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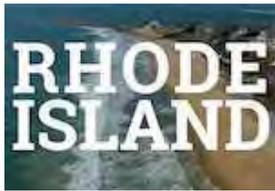


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RHODE ISLAND SEEKS TOURISM PITCHES

Rhode Island is seeking a firm(s) to handle PR, advertising and social media to bolster its \$4.9 billion tourism sector.



The Rhode Island Commerce Corp. needs PR to handle strategic planning, partnership opportunities, activate media events and programs, create and distribute content, and to assist with other duties on an as-needed basis.

The firm will “provide ongoing media relations support, representing Rhode Island’s unique story and targeted media opportunities; align partner priorities to provide direct referrals to regional marketing organizations; maintain strong relationships with a diversity of U.S. media across multiple channels in the tourism, lifestyle and other relevant sectors; and organize familiarization trips,” according to the RFP.

The state’s target audience includes prospective and previous visitors, residents, transportation partners, tour operators, travel agents and industry partners.

Rhode Island plans to issue a two-year contract with an option for an additional three years.

Proposals are due Nov. 29. Send an electronic (PDF) version and ten printed copies to: Rhode Island Commerce Corporation; Attention: Tourism Public Relations and Advertising Agency RFP; 315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101; Providence, RI 02908

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

DIRECT IMPACT HIRES STRUBHAR

Keith Strubhar has joined Direct Impact, the grassroots unit of [BCW Group](#), as executive VP.



Keith Strubhar

Most recently, he held the managing partner slot at Tarpon Strategic, counseling aerospace and industrial companies on social influence campaigns.

Earlier, Strubhar was executive VP-PA & issues at MSL’s Washington office. He also was director of communications for Raytheon Intelligence, PA director at Burson-Marsteller and senior VP at DI.

Drew O’Brien, DI president, called Strubhar a great fit for the firm due to his knack for developing and managing winning electoral campaigns and leading international marketing, PR and grassroots efforts to enhance the reputations of clients.

FWV SNAPS UP STAKE IN BIG PICTURE

French|West|Vaughan has taken an equity stake in San Francisco-based Big Picture PR, a consumer lifestyle PR and influencer marketing agency that works with clients in the wellness, fitness, beauty, consumer tech and retail spaces.

BPPR will maintain its brand and its San Francisco office, while its Los Angeles and New York offices will combine with existing FWV offices in those cities. Big Picture founder Amy Cunha will retain her role as its president and agency partner.



Rick French, Amy Cunha

Big Picture’s work “complements our existing portfolio of clients in consumer and lifestyle marketing across all of our offices, while adding a strong consumer tech practice to our agency,” said FWV Chairman and CEO Rick French.

FINN TO PITCH SITE OF CHRIST’S BAPTISM

Jordan has hired [Finn Partners](#) to create a communications campaign that would transform the site believed to be where John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ into the world’s leading spiritual pilgrimage destination.

The communications objective of The Bethany Beyond the Jordan project is to drive investment for the site and heritage center and to increase awareness of Jordan as a tourism and cultural site.

Finn Partners has a six-month contract worth \$324K for Phase 1 and 2 of the effort that runs through the end of the year.

ZWEIBAUM UPPED TO OPRG GROWTH POST

Omnicom Public Relations Group has shifted Kiersten Zweibaum to global chief growth and marketing officer. Most recently, she served as managing director, partner, global growth at Ketchum (part of OPRG), overseeing business development, including a number of cross-Omnicom agency new business and organic growth engagements.

In her new post, Zweibaum will be responsible for expanding relationships between OPRG agencies and existing clients, identifying and securing new clients, and enhancing the brand externally to attract both talent and clients.



Kiersten Zweibaum

WARREN ASKS SEC TO PROBE TRUMP SPAC

Senator Elizabeth Warren wants the Securities and Exchange Commission to probe Donald Trump's SPAC deal.



Elizabeth Warren

The Massachusetts Democrat says SPAC sponsor Digital World Acquisition Corp. may have violated securities laws because it discussed the merger with Trump before the SPAC went public, according to media reports.

DWAC's failure to disclose the talks "appears to be an omission of material information necessary for both early institutional investors and retail investors in the SPAC's public offering," wrote Warren in [her Nov. 17 letter to SEC](#)

chairman [Gary Gensler](#).

Warren also believes the lack of a core business model for Trump Media and Technology Group raises questions about the extent to which DWAC is profiteering off the SPAC model and inherent disclosure failures.

She hopes the probe of the Trump deal would lead to a broader SEC investigation "of wrongdoing and fraud in the SPAC space."

EYE HEALTH ADVOCACY GROUP ISSUES RFP

Prevent Blindness, the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and preserving sight, is requesting proposals from public relations agencies.



The nonprofit, which was founded in 1908, seeks a partner that can develop, promote and provide PR and communications support for an art therapy initiative intended to create community among people living with Thyroid Eye Disease in an effort to address the psy-

chosocial aspects of the disease.

The objective of the initiative is to connect those living with TED with fellow peers, to offer psychosocial value through a program shown to improve self-esteem and to provide a platform to raise awareness and understanding of the condition.

Proposals are due by 5 p.m. (CST) on December 1 and should be emailed to President and CEO Jeff Todd, jtodd@preventblindness.org.

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

SVC WORKS DURATIONAL DEAL FOR CASPER

[Sard Verbinnen & Co.](#) represents Durational Capital Management as the New York investment firm agrees to acquire Casper Sleep mattress-in-a-box company for nearly \$300M.

Durational's \$6.90-per-share offer is a 94 percent premium over Casper's Nov. 12 \$3.55 closing price.

Casper, which went public at \$12 per-share in February 2020, posted a 26.8 percent rise to \$156.5M in Q3 revenues.

Despite that robust spurt in revenues, the red ink flow widened to \$25.1M from \$15.9M a year ago.

The mattress firm registered an \$80.2M nine-month deficit on \$436M in revenues.

SVC's Jared Levy, Emily Claffey and Jeff Huber handle Durational, while JCIR's Joseph Jaffoni, Norberto Aja and Jennifer Neuman represent Casper.

ON THE MOVE

Huge, IPG's "global experience agency," promotes **Mark Manning** to global chief operating officer, a newly created position. Manning was previously president, west region, a role that will now be filled by Ryan Ku, former chief strategy officer at Eleven. Reporting to CEO Mat Baxter, Manning will assume responsibility for all of Huge's global operations, managing client services, program management, and central shared services. In addition, he will oversee the agency's internal products, capabilities, processes, platforms and tools.

Alpha Teknova, which provides custom products and reagents for bioprocessing, bioproduction and molecular diagnostics, hires **Jennifer Henry** as senior vice president, marketing. Henry was most recently senior director of global brand at eBay. She has also held executive marketing positions at Facebook, Google and Apple. At Teknova, she will drive the company's corporate brand strategy and product marketing efforts.



Jennifer Henry

Pure Beauty, a California-based boutique cannabis brand, names **Esther Song** as its first chief marketing officer. Song was previously senior vice president of marketing and communications for cannabis retailer MedMen. Her other posts have included vice president of VIP public relations and partnerships at Tory Burch, and senior account executive at BPCM. "Her exemplary background in both cannabis and the fashion and lifestyle space will be instrumental to expanding our brand," said Pure Beauty CEO Imelda Walavalkar.

Bospar bolsters its social media practice with the addition of **Mega Jewell** as VP and **Samuel Anthony Harwit** as director. Jewell has run her own communications company, MEGA, since 2017. She has also served as head of messaging and public affairs at the Translational Pulmonary & Immunology Research Center and has worked as a broadcast journalist at outlets including KPTV Fox 12 in Portland, Oregon. Harwit operates lifestyle blog The Frenchy Toast and has served as head of marketing communications at PUBLICpr.

Xperience Restaurant Group has named **Giovanni Salvino-Prada** vice president of marketing. Salvino-Prada joins the company from Pacific Hospitality Group, where he was corporate director of integrated marketing and loyalty. In his new position, he oversees the planning, implementation and evaluation of all marketing activities including brand, social, public relations, customer acquisition and loyalty strategies for all brands under the XRG umbrella.



Giovanni Salvino-Prada

BMF brings on **Talya Mirkin** as earned practice lead. Mirkin comes to BMG from The Brand Amp, where she was director of public relations. She has also served as account supervisor at Wagstaff Media & Marketing and was at Konnect Agency and Bread & Butter. She has repped such clients as Patina Restaurant Group's 22 West Coast restaurants, Petrossian, the Creative Arts and Primetime Emmys Governors Ball and the Hollywood Bowl food offerings.

IMPROVING OMNICHANNEL MARKETING

We know there's a significant difference between incremental innovation and substantial innovation, and that the difference between the two drives choice in nearly everything we do. By necessity, communicators and marketers must focus on:



Nicholas Love

- Delivering experiences that allow brands to be more thoughtful about the audiences with which they're engaging.
- Seamless channel integration due to the importance of omnichannel activity in the world in which we live.
- The ability to move audiences through various forms of the funnel

with the intent of creating frictionless conversions led by value-rich content.

- Understanding the role and effectiveness of each channel in driving the desired result and maximizing spend allocation.

Building a better user experience

We've witnessed the mass adoption of a digital-first mindset across the world. As a result, the many channels we come in contact with every day, including social media newsfeeds, email inboxes, SMS marketing, advertising, mobile apps, search engine result pages and other digital channels, are as competitive as ever.

We've heard the cliché of "experience is the new brand," and, in many ways, it's true. However, let's be clear, you can't have a brand experience without a user experience. User experience must drive a point of differentiation as it speaks specifically to a person's takeaway from a brand's product. User experiences are meant to be relevant, drive recall and resonance. If you are not delivering on those key points, you fall victim to limiting your brand's ability to elevate your reputation and serve as a solution for a particular pain point they may be experiencing or a problem they are facing.

Planning is critical, and omnichannel marketing must represent the intent to educate your audience first and often across several devices, channels, and, most importantly, different content forms.

Remember, the importance of video still exists, and if nothing else, has been amplified over the last 18 months. Social audio has become a staple in attempts to build diversified content mixes and communities. The dependency on solid writing remains while data and analytics are now normal in performance-driven cultures.

However, one of the most important aspects of performance-driven cultures is the level of curiosity on display. Our digital team spends quite a bit of time discussing the importance of being intellectually curious and being "allergic" to the dreaded plateau. Ensuring that we're asking the right questions instead of providing the right solution to the wrong question has become a must to our strategic planning approach. With an oversaturation of activity and content across digital channels, audiences are craving seamless interactions with brands, and brands must be in information acquisition mode to build personal and customized experiences.

Sometimes, users don't know exactly what their needs are, and personalization seeks to humanize a brand by providing content and functionality that anticipates a consumer's needs, interests and wants with no effort from the user, and methods

like AI and machine learning largely drive this. Personalization is controlled by the company and relies on a broad set of demographic data. It's generally managed through an experience platform that follows the interactions of a user along a journey. Personalization is a very effective marketing tactic despite the dependency on technology, which can become outdated because of technological advancements. According to [a 2020 Salesforce survey](#), 66 percent of customers expect companies to understand their needs and expectations. This expectation also focuses on reducing silos between departments and channels as frictionless conversions are table stakes these days.

Customizing your brand experience

While personalization and customization are often interchangeably used, they are different. Customization is driven by human preference as it works well under the idea that users know their needs. Customization allows companies to further target and segment audiences through touchpoints that will enable them to select what they need or want as an exchange for profile-based information. By doing so, companies can earn the rewards of this information.

Relevance. By allowing a user to customize their experience, brands deliver a more relevant brand experience that's suited specifically to their stated needs and, when memorable, contributes to their ability to recall what they've experienced.

Engagement. Customized content provides a shortcut for users in terms of getting to their needs. As a result, engagement skews higher because their needs are being met. A great example of this is Buzzer, the new sports experience technology that curates the best live moments in sports to each fan's preferences while simplifying the discovery and viewing experience of live sports on mobile in a short form live format.

Understanding. Customized content applications allow brands to better understand the needs and preferences of individual users and apply those learnings to enhance future efforts.

Preference. We operate in a world full of preferences. By leveraging gathered intelligence, converting users into customers—and, ultimately, into loyal customers—is where your time should be spent and maximized as opposed to wondering what will resonate with your audience and guessing.

Creating your omnichannel experience

At its core, personalization and customization represent the necessity of providing solution-based experiences as brands must emphasize the needs of their target audiences. Modern marketing recognizes that customers are in charge. If your companies' data, technology, and content aren't operating in an integrated fashion, you aren't delivering valuable experiences during a time in which brands must continuously create and win with user experience.

Remember, your brand image is not what you say, but it's the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that users encounter when interacting with your brand. It's imperative that each touchpoint provides you and your team with additional user intelligence to continuously influence how your brand is received by its target audience. If not, you run the risk of being known as a brand that is out of touch with the preferences that users are essentially demanding. In the end, this leads to a brand's digital transformation; there's no quick fix but it's a journey that never stops.

Nicholas Love is VP of Digital Marketing at [G&S](#).

PR SUMMIT DC GOES LIVE AGAIN

Topics from how to make an attention-grabbing TikTok video to strategies for handling a cybersecurity PR crisis were on the agenda at this year's combined [Mid-Atlantic Marketing Summit and PR Summit DC](#),



which was held at the Capital One Hall in Tysons, VA on Nov. 10.

Hosted by [Capitol Communicator](#), a media and events company serving marketing, public relations, digital and media communications pros in the mid-Atlantic region, this was the first time the Summits were held as a live event since the beginning of the pandemic.

Among the event's presenters were [Axios](#) co-founder and president Roy Schwartz and Mitch Marovitz, director and professor in the communications, journalism and speech program at the University of Maryland, who presented the seminar "Using Smart Brevity for Effective Internal Communications."

Schwartz spoke about how communications that are short and to the point can help a client's message stand out from the enormous amount of content that people receive each day.

"CEOs are seeing that the need for great communication is probably the most important thing that they can do," he added. Because of that, he predicted that communications will take an increasingly important role in a company's basic operations. "In the past, the right-hand person of the CEO was either the CFO or the COO and I think in the future it's going to be the CCO. Because everything is going to be about communications."

Other presentations at the event included "CMO and Communications Directors Round Table: The Big Picture," "How Covid Changed Communicating and the Way Federal Contractors Work with PR Agencies" and "ESG: Data Informed Communications."

With strict Covid protocols in place, PR Summit DC co-producer Robert Udowitz said feedback was excellent.

He added, "We were overwhelmed by the interest from the PR and marketing communities to come to a live conference to discuss and learn about topics that focused on the present and future and look forward to producing it again in 2022."

GLADSTONE WORKS \$1.2B BEAUTY CO SPAC

[Gladstone Place Partners](#) is handling the \$1.2B three-way business combination of Obagi advanced skin care company, Milk Makeup vegan brand and Waldencast Acquisition Corp. SPAC to create a global beauty and wellness platform.

Obagi is a leading player in the fast-growing dermo-cosmetic space, ranking as the No. 1 doctor-dispensed brand for treating acne, premature aging, sun damage and discoloration.



Milk Makeup markets more than 300 cruelty-free, vegan and clean formula products that are sold in Sephora and other retail outlets.

Waldencast is led by CEO Michel Brousset, who was group president of L'Oreal North America consumer products, and COO Hind Sebti, a veteran of L'Oreal and Procter & Gamble.

Gladstone Place Partners' Steve Lipin and Christina Stenson represent Waldencast.

ZUCKERBERG'S EMPTY METAVERSE

Facebook's name change to Meta has been derided and pilloried worldwide. *New Yorker* contributor Charles Duhigg called it "a desperation play," and kicked off an interview with CNBC by saying it was like Philip Morris telling the Surgeon General that instead of changing cigarettes, they were going to create a theme park called, "Tobacco Adventure Land," and "hope everyone stops remembering that these cigarettes are actually unhealthy for you."



Duhigg's theme-park analogy is reflected in one of the first Metaverse commercials out of the chute in a new campaign, depicting Henri Rousseau's famous painting "The Fight of a Tiger and a Buffalo" (1909). As the action begins, instead of ripping through the hapless buffalo's neck as it is doing in Rousseau's realistic painting, the tiger starts petting him, its fearsome claws unsheathed. At the end of the commercial, they are rocking out companionably to a catchy beat.

Is this what Metaverse promises? Distortion of reality, alteration of the created and built world so that nothing is frightening, or unpleasant, or offensive? That predators don't kill for food, or that Kim Jong Un is just an ambitious young man and those DPRK missiles are actually carrying daisies?

Or, are we the buffalo and Zuckerberg the tiger?

Bill Huey is president of Strategic Communications and the author of Carbon Man (Kindle, 2010).

FLORIDA CO. SEEKS PR FOR CAREGIVERS

Florida's Pinellas County is looking for a firm to develop and launch an early childhood public awareness campaign to educate parents and caregivers of kids from birth to three about critical developmental milestones in their lives.

The goal is to take advantage of everyday opportunities to help "build a baby's brain," according to the RFP.

The selected firm will promote things such as face-to-face interactions between adult and child for bonding; responding to "baby talk" with real words, exaggerated tone of voice, higher pitches; and incorporating songs, stories, reading, play during diaper changes, meals and bath times.

The PR contract will run for four years, with a \$125K budget set for Year One.

Proposals are due Nov. 30 at rfp@jwbpinellas.org.

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

MERCURY HIRES CAPITOL HILL VET HERSEY

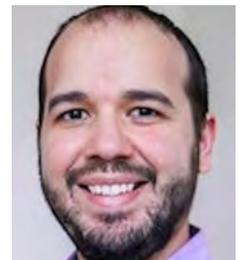
Eric Hersey, who was communications director for the House Committee on Financial Services under chairwoman Maxine Waters, has joined Mercury.

He helped shape messaging for issues such as consumer protection, housing affordability and availability, diversity and inclusion, technology and pandemic response. Earlier, Hersey served as communications director for the National Community Reinvestment Coalition.

He began his political career in the offices of New York Senators Hillary Clinton and Kirsten Gillibrand.

Charlie King, Mercury partner, said Hersey will prove a "major boost to our media relations practice."

Omnicom owns Mercury.



Eric Hersey

GALLAGHER ADVISES POLAND ON DEFENSE

The Gallagher Group has inked a \$27,500 monthly retainer pact to provide strategic counsel and tactical planning advice to Poland's minister of defense to further US-Poland ties.

The Alexandria, VA-based firm will take on issues that arise in relation to Poland-US defense relations and provide the MOD crisis communications support, if requested.

Gallagher will also conduct outreach to US government officials and non-governmental groups on behalf of the MOD.

Poland is currently locked into a standoff with neighboring Belarus over the fate of thousands of migrants from the Middle East.

Gallagher's contract with Poland went into effect on Nov. 5 and runs through Feb. 5.

It will automatically renew for another three months, unless the MOD decides to end the relationship.

OLSON SUCCEEDS LAMBERT AT LAMBERT

Lambert managing partner Michelle Olson is moving into the CEO slot on Jan. 1, succeeding Jeff Lambert, who will become chairman and also lead the Lambert family of companies.



Michelle Olson

Before coming to Lambert in 2019, Olson founded and led her own company, Olson Communications, for 13 years prior to its acquisition by New York advertising agency Fingerpaint, where she served on the leadership team for five years.

As CEO, Olson's responsibilities will include driving client, practice and talent growth, while also managing the agency's largest client relationships. Don Hunt, a 22-year veteran of the firm, will remain president, where his focus will be agency operations, M&A integration and client satisfaction.

Jeff Lambert will remain the firm's largest shareholder and continue to lead its vision, innovation pipeline and M&A.

Olson is "a proven agency CEO, an industry leader, and a trusted friend for over a decade," Lambert said. "I'm looking forward to Michelle's handprints on our culture, team and trajectory for years to come."

JOELE FRANK HELPS SOUTHWEST FIGHT ICAHN

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher represents Southwest Gas Holdings as the Las Vegas-based company seeks to fend off a takeover bid by corporate raider Carl Icahn.

The billionaire investor opposes Southwest's proposed \$2B acquisition of Questar Pipeline Co. from Dominion Energy. His Icahn Enterprises LP has offered to buy Southwest for \$75 per share and threatened a proxy fight at the 2022 annual meeting.

Southwest on Nov. 15 rejected Icahn's "unsolicited, inadequate, structurally coercive, highly conditional and illusory tender offer." It promised to review Icahn's slate of board nominees and announce the date of the annual meeting in due course.

Southwest, which serves Arizona, California and Nevada, generated \$3.5B in revenues and \$234M in net income for the year ended Sept. 30.

JFWBK's Dan Katcher and Tim Lynch handle Southwest Gas.

NEWS OF FIRMS

Media.Monks, a creative production company that is part of S4Capital, is merging with Italian content marketing agency **Miyagi**. The deal, which is the 11th merger or combination completed by S4 Capital in 2021., is intended to add to S4's existing content, data and digital media capabilities in Italy. Miyagi has 70 staffers in its Milan office, working with such clients as Campari Group, Danone and Red Bull. "With close to 100 Monks in the Italian market, and a clear focus on digital creative craft, I believe we will accomplish great things together," said Media.Monks CEO Victor Knapp.



MIYAGI

Hahn Public, which serves clients in the food and energy sectors, acquires science and analytics firm **Statistical Vision**. The acquisition gives the agency the ability to support clients with predictive business forecasting tools. It expands Hahn Public to a 48-person agency with combined revenues of more than \$10 million annually. "Statistical Vision's, now Hahn Stats', analytical and data visualization capabilities allow us to harness massive data sets and create trend models to better equip our clients with state-of-the-art guidance, enabling them to make marketing investment decisions with great confidence," said Hahn Public principal Jeff Hahn.

Propel, a PR software firm, adds an accessibility widget to its platform for those with disabilities—including visually impaired, blind, dyslexic, elderly, and neurodiverse individuals. The accessibility widget, created by UserWay, delivers solutions to more than 40 challenges a variety of disability communities face on traditional websites including: screen reader, dyslexia font, high contrast, keyword only navigation and others. Coca-Cola, Disney and eBay are also using this widget to make their sites more accessible and inclusive. The launch of the Accessibility Widget is the first initiative of Propel's newly formed diversity and inclusion board.

Bliss Impact, a new offering from The Bliss Group focusing on purpose-driven initiatives, is one of 10 technology and professional services companies that have joined forces to launch **purposewerx**, a global collective created to drive and scale business and social impact. The collective's members also include global purpose consultancy Innate Motion, digital marketing and design agency Matchfire, and media specialists Truth + Unity. Purposewerx says that its founding members represent a combined \$45 million in annual revenue.



purposewerx.

The Institute for Public Relations has formed a partnership with **The Commission on Public Relations Education**. Under the partnership agreement, IPR and CPRE will coordinate activities and resources, as well as pursuing 501(c)(3) status for CPRE so it can maintain independent governance of its operations. In addition, the **PR Council** will support CPRE and IPR in these efforts, lending the strength of its members to address the profession's growth and aid CPRE's role in developing curricula and standards that prepare students for professional success. "IPR has long supported the work of CPRE and we are absolutely thrilled to partner with them and work with the PR Council to help support CPRE's mission to continue to advance excellence in public relations education," said IPR president and CEO Tina McCorkindale.

COMMENTARY



There is a very good reason why AEG decided to get paid in cash rather than cryptocurrency for the naming rights of the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Cash will still be in circulation five years from now.

Singapore-based cryptocurrency platform Crypto.com is forking over more than \$700M in cold cash to AEG, owner and operator of the arena, for the right to slap its name on the home of the Lakers, Clippers basketball and Kings hockey teams.

In announcing the deal, Crypto.com chief Kris Marszalek said a few years from now people will look back at this day and think this is the moment that cryptocurrencies kind of crossed the cosmos into the mainstream.

But people may look back at this day and the amount of cryptocurrency hype and marvel at Crypto.com's hubris in putting its moniker on the world's second-most-famous arena.

Crypto.com may suffer the same "stadium curse" that afflicted another once-hyped company, CMGI, which was the darling of the dot.com era.

Andover, MA-headquartered CMGI created or invested in more than 70 companies and generated more than \$1.5B in revenues at its peak.

In 2000, CMGI struck a naming rights deal for the home of the New England Patriots NFL team. It agreed to pay \$7.6M a year for 15 years for the right to call the stadium CMGI Field.

In 2002, high-flying CMGI fell to Earth. CNN called it the "poster child for the failed dot.com era."

Gillette took over naming rights in 2002 with a 15-year deal of its own.

AEG would be wise to keep the Staples signage and promotional materials in storage. They may come in handy some day not in the very distant future.

Much ado about nothing... Apple's PR stunt of offering "self-service repair" sure got a lot of positive press.

The *New York Times* called Apple's Nov. 17 announcement "an early holiday gift" to the eco-conscious and do-it-yourselfers. The *Wall Street Journal* noted that "customers will be able to fix their own devices, starting with the mobile-phone display, battery and camera, using genuine Apple parts."

Despite the media cheering, few consumers are going to order any of the more than 200 parts and tools needed to do the most common repairs on iPhone 12 & iPhone 13.

Apple's release made it plain that self-repair is intended only "for customers who are comfortable with completing their own repairs."

Who is going to risk botching a repair job on a \$700 iPhone? A replacement screen at an authorized dealer goes for about \$235.

You can bet that Apple, which hasn't announced repair pricing, will demand top dollar for its parts and tools.

The company has the gumption to charge \$19 for a "polishing cloth" to clean displays. It does feature the company's logo to make it official in the minds of Apple fanatics.

Apple CEO Tim Cook's self-repair launch does serve the purpose of currying favor with federal regulators.

The Biden administration wants the Federal Trade Commission to issue rules barring electronics companies from restricting people from fixing their devices.

Smart move, Tim.

Charles Dickens would recognize America's dysfunctional House of Representatives. The House censured the Arizona Congressman Paul Gosar for posting a photoshopped video that featured him killing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and attacking Joe Biden.

Dickens, a chronicler of the unruly US House of Representatives, would understand knuckleheads like Gosar and his buddy, Marjorie Taylor Greene, who was stripped of her committee assignments for spreading conspiracy theories.

The People's House from 1830 to 1860 featured more than 100 violent incidents between members, including brawls, fights on the floor and duels on the street, according to Jill Lepore, author of the US history masterpiece, "These Truths."

In his "American Notes," which was published in 1842, Dickens wrote that the House was "the meanest perversion of virtuous political machinery that the worst tools ever wrought."

He said the goal of Congressmen was "to make the strife of politics so fierce and brutal, and so destructive of all self-respect in worthy men, that sensitive and delicate-minded persons shall be kept aloof." Doesn't that sound familiar?

Lepore wrote that Dickens "knew a rogue when he heard one and a circus when he saw one."

One wonders how Dickens would profile the spineless Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who has promised to give Gosar and Greene better assignments, if the Republicans flip the House.

America's democracy is no longer the envy of the world, according to a poll conducted by Pew Research.

Nearly six in ten (57 percent) of people polled in 16 countries say, "the US used to be a good example of a model democracy but has not been in recent years."

My hunch is that four years of Donald Trump in office and his subsequent undermining of the 2020 election has other countries down in the dumps over the Land of the Free.

South Korea (73 percent) was most turned off by recent political events in the US. It was followed by Canada (69 percent), Japan (67 percent), Singapore (66 percent) and Australia (64 percent).

At 32 percent, Italy took the top spot of the countries saying America's democracy sets a good example. Greece (25 percent), Spain (22 percent), UK (20 percent), Netherlands (18 percent) and France (18 percent) ranked next. Those numbers are hardly a robust endorsement of the USofA.

New Zealand, France and Greece tied at 27 percent in believing the US was never a good example to follow.

The countries rated America's technology, popular culture and military as "the best or above average" compared to other developed nations.

Two out of three respondents view America's healthcare system as "the worst" in the developed world.

—Kevin McCauley