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Editor-in-Chief

O'Dwyer's Newsletter



**The Inside News of
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VISIT CALIF. WANTS SOCIAL MEDIA PARTNER

Visit California, the non-profit offshoot of the California Travel & Tourism Commission, is floating an RFP for social strategy & content creation services.



VC wants counsel on emerging platforms, “ideation of social campaigns,” in-depth analysis/recommendations on best practices and how to optimize real-time opportunities, according to its RFP.

Duties include curating content for publishing on social media, identifying key influencers/trends and creating at least nine posts daily.

May 25 is the deadline to bid on the business.

Bids may be sent electronically to rfps@visitcalifornia.com or or hard copy (via FedEx or UPS) to: Visit California; Request for Bids: Social Strategy & Content Creation Services; Attn: RFP Submissions; 555 Capitol Mall, Suite 1100; Sacramento, CA 95814

DIDIT BIDS FOR GAWKER

Didit marketing services firm is bidding for Gawker Media.

The move follows the May 17 court approval of a peace treaty between Gawker and Peter Thiel, the billionaire venture capitalist who funded the successful lawsuit of wrestler Hulk Hogan that drove Gawker into Chapter 11.

Under the court ruling, Thiel has agreed not to buy Gawker.com, which will be sold in bankruptcy, and to release claims against any future buyer.

Kevin Lee, Didit’s co-founder & executive chairman, told Reuters if his firm is successful, it will donate ad revenues from the relaunched Gawker to non-profits.

MCGRATH DIES AT 81

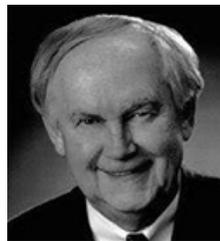
Dennis McGrath, a former president/CEO of Mona, Meyer, McGrath & Gavin, died May 13. He was 81.

Weber Shandwick acquired MMM&G, which became its Minneapolis office. McGrath headed Weber Shandwick’s New York and Tokyo offices.

After his departure from the Interpublic unit, McGrath joined the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis as communications director in 2002.

McGrath formed McGrath-Buckley Communications Counseling with his wife, Betsy.

He joined Himle Rapp as senior counsel in 2013 and stepped down last year.



Dennis McGrath

NOVARTIS’ LAWYER OUT AFTER HIRING COHEN

Novartis announced that Felix Ehrat, group general counsel, will retire June 1 due to fallout from his decision to pay \$1.2M to a shell company formed by Michael Cohen, President Trump’s personal lawyer and “fixer.”

Novartis paid \$100K monthly to Cohen’s Essential Consultants, which was formed to funnel \$130K to porn star and alleged 2016 Trump sex partner Stormy Davis. The contract expired in February.



Felix Ehrat

Ehrat, general counsel since 2011, signed the Essential Consultants pact with former Novartis CEO Joe Jimenez. Vas Narasimhan, who succeeded Jimenez in February, told staffers that he was not involved with the Essential Consultants arrangement.

FINSBURY REPS REDSTONES IN CBS BATTLE

WPP’s Finsbury represents National Amusements Inc., the company of Shari Redstone and dad Sumner, as it battles to merge Viacom with CBS. NAI owns about 80 percent of the Class A voting stock of Viacom and CBS.

Shari won a court victory when a Delaware judge rejected CBS’ move to eliminate NAI’s controlling stake.

CBS chief Les Moonves pushed for payment of a special dividend that would have slashed NAI’s ownership in the broadcaster to less than 20 percent.

NAI called CBS’ dividend scheme an effort to deprive a shareholder of its fundamental voting rights.

CBS expressed disappointment with the court ruling and vowed further action.

BRUNSWICK PROMOTES ABU DHABI

Brunswick Group is working with Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, to better position it on the global stage.

The informal agreement with Abu Dhabi’s General Secretariat of the Executive Council calls for a multi-market effort to understand the emirate’s international reputation.

The effort includes focus groups in Washington and London as well as national surveys in the US and UK.

Abu Dhabi controls about 10 percent of the globe’s oil reserves and generates two-thirds of the UAEs \$400B economy. The UAE, which is composed of seven emirates, has close ties with Saudi Arabia and is key driver in the Arab boycott of Qatar for its alleged ties with Iran.



WPP INVESTORS WANT INFO ON SORRELL EXIT

Major WPP investors directed by Glass Lewis advisory group are demanding information surrounding the exit of founder Martin Sorrell last month.

GL took aim at Roberto Quarta, WPP chairman and nomination committee chief, for failing to provide details about the internal probe into Sorrell's alleged personal misconduct. In a report to investors, GL also expressed concerns about the transparency and efficacy of the succession process at the ad/PR giant.

Sorrell's good leaver status allows him to keep more than \$27M in future payouts.

GL is telling WPP shareholders not to back Quarta's re-election to the board at the June 13 annual general meeting.

BROOKS TO HEAD FINN TECH PRACTICE

Jodi Brooks, former chair of Burson-Marsteller's U.S. technology operations, has moved to Finn Partners, where she's been named leader of the agency's tech practice.



Jodi Brooks

Brooks succeeds Sabrina Horn, who has led FP's tech business since 2015 and now becomes a senior advisor at the agency.

Brooks joined B-M in 2013, previously serving as managing director of the agency's technology practice before she was appointed to lead its U.S. operation in 2016.

JOELE FRANK TIES UP ROCKPORT CHAPTER 11

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher is working the Chapter 11 restructuring of footwear maker Rockport Group and its \$150M conditional sale to Charlesbank private equity investor.

Newton, MA-based Rockport expects bankruptcy protection and Charlesbank's financial backing to enable it to regain footing needed to capitalize on its brand heritage.

Charlesbank retains the option to acquire selected US stores. Rockport will seek court approval to shutter those US locations not acquired by Charlesbank or any other entities.

FOCUS: HOPE FOCUSES ON PR

Focus: Hope, the Detroit-based non-profit, expects to select a PR firm or marketing consultant by the end of the month. Founded after the 1968 riots, the group's mission is to develop "intelligent and practical action to overcome racism, poverty and injustice."



Focus: Hope emphasizes educational programs for children and their families and economic opportunities.

It expects to reach its goals through improved marketing and communications efficiencies.

The organization will partner with a firm to manage day-to-day PR, including media relations, event promotion and website maintenance.

NEWS OF FIRMS

BCW Group has merged its tech brands North of Nine and PPR in the U.S. to form AxiCom U.S. Emily Dunlop, previously the leader of PPR U.S., is president of the newly formed entity. The merger is intended to build on the tech agency's presence in seven European markets as well as beginning AxiCom's global expansion. North of Nine is a communications boutique focused on technology-based innovations, while PPR in the U.S. is a full-service consultancy.



Emily Dunlop

5W Public Relations says it will launch a specialty practice focused on providing communications strategy and media relations services within the gaming and sports gambling industry. The firm's experience within the gaming and betting industry includes work for Caesar's Entertainment Corporation and Harrah's Properties. Services that the new practice will offer include messaging and strategy, media relations, content creation, digital media campaigns and crisis support.

Racepoint Global and **Reputation Institute** are partnering to launch an "insight to result" service for domestic and multi-national companies around the world, with a focus on China. Reputation Institute will provide its RepTrak study data, which incorporates feedback from more than 29,500 people among the informed general public in China, to help Racepoint Global fuel its communications programs.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



Cheryl Overton

Egami Group has appointed **Cheryl Overton** president, a newly created position. Overton comes to Egami from Zeno Group, where she was executive vice president and New York consumer marketing practice lead. She has also run her own communications consultancy, Cheryl Overton Communications, and has held executive positions at Spark PR, PMK|BNC, UniWorld Group, Ogilvy and Edelman.

SourceCode Communications has brought on **Sara Ajemian** as VP to lead its ad and martech practice. Ajemian joins SourceCode from DiGennaro Communications, where she most recently served as a VP, managing a team of communications strategists and serving on the firm's leadership team.

Public Relations Global Network elected **C.L. Conroy** president at its bi-annual meeting in Toronto. Conroy is president and CEO of The Conroy Martinez Group. **Christina Rytter**, managing director and founder of Scandinavian Communications, is now immediate past president and chair of the advisory board. Other officers named include: president-elect **Aaron Blank**, president/CEO of The Fearey Group; secretary **Leeza Hoyt**, president of The Hoyt Organization; and **Sean Dowdall**, general manager and chief marketing officer of Landis Communications, Inc., who will serve as treasurer.

SMALL BIZ TO BOOST FACEBOOK INVESTMENT

Despite suffering from a massive trust setback in the last year, small businesses still recognize social media's value as a marketing tool and its ability to engage and successfully reach audiences.

As a result, a recent survey by business news site



The Manifest found that nearly all small businesses said they plan to ramp up their paid social media investments this year.

The Manifest survey found that 92 percent of small businesses said they'll invest more time and money in social media in 2018.

Facebook will take the lion's share of this investment, according to the survey, cited by 58 percent of respondents, more than any other platform, followed by YouTube (39 percent), Instagram (39 percent) and Twitter (32 percent).

The Manifest's "2018 Small Business Survey" polled more than 350 U.S. business owners and managers whose operations have fewer than 500 employees. The survey was conducted at the end of Q1 this year.

SS&A PITCHES PHILIPPINES-US TRADE PACT

The Confederation of Garment Exporters of the Philippines, a Manila-based private association comprised of companies involved that nation's garment trade, has hired D.C.-based lobbying firm Sorini, Samet & Associates to advocate a potential bilateral free trade agreement between the US and the Philippines.

CONGEP has hired SS&A to conduct outreach to U.S. officials and relevant private sector organizations for the purpose of building the groundwork and assessing the possibility for a free trade agreement between the U.S. and the Philippines and to support the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry's efforts to do the same.

The four-week pact runs from May to June and brings SS&A \$8,000.

SS&A in 2014 represented CONGEP in a bid to encourage Congress to pass free trade zones that would promote development in areas of the Philippines devastated by Typhoon Haiyan.

FTI'S BALET EXITS FOR SGA

Steven Balet, who was managing director at FTI Consulting Group's strategic communications unit, is now New York managing director of Strategic Governance Advisors, which is affiliated with Sard Verbinnen & Co.

Prior to FTI, Balet headed his own firm and worked at Okapi Partners and MacKenzie Partners on proxy contests, mergers & acquisitions and corporate governance matters.

Launched in 2017, SGA counsels boards and management on activism, messaging, takeover battles, compensation, shareholder engagement and messaging.

It handled ADP's successful proxy contest defense against Pershing Square and EQT's contested merger with Rice Energy.



Steven Balet

CCI TO HOLD CORPORATE COMMS CONFAB

Corporate communications pros will be able to exchange ideas and information on the issues facing the profession at the 2018 Corporation Communication Conference, to be held at Baruch College in New York from May 29 to June 2.

Presented by Corporate Communication International, the conference will feature presentations by FleishmanHillard senior VP Adam Yates; Alan Kelly, author of *The Elements of Influence* and the founder and director of Playmaker Systems; and former CapitalOne senior VP of corporate affairs Richard Woods. There will also be several panel discussions that address "Culture, Crisis and Choices in Digital Communication."

Two pre-conference workshops will be offered May 29. Patricia Scott, president and CEO of Uhmms, a company that shows clients how to "lead, speak and inspire," will talk about the principles behind producing an engaging slide presentation. Roslyn Petelin, who teaches in the editing and publishing program at the University of Queensland, will discuss "Creating Credibility in Your Academic and Corporate Writing."

For more information about the event, or to register, go to [CCI's website](#).

WEBER SHANDWICK PICKS UP CAPPUCCINO

Weber Shandwick has acquired Cappuccino, a digital marketing and communications shop in Sao Paulo.

A pioneer in Brazil's digital arena, Cappuccino offers social media, content creation, mobile, paid distribution, SEO, UX and design/development offerings.

Andy Polansky, CEO of Weber Shandwick, praised Cappuccino's diversity of talent and said his Interpublic unit will continue "placing platform knowledge, creativity and data-driven results" at the core of its business.

Founded 20 years ago by Eduardo Coelho, Cappuccino represents clients such as Citi, Arcor, Boeringher Ingelheim and Ajinomoto.

The Cappuccino deal follows the opening of a Weber Shandwick outpost in Colombia.



Eduardo Coelho

LACHLAN MURDOCH TO HELM FOX

Lachlan Murdoch, 46-year-old executive chairman at 21stCentury Fox, will become CEO of the revamped media company following completion of the \$66B sale of its movie studio, cable networks and overseas businesses to Walt Disney Co.

His 87-year-old father Rupert will keep the executive chairman post.

James Murdoch, Lachlan's 45-year-old brother, currently helms Fox. It's not clear whether he will take a post at Disney.

The new Fox will include Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, Fox Broadcasting Co., Fox Sports, Fox Television Group and cable sports channels.

5G: ARE WE ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

The promise of 5G is bright: it offers possibilities for the world in everything from medicine to autonomous vehicles to entertainment. In the U.S., AT&T and Verizon have both announced the rollout of 5G networks in 2018.

So, what will life on 5G be like? Greater speeds and greater bandwidth mean that things like remote medical operations will be possible; instant super-high-def entertainment will be an everyday occurrence; fully functioning driverless cars and maybe even aircraft will be the norm. But perhaps the true promise of 5G is how it could change the very fabric of innovation.

To provide some context for 5G speeds, the average internet speed in the U.S. today is 6.5 megabytes per second. At MWC last year, Samsung showed off a new 5G router with speeds of 500 megabytes per second (4 gigabits per second).

However, there's a significant distance between hype and reality around 5G today. Technical challenges start with reception issues. 5G signals run at high frequency, which means that trees, shrubs, buildings, cars, even people can disrupt the signal. This leads to the need for a larger physical footprint for base stations, repeaters and small cells to establish reliable access. It also means that the rollout will take a lot longer and require more investment than previous 3G and 4G LTE rollouts.

The need for backward compatibility and the ability to process more data at faster speeds also requires close collaboration throughout the technology industry.

Even at the device level, 5G technology is still coming into its own. The handoff from older networks to newer ones will have to be seamless, and the 20-plus hour battery life that consumers have come to expect must remain table stakes in the mobile market.

At the political level, different countries are vying to own 5G in ways that we didn't see in earlier network evolutions, at least not so publicly. The truth about 5G is its development relies on a global ecosystem of partners.

The technical, financial and political problems will be solved by different camps. What remains is the biggest challenge of all: how to reinvent the way we dream. 5G will change our world: it will bring the IoT, mobility, the auto industry, medicine, education and AI forward in new and fantastic ways. What's left for people to do is to reimagine what we can invent and how we can apply this to less agnostic challenges we face today.

We don't read a lot of these issues when we read about 5G. Perhaps that's really where we're falling down. If we're truly looking at the horizon of a new technology this big and this far-reaching, shouldn't we be thinking of solving more than the technical challenges of today?

Peter Prodromou is president and CEO of Racepoint Global and RJ Bardsley is chief strategist of Racepoint Global's Global Tech Practice.



**Peter Prodromou (L)
and RJ Bardsley**

HOW TO HANDLE INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing continues to increase its appeal. But as this communications vehicle gains prominence, the onus is on PR pros to determine how best to engage the people and organizations who can be very influential supporters as well as persuasive detractors.

According to an Association of National Advertisers (ANA) study released earlier this year, 75 percent of their members currently employ influencer marketing and almost half (43 percent) are planning to increase their spending on it in the next 12 months.

Brands engage with and hire influencers who have followings ranging from as few as 50 followers to 100,000-plus, the ANA study said.

In an increasingly fragmented media environment, B-to-B audiences and buyers rely on influencers to educate and inform them about corporate and brand reputations and how your products and services stack up against competitors.

Communications professionals should view influencer marketing as a linchpin for multiple types of messaging and the engine for an effective "publish once, distribute many" model.

For instance, you can work with influencers to help develop an earned media story that can be repurposed into blog posts, white papers, events, executive speeches and presentations and video content.

However, influencer marketing is not about the marketing channel per se. It's about the ability of influencers to create genuine conversations with specific audiences that can be leveraged across communications platforms.

The strategy applies to both online and offline venues. PR pros can piggyback on positive messages influencers post on their social channels. But communicators also need to consider how to take these relationships offline and craft ways for influencers to press the flesh, including networking events, conferences and more.

A robust influencer marketing strategy also helps to augment traditional media relations. PR professionals can curate their outreach efforts with influencers in order to generate more earned media opportunities and raise awareness and positive visibility.

In both cases, careful diligence is paramount. In stark contrast to reporters, many of whom are trained to be decidedly neutral about the people and companies they report on, some popular influencers attract audiences by taking an adversarial stance because they don't like how a brand behaves. PR professionals shouldn't be cowed by influencers who seem unmovable. Rather, we can take a diplomatic approach to building a dialogue that can pay dividends for brands and companies over time.

Mechanics aside, building relationships and telling compelling stories are at the heart of effective influencer marketing. This tool helps showcase the value of multi-channel communication in a fragmented world.

Alex Stanton is CEO of Stanton, a communications firm with offices in New York and California. He can be reached at astanton@stantonprm.com.



Alex Stanton

RISING HEALTHCARE COSTS HIT PR FIRMS

Since 20 million Americans opted not to take either Obamacare or private plans, the cost of the private plans in 2018 will be nearly triple the rates of 2013.

The analysis was made by Betsy McCaughey, who was Lieutenant Governor of New York from 1995 to 1998 under George Pataki. She later joined the Donald Trump presidential campaign as an economic adviser.

A historian with a Ph.D. from Columbia University, McCaughey has provided conservative media commentary on policy affecting healthcare issues. She says the 20 million decided they can't afford Obamacare even though they risk fines for doing that without an exemption.

The problem with Obamacare, she says, is that while five percent of the population consumes almost 50% of healthcare costs, everyone pays the same premiums. Healthy people are being forced to pay the bills of the chronically ill, she writes.

Some PR firms bolster staff with part-timers to avoid health insurance costs which can range from about \$700 monthly for single persons to \$1,000 and more monthly for families.



**Betsy
McCaughey**

President Trump's plan would allow consumers to pay according to their own needs and to buy 12-month plans without extras such as maternity and pediatric dental coverage.

Senator Charles Schumer, D-New York, said Trump would "sabotage" the Affordable Care Act and drive up costs for millions of Americans. McCaughey calls this the "Democrats' Healthcare Lie."

Single-payer national health insurance, called "Medicare for all" by Physicians for a National Health Program, would allow a single public agency to organize healthcare financing, but keep delivery largely in private hands. Most industrial nations have such plans.

The Medicare for All Act, H.R. 676, would establish a single-payer health insurance system.

The Affordable Care Act, says PNPH, aims to expand coverage to about 30 million Americans by requiring people to buy private insurance policies and by expanding Medicaid. However, it notes:

- About 30 million people will still be uninsured in 2023, and tens of millions will remain underinsured.
- Insurers will continue to strip down policies.
- The law preserves a fragmented financing system, making it impossible to control costs.
- The law continues the unfair financing of health care, whereby costs are borne by middle- and lower-income Americans and those facing acute or chronic illness.

Wendell Potter, former communications head of CIGNA, left the company in 2008 to become a consumer advocate, authoring *Deadly Spin: An Insurance Company Insider Speaks out on How Corporate PR Is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans*.

His most recent book is *Nation on the Take: How Big Money Corrupts Our Democracy*.

"Most people don't realize how what they eat, what's available to them, is so influenced by special interests who have huge amounts of money to spend," Potter says.

SV&C WORKS IP BID FOR PACKAGING GIANT

Sard Verbinnen is handling International Paper's nearly \$11B bid for Ireland's Smurfit Kappa, which believes (at this point) that independence is its best strategy.

Memphis-based IP made its initial offer for the packaging company in March. The company ruled out a hostile bid on May 16, saying it will not proceed with a binding offer unless it's accepted by SK's board of directors.

SK applauded IP's decision to seek its blessing for a deal but maintains that its best interests "are served by pursuing the future as an independent company, operating as the European and Pan-American leader in paper-based packaging."

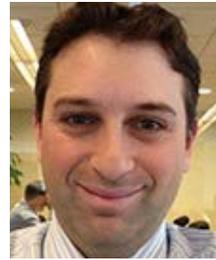
It rapped the American company's offer as below its "true intrinsic worth."

Ireland's takeover panel established June 6 as the deadline for IP to decide whether to pursue or drop its quest for SK.

SV&C's David Reno and Joe Aarons represent IP with Rory Godson, founder of UK-based Powerscourt.

BARCLAYS' ZWEIBACH MOVES TO PANAGORA

Yosef Zweibach has joined PanAgora Asset Management of Boston as head of business strategy & investor relations.



Yosef Zweibach

The former paratrooper in the Israeli Defense Forces did a more than eight-year stint at Barclays Capital as global chief of quantitative sales.

George Mussalli, chief investment officer for equities at PanAgora said Zweibach is "a proven investment leader with an extensive background in systematic quant investing that will benefit us as we continue to enhance our platform and meet investors' needs."

Prosek Partners represents PanAgora, which has \$54B in assets under management.

AWARDS AND EVENTS

The **Hugh M. Hefner Foundation** will present its 2018 First Amendment Awards on June 4 at the Newseum in Washington D.C. This year's Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to **Joan E. Bertin**, longtime executive director of the National Coalition Against Censorship.

The **Institute for Public Relations** is accepting nominations for the 2018 IPR Annual Awards through June 15. The awards will be presented on Nov. 28 at New York's Roosevelt Hotel. For more information and the criteria for each of award, go to IPR's website.

The **Publicity Club of New York** is holding a luncheon on June 20 that will feature reporters and editors sharing their insights on the healthcare media beat. Speakers include Axios healthcare business reporter Bob Herman, Bloomberg News healthcare reporter Zachary Tracer, NBC-News medical and health reporter Lauren Dunn, STAT First Opinion editor Patrick Skerrett and Wall Street Journal consumer health columnist Sumathi Reddy. For more information, or to register, go to <https://publicity-club.org/pcny-presents-the-healthcare-media-beat/>

COMMENTARY

NOVARTIS ENTERS THE SWAMP

Novartis is a sophisticated \$50B global pharmaceuticals giant that claims it hired the shell company of Donald Trump's "fixer" Michael Cohen to "get out ahead" in understanding the new administration's healthcare agenda. That's pretty laughable.

Candidate and then president Trump had no health-care program, other than to repeal ObamaCare and to replace it with a "big beautiful" plan—not to be confused with his big beautiful wall on the southern border.

Politico reported March 13, 2017 that Trump and his advisers talked about repealing and replacing Obamacare and made an array of blanket statements about what it would entail for nearly two years.

The emperor though had no clothes. Once in office, Trump adopted the House-produced American Health Care Act.

Why Switzerland-based Novartis thought Cohen had some special insights into healthcare when Trump himself didn't have a clue is a real head-scratcher.

Novartis retained the services of Cohen's Essential Consultants—more aptly named Essential Consultant since it is comprised of one person—following Trump's January 2017 inauguration.

After a single meeting, Novartis group general counsel Felix Ehrat decided that Cohen knew nothing about healthcare policy, ObamaCare and Medicare.

Yet Novartis continued to pay Essential Consultants \$100K per-month until the contract expired in February. The company said it did so to avoid costly litigation connected with breaking the agreement. Right.

In announcing his early retirement, Ehrat admitted paying Cohen was an error and took personal responsibility for his mistake. Kudos.

He's mistaken in thinking that his resignation will "bring the public debate on this matter to an end."

It should be just the beginning.

The *Financial Times* reported May 14 that Swiss prosecutors have expressed concern over Novartis' payment to Essential Consultants. The country's attorney general has been in touch with prosecutors in Novartis' headquarters city of Basel, though a criminal probe has not been opened.

Congress and federal law enforcement should probe the Novartis payment and AT&T's foolish \$600K outlay for Cohen's advice on its \$85B Time-Warner merger. The Trump Organization via its Trump International Hotel in DC and shady real estate deal in Indonesia with a Chinese government-owned partner is using the White House as its piggy bank.

It appears that Trump cronies want in on the action (before it is too late) and corporations stand ready to play with them.

—Kevin McCauley

POLITICIANS, COMPANIES ARE KILLING TRUTH

Official Washington and Corporate America are killing the truth. Even worse, society is condoning their untruthful behavior. Lies have become so common that lying is becoming accepted behavior.

The Trump Administration added new words to our vocabulary: "fake news" and "alternative facts." To me the truth is the truth and always will be. And a lie is a lie is a lie. Period.

I've been lied to by companies, organizations, institutions and individuals.

One lie or embellishment that I hear over and over from people in Corporate America is, "I work in the office of the president." I've reported directly to several presidents during my career and always had an adjacent office. So, when someone tells me "I work in the office of the president," should I assume s/he is physically located a few steps away from the head of the company?

No. More often than not today that person has been given a glorified title and may be working hundreds or thousands of miles away from the president.

I recently requested a current channel listing from DirecTV. I then learned that parent company AT&T follows the office of the president charade.

Before being acquired by AT&T, I only needed to email my request to customer service at DirecTV. Since AT&T discontinued the email address, I had to call a toll-free number. After failing to get help, I asked for the name of the president of Directv.

I next wrote to Michael Viola, AT&T's senior VP of investor relations asking him this same question. No one from his office responded, but Diana Pon called and said she was in the office of the president.

It's hard to believe that someone in Viola's office didn't just respond. Instead, my request was elevated to the "president's office."

Last week AT&T's Stephenson said it was a big mistake to hire Trump attorney Michael Cohen as a political consultant for \$600,000. Does he have any idea how many people "work" in his office and is it a big mistake if they say they do?

It is time now for companies to eliminate all misleading and deceptive practices, be transparent and always tell the truth. Ethics. Honesty. Integrity. Truth. Corporate America CEOs need to get back to the basics.

Rene A. Henry lives in Seattle and is the author of 10 books including "Customer Service: The Cornerstone of Success" which is available from Amazon in paperback, on Kindle and as an audio book.



Rene Henry