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Communications & new media

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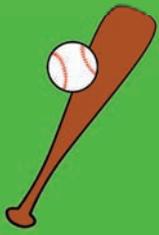
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- February: *Environmental & P.A.*
- March: *Food & Beverage*
- April: *Broadcast & Social Media*
- May: *PR Firm Rankings*
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PRSA Delegates divided on PR's future role

The more than 250 delegates at the PRSA Assembly Oct. 16 were deeply divided about what PR's role will be in 2015. The split mirrored the divide among delegates about the worth of the APR program.

A move to let non-APRs on the board for the first time in 30 years was defeated but was argued long and hard in a Society e-group. The vote was 173 against the change, with 104 in favor of it. Delegates, who were given the entire afternoon of the Assembly to discuss the future of PR, were split about the importance or non-importance of the press.

A large majority saw a decline in press size and credibility and some suggested the press is destroying itself because of lack of "fairness and objectivity."

Role of press argued

A slide summed up this view:

"News is no longer vetted [meaning subjected to thorough and diligent review] and gatekeepers increasingly are being eliminated. The concept of 'news' and its corresponding 'news values' as they have evolved over the course of nearly two centuries is being diluted if not dissolved. Much, if not most, of the content in the new media has become once again ideological with no attempt at fairness and objectivity according to the traditional concept of news and its news values."

The slide also says the new media are "creating a healthy skepticism about the truthfulness of media, refocusing responsibility on the consumers of these media." Another slide talked about the "deprofessionalization of traditional media and arguably, PR."

Several delegates objected to minimizing the role of the press and to the view expressed in another slide that said PR people must "Embrace IMC (integrated marketing communications) to reach highly distracted publics in a competitive communications environment."

The slide urged PR people to work with traditional and new media but also work with advertising and marketing to achieve "strategic goals." "Reporters are now living in different worlds where they continue to serve as experts and they represent a voice that we desperately need," said one delegate.

Another said reporters and editors are losing their jobs for one reason or another but they are learning to adapt to the new economics and technology and "will be back stronger than ever."

Mike Chersonon, 2009 Society Chair, said the New Jersey chapter held a meeting that featured an international speaker and only eight people showed up. But a session featuring reporters drew 80, he said.

Bleak job market painted

Professor Donald Wright of Boston University said the PR job market is "saturated" and that beginners are lucky to get \$35K in New York. PR people have to move around a lot to make more money, he said, because the conglomerate-owned agencies limit raises to 3% every 15 months.

A delegate said information technology was not only supplying the hardware but "taking control of content."

Another delegate said "the words public relations can't be expanded to include communications and we must deal with that."

A professor complained that college PR courses are often years behind what is happening in the marketplace because "it takes a long time to change a curriculum ... by the time the changes are made, they're outdated."

A delegate said the Society "led the way" in offering seminars and webinars on social media but that such courses now flood the internet, providing stiff competition.

Where are we now?

A delegate wanted to know how the PR study groups could talk so much about where PR will be in five years when there is no description of where PR is now. His question went unanswered.

PR pros had a firm grip on what their job was in the 1960s, 70s and part of the 80s: make as many press friends as possible and boost the image of employers and their products by obtaining "third party endorsements." Also, pick up any "skinny" the reporters might have.

Socializing by PR pros and their spouses with reporters and their spouses was the norm. Big companies had outreach programs that sent PR staffers to the desksides of editors. We were guests at more than 30 homes of PR pros and reciprocated. There was a parade of lunches and press happenings and "nights on the town."

If PR people are going to predict where PR is headed, they first must know where it has been and where it is now. Is the current model of PR better or worse than the model that was extant in the 1960s, 70s and part of the 80s? The reasons for the changes should be explored. ●

— Jack O'Dwyer



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Groups ask FCC to investigate “fake” news

By Jon Gingerich

Media watchdogs and nonprofit organizations are asking the Federal Communications Commission to take action against a new crop of reported instances of “fake” news, a practice some claim is getting worse despite ongoing Federal actions to curb it.

A series of September *Los Angeles Times* reports brought to light recent instances of spokespersons advertising products during national and regional TV broadcasts that appeared to be news. National toy manufacturers allegedly forked over as much as \$11,000 to be part of a series of back-to-school news features that aired in television markets in 10 major U.S. cities. The segments featured a “toy expert” who was actually a spokesperson paid to promote the toys. Many of the stations that aired the segments also allegedly failed to identify the segments as paid promotions.

In another case, a Los Angeles CBS affiliate aired a “Healthwatch” segment that was ostensibly a profile of area hospitals. It was later revealed that at least one of the spots was paid for by a

Los Angeles area hospital.

In response, the Free Press in late September filed a complaint with the FCC, asking the commission to take action against broadcasters that appear to be in violation of pre-existing Federal sponsorship laws. The organization also asked the commission to write new rules that would enforce stricter regulations and to create more prominent disclosure guidelines for paid segments.

The problem, some say, is getting worse. Corie Wright, Policy Counsel for the Free Press, said recent investigative reports and monitoring on behalf of consumer groups like the Free Press show that pay-for-play in news and entertainment programming is on the rise, and there’s a number of reasons for the phenomenon.

For one, TV stations are under increasing pressure in terms of both budget and a 24-hour news cycle, and will gladly take stories that come from PR shops that can fill time slots and, in some cases, supply revenue.

“The problem is, it’s not fair to consumers,” Wright said. “TV viewers want to see more reporting. When what appears to be bona fide news is actually a paid segment, when it’s *quid pro*

quo and that’s not disclosed, there’s a conflict of interest.”

Wright also noted that marketers and ad companies realize the efficacy of advertising during regularly scheduled programming. The advent of DVRs has made it possible for many viewers to skip commercials altogether, so integrating messages into popular programs is seen as a viable alternative.

“When you’re watching a commercial there’s also a certain level of skepticism, but when you’re watching a TV show and advertisements are imbedded in the plotline your guard is down and that skepticism is gone. It has a certain cognitive effect,” she said.

Finally, Wright said the use of legal, disclosed product placement is also on the rise. However, even when broadcasters abide by the rules it’s common for disclosure to be delivered in the form of a very brief message at the end of the program, sometimes in illegibly small typefaces.

‘Old news’ to the FCC

The Federal laws that govern disclosure of paid programming have been around since the 1960s. Known as Sponsorship Identification Rules, it states that broadcast and cablecasters must disclose when they’ve aired content in exchange for money.

The problem, Wright said, is the laws are seldom enforced. In perhaps the last well-publicized instance, the FCC in 2007 fined Comcast \$4,000 for airing segments on a sleep aid without disclosing that the slot was paid for by its manufacturer.

The same year the commission issued a clarification on their preexisting rules governing sponsored video content, in an attempt heighten disclosure for the increasingly popular use of video news releases and B-Roll. The FCC in 2008 held a series of hearings and took public statements regarding the matter, but appeared to drop the issue after several months. The Free Press has asked the commission to revisit these proceedings.

“If the FCC’s investigation of new instances do prove to find violations, there needs to be swift enforcement and further action. We also want the FCC to revisit proceedings and to promulgate better, clear and more prominent sponsorship identification rules so the public knows when they’re watching bona fide news content or a commercial.” ●

PN cleared of ‘propaganda’ charges

By Kevin McCauley

The General Accountability Office ruled Oct 19 that three 30-second ads created by Porter Novelli for the Dept. of Health and Human Services to promote President Obama’s healthcare law were not propaganda.

Darrell Issa, top Republican Congressman on the Committee on Oversight and Government, and David Camp, ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee, demanded a probe to see if PN’s ads featuring 84-year-old actor Andy Griffith “violated the prohibition on publicity or propaganda.”

In the ad, Griffith says “Our new healthcare law sure sounds good for all of us on Medicare ... we’ll get free check-ups, cancer screenings, lower prescription costs. And better ways to protect us and Medicare from fraud.”

In another ad, Griffith predicts changes

in healthcare law are “worth looking into.”

HHS paid \$3.3M for the production and airing of the ads. HHS placed the first ad on the main page of Medicare’s website. The three ads ran on YouTube.

The GAO ruling, written by acting general counsel Lynn Gibson, says “communications are purely partisan, if they are completely devoid of any connection with official functions and are completely partisan in nature.”

In the ads, HHS “has established a connection to official functions, that is, its responsibility to provide Medicare beneficiaries information about the program.”

Gibson concludes: “Because nothing in the advertisements constitutes communications that are purely partisan, self-aggrandizing, or covert, we conclude that the advertisements did not violate the publicity or propaganda prohibition.”

Griffith volunteered his services for the ads. ●

Denver firm forms marijuana PR unit

By Greg Hazley

Denver-based Volume PR has set up a division focused on the medical marijuana sector, a burgeoning industry pegged as high as \$14 billion.

Volume, a nine-year-old firm headed by Elizabeth Robinson, has dubbed its new offshoot Grow Room Communications.

Robinson told *O'Dwyer's* the entity was formed because the medical marijuana sector deserves the focus and attention of a separate firm, and also that the work requires comprehensive communications, from advertising and media buys to digital, where Volume has always been solely focused on PR mainly in the tech and telecom sectors.

"I felt it was most appropriate for both brands to stand apart," she said of Volume and Grow Room.

Robinson, a former Ogilvy PR and Boeing corporate communications hand, also said she didn't want to make any Volume clients "uncomfortable" with the medical marijuana side of the business, which, she noted, carries significant public "misunderstanding."

Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter signed two new laws in June to essentially codify and regu-

late a flurry of marijuana dispensaries around the state. The laws stipulate that only doctors in good standing can prescribe the drug, while outlining rules for sellers and growers.

The state's move reined in a freewheeling industry that has spawned businesses from research and medical clinics to so-called pot stores which have questionable medical merits.

"There are some businesses that are operating with the highest level of integrity and legitimacy with a focus on regulation and on wanting to do things right," said Robinson. "but I also see the news constantly and how many people are denigrating the industry by having these horrible little shops with atrocious names practicing in an atrocious way."

Robinson said because the industry is at such an early stage, an opportunity exists to create a climate and environment to provide patient care for people that are sick. According to Robinson, it's "not just trying to be a pot shop."

Among Grow Room's clients is Greenway University, a vocational school that trains people to work in the medical marijuana sector. Robinson said Colorado's Dept. of Education approached the school about becoming a licensed vocational institution after seeing its positive media expo-

sure.

"This is not just about people getting high, that's what is key. So much research and study in science is starting to be done. We're doing work with health centers with geneticists, botanists, and other serious people doing research on all of the data coming out of these clinics and centers," she said. "A lot of the public perception is that [scientific basis] doesn't exist and that's understandable because who's picking up the microphone to tell the story correctly?"

Media Briefs

PFF CLOSURES DOORS AFTER 17-YEAR RUN

The Progress & Freedom Foundation, a market-oriented think tank that analyzed digital media and its impacts, has closed its doors. The Washington, D.C. organization was founded in 1993.

Operations for the organization ceased October 1. In an online forum, one employee cited declining financial support as a reason for the closure. PFF was once funded by major media and telecom companies such as AT&T, Comcast, Sony, Verizon, and Vivendi.

"PFF will be remembered by its scores of scholars and the hundreds of participants in its programs over the years as a cutting-edge research institution that generated exciting ideas," said PFF President Adam Thierer.

PFF's mission was to educate policymakers, opinion leaders and the public on digital media and the changes associated with it, with a founding philosophy of limited government and free markets. It was the only market-oriented think tank focused on digital media when it was formed.

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Innovation, competition abounds in NYC tech scene

One of the most popular and exciting groups in the tech scene today is the community-led NY Tech Meetup. In addition to an active and resourceful bulletin board, the NYTM each month draws more than 800 to a large theatre in downtown Manhattan (lately it's been held at NYU's Skirball Center) to observe demos of up-and-coming technology from a select handful of some of the city's most aspiring digital start-ups.

By Peter Himler

Few can dispute the vitality and promise of New York's tech community after attending one of these monthly showcase events. For October's event, the energy was palpable among the sold-out audience of 900 who successfully nabbed a coveted ticket to catch an early glimpse of the next Twitter or FourSquare. They were not disappointed.

The first time I attended a New York Tech Meet-up was in April 2009, where I was both a presenter and an observer. I had the good fortune of crossing online paths with Charlie O'Donnell who was interested in the new PR search engine I helped develop. Three days later I found myself on the stage of FIT's Haft Auditorium starting out at an audience of 600 (mostly young men whose hearts and minds my co-developer and I needed to capture.

In 2009, the event had a more of a "Hell's Kitchen" feel to it, with the moderator doing his best to emulate Gordon Ramsay (I exaggerate). It was a tough crowd; there were a few presenters who were literally told to go back to the drawing board. Fortunately, our search app was well received, maybe because it did what it said it would within the allotted time.

In comparison, this month's moderator Nate Westheimer handled his duties with aplomb and compassion. When one presenter lost her Internet connect midstream, Nate assuaged the terror she no doubt was feeling with a few reassuring words and an extension of her time on stage. I suppose he also could have reminded her of how Steve Jobs lost his Internet connect during the first public demo of the iPhone4.

Much of the growth of New York's tech community has to do with the commitment the city's universities, and by extension its graduates, have made to exploring and expanding digital's impact on society. Considerable credit also must go the Bloomberg Administration, which had the foresight to support and bolster New York's vibrant tech community all along the way.

At this week's meet-up, Robert Steel, the city's new Deputy Mayor for Economic Development (and the only one in the house wearing a suit and tie), took

the podium to kick-off the second year of NYC BigApps2.0 whereby the city will reward \$20,000 to "the developers of the most creative, best implemented, and impactful applications for delivering information from the City of New York's NYC.gov Data Mine to interested users."

As for the applications and social media-fueled services presented Tuesday evening, there were several that struck a resonant chord with this PR blogger. The first was Introspectr, a search engine, which "makes it easy to find messages, documents, and links from every part of your online life." The engine indexes everything in one's Facebook and Twitter streams, as well as one's Gmail (attachments too) to allow those forgetful users among us to find even the most vague recollections from your digital travels.

There's also Solvate, an on-demand sourcing solution for companies seeking qualified freelancers. It had kind of an elitist Doostang feel to it, i.e., no slouches need apply, but the site is clean and matching mechanism efficient. For the volunteers among us, the team at CatchaFire created a smart way to put one's skills to work for good causes, and in so doing quantify the value of the work to the organization.

Finally, there's Amie Street, whose Co-Founders Elliot, Eli and Josh I first met during their senior year at Brown. Amie Street developed an idea for a music e-commerce site exclusively for independent artists that had a novel sales model: the community determined the price of the tune, i.e., the song prices rose based



A local start-up demos its newest technological offering at the October 12 New York Tech Meet-Up.

Photos by Peter Himler



The October Meet-Up at NYU drew a packed house.

on popularity.

Amie Street in September was acquired by Amazon, which shuttered the site, but allowed its founders to apply their considerable energy and talents to Songza, an easy way to create and share with friends your own Internet radio station. According to Elliot, Songza has more than 8.5 million songs in its database.

Peter Himler is Principal of Flatiron Communications LLC in New York, and President of the Publicity Club of New York. He is author of the blog *The Flack*, which can be found at: <http://theflack.blogspot.com>. ●



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FTC cracks down on “green” advertising claims

Advertisers and marketers that boast the environmentally-friendly aspects of their products can expect to be held to a stricter standard on what words and images they’ll be allowed to use, if recent changes proposed by the Federal Trade Commission become policy.

By Jon Gingerich

The FTC in October produced an updated draft of its Green Marketing Guides, which affect product claims, as well as packaging design, seals and certifications that purport an environmentally-friendly product. The revised Guides — updated for the first time since 1998 — are intended to help marketers “avoid making misleading environmental claims,” according to a press release issued by the FTC.

By establishing a universal, industry-standard language for “green” terms, and by eliminating blanket, often unsubstantiated claims commonly used by manufacturers and advertisers, the new rules aim to weed out much confusion for consumers and marketers regarding products that allege specific environmental benefits.

Especially taken to task are ambiguous terms such as “eco-friendly” and “renewable.” According to the FTC release: “Very few products, if any, have all the attributes consumers seem to perceive from such claims, making these claims nearly impossible to substantiate.”

The changes also include new guidance on marketers’ use of product certifications and seals, common packaging emblems that promise a “renewable” product or one that aids in “carbon offsetting.” The proposed updates state that products promising to be “green” cannot use seals and certifications on packaging unless those claims are substantiated. The Guides suggest that manufacturers not display seals at all unless they belong to a qualified certification.

Finally, the proposed Guides serve as a yardstick for marketers on how consumers are likely to comprehend common “green” terms. Consumers purchase products with preexisting expectations in words like “renewable,” according to the FTC, so marketers should be clear to tell consumers exactly how the product is thus. If the product or its parts were manufactured using fossil fuels, the FTC advises the product to drop any “renewable” claims. If a product is listed as “degradable” for example, it must decompose under natural conditions

in a year.

Similarly, if a product promises “carbon offsetting,” the new Guides suggest marketers disclose if the offsetting will occur within the next two years, and not to advertise any alleged offset if the law already requires the manufacturer to do so.

Ad industry responds

The FTC is currently seeking public comment on the proposed changes to the Guides, which will continue until December. If adopted, the Guides will be just that; they will not be Federal law. However, the FTC can enforce the Guides and fine violators under Section 5 of the FTC act.

The FTC first began its regulatory review of the Guides in early 2008. They began with a series of workshops to discuss renewable energy credits, to look at popular “green” packaging design and to discuss how its terminology had changed over the years.

Consumer rights groups have been pushing the FTC to update its Green Marketing Guides for years. They hope the proposed updates will curb potentially deceptive marketing tactics, practices that amount to “greenwashing,” or the art of touting products or public policy that deceptively pose as environmentally-friendly for their demand among consumers.

The ad industry however, hasn’t been as cooperative. Ad agencies went on record in 2008 stating they didn’t want the FTC to update the Guides. A 10-page commentary jointly submitted to the FTC by the American Advertising Federation, the American Association of Advertising Agencies and the Association of National Advertisers made the industry’s feelings clear:

“Any significant changes to these well-accepted Guides ... would be impractical, if not impossible to implement and could have a chilling effect on advertisers’ ability to communicate important and valuable information to consumers.”

But not everyone in the industry agrees.

“It’s disappointing,” said Valerie Davis, Co-Founder and CEO of EnviroMedia, an Austin, TX-based advertising and PR

agency that specializes in green marketing and social marketing campaigns to improve the environment and public health. “I don’t understand why my industry would not want to update the Guides, just for the simple fact that they could avoid any future mishaps. If I was a green-washer, I’d like to know how far I could push things.”

Davis said the new updates are a good first step in curbing deceptive advertising practices, but it also protects the industry. To date, the FTC has taken legal action against at least six companies that have made false “green” claims.

“We’ve seen an explosion of green marketing since ’07, and it’s a great business but so much of it is a crock,” Davis said. “I think the updates will make great reference tools because the truth has been stretched way too far. They have to wonder: how far can they ethically or legally take it?”

Consumers must educate themselves

In a joint collaboration with the Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, EnviroMedia in 2007 launched the Greenwashing Index (greenwashingindex.com), an online tool that educates consumers on the veracity of an ostensibly “green” products’ claims.

Users can submit advertisements with environmental claims and then rank them, lauding honest products and deriding misleading ones on a “greenwashing scale” of one (authentic) to five (bogus). The site also educates consumers on what to look for in “green” product claims.

In 2008 environmental group Greenpeace launched a similar site, Stop Greenwash (www.stopgreenwash.org), to educate consumers on possibly deceptive greenwashing campaigns.

In a 2009 study, EnviroMedia found that one in three consumers admitted they couldn’t tell if a purportedly “green” product’s claims are true, roughly a quarter of consumers judge a product’s claims solely by reading its packaging and one in 10 admitted to “blindly trusting” a product’s environmental claims.

Perhaps most telling, the EnviroMedia study found that in spite of the economy, consumers continue to buy roughly the same amount of allegedly “green” products. The conclusion? Advertisers and marketers know how their products are made, but they also know how important a “green” designator can be.

“It seems to matter that much to many consumers,” Davis said. ●

Tech improvements spark monitoring advancements

By Greg Hazley

As technology improves, the scope and volume of content that monitoring services can process is rising exponentially, in some cases to staggering numbers.

In the case of traditional outlets like broadcast TV or radio, the speed of search results and depth of tracking have greatly increased, while the rapidly expanding ocean of content in social media has forced monitoring companies to retool infrastructure and keep pace with the flood.

In either case, the tech-wrought versatility has opened up new markets for PR services providers that invested in infrastructure and, in the case of social media, saw the boom coming.

Broadcasting monitoring company Critical Mention, in October, released a major upgrade to its CriticalTV monitoring platform, 4.0, which tracks television content in the top markets across the country. Its capabilities are now such that it ingests 27 hours of media every 60 seconds. That's more media per minute than YouTube is getting uploads per minute, which is close to 24 hours per minute, noted CEO Sean Morgan.

"We are getting much deeper with clients than was typical," said Morgan. "They are tracking their management, boards, products, competitors, but also their legal issues, lobbying, human resource issues."

Technological improvements are meeting client demand, meaning more data can be searched more rapidly. In addition to the speed of queries, key additions to the new platform from CM are the ability to vary the scope of a search from a single TV market to a global search, on-the-fly editing of video clips which lets users choose the start and finish of a clip based on the transcript text of what's being said, as well as email and RSS alerts for mentions.

Allowing users to vary the scope by market also allows Critical Mention to open a wider pool of potential clients beyond its 600-plus client base. Such a strategy has fueled growth of tech-savvy PR services start-ups like Vocus, which have used the small business market as a vast opportunity to gain customers overlooked (and priced out) by rivals.

"Because we have this capability of really 'narrowscoping' results, we're also able to accommodate any entity's budget and needs," said Morgan. A small non-profit in Hawaii, for example, could subscribe to content only in the Hawaii DMA. A politician could buy a package from his local

markets and, perhaps, adjacent states.

Morgan said the versatility has opened up its services to regionally focused, boutique PR firms as well, where in the past, only larger agencies could afford the services of big monitoring shops.

Social media at an inflection point

The spike in volume of data is attributable both to increased adoption by the public, as well as the transition from companies and brands from a listening pattern to more engagement.

"We started to realize that the application we have was not going to be able to scale with that," said Geoff Farris, Executive VP of Visible Technologies, a social media monitoring and consulting company. "As all of this data started coming in, we realized that we were at this inflection point and a lot of the applications that are out there are going to hit a wall. We decided we need to build something that would take on this challenge."

Farris said there were three key challenges to building a new platform essentially from the ground up.

First, the global nature of communications today makes multiple language translation necessary. "It's a global problem that people are trying to solve, not just a local,

traditional problem," said Farris.

Second, a monitoring platform has to be scalable to the huge volumes of data. "Ten billion posts for Twitter this year, Facebook creating this massive amount of data — we had to be able to make sure we could scale," he said.

Finally, tracking the data alone is no longer the end of expectations for monitoring platforms. Clients, whether it's a PR department or a sales division, are looking for specific information and tone. Sentiment is now key. "We built the application to surface things so that you're not just staring at a screen and the data is just flying by you in a river," he said. "That's not acceptable."

Technology was key to incorporating sentiment into Visible's new platform. The company has used five years of data which had been manually scored by staffers to "teach" its computer models to gauge sentiment, a move which takes the human element out of the process and provides a more automated and accurate method.

Farris added that the other key to adding value to monitoring data is allowing it to be integrated into other data sources, essentially letting a client take its social media data and plug it into other information like sales outcomes. ●

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Putting your best foot forward with social media

The evolution of public relations in the business-to-business market has taken more interesting curves this year than many of the pitches thrown during the baseball season.

By Lois Paul

The stakes of the game have certainly changed in recent years, with the use of social media and digital channels like blogs, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn becoming core elements of most communications programs in this market segment. It became clear in early 2010 that regardless of how extensively you plan to use these channels and other social technologies, every company needs to be at the very least monitoring and actively listening to the discussions. Many organizations are now taking the next step by acting on what they hear to create true two-way engagement.

The curve ball being thrown at PR is the fact the B2B buying public relies less on the media translators — traditional or otherwise — for information that helps with purchasing decisions. The trade and business media are still important audiences for all companies selling into the B2B market, but are no longer the primary channels.

The shrinking number of media outlets and technology-focused reporters has accelerated the replacement of external media as the preferred communication and publicity channel for companies. Buyers increasingly seek and expect in-depth, unbiased peer reviews and lab tests of products and technologies, particularly since many B2B products and services are big budget items requiring major investment and change within their companies. The thirst for more intricate product information and reviews is a direct result of the pressure being placed on decision makers who need to rapidly deliver a clear and measurable return on the investments they recommend.

Take the B2B technology market. The power of online information and product reviews when it comes to technology decisions means IT buyers are approaching purchasing decisions like everyday consumers, who have become quite comfortable checking peer review sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp — or their own Facebook news feeds — before booking a hotel or making a restaurant reservation. Big technology investments have a huge impact on corporate budgets and companies' ability to meet strategic goals — not to mention the ability to make or break the

career of the IT executive writing the check. It is critical to these executives to feel confident they are obtaining objective, reliable reviews and pertinent information from peers about the products or services they are considering.

PR as trusted navigator

This opens up a great opportunity for tech companies to communicate directly with current and prospective customers using social media channels. The challenge for these companies is selecting the right communications partner to help them effectively navigate this change. There are two extremes that seem to be vying for this role. The first are the tools and services being heavily promoted by self-professed digital experts — whether they are the solo practitioners who promote themselves on Twitter 24/7, or the self-branded digital agencies that are offshoots of advertising, PR firms or independent boutiques.

Recently, some nontraditional providers have entered the fray, including technology industry analyst groups, who increasingly are offering social media seminars and services. Even traditional management consulting firms have jumped on the social media/social technology bandwagon, including Booz Allen Hamilton, who co-sponsored the recent PRSA international conference to help market and highlight its own social media/government 2.0 and healthcare engagement practice areas and services.

It's certainly important to understand how to use social media tools, but what is most important before using technology to engage with information-hungry customers is to establish goals that align with overall business objectives and create a strategy based on your current reputation within the industry. Then, determine how to fully integrate your social media efforts with the other marketing efforts — both outbound and inbound — that are driving your leads, Web traffic and sales.

Animated Facebook Pages and flashy microsites are nice, but companies need to develop credibility by telling their story both in an authentic way and via the appropriate social channels. And, these efforts should appeal to the buying public and

influencers so they ultimately want to not only subscribe to and receive your social media content on a regular basis, but also comment upon and share your content with others.

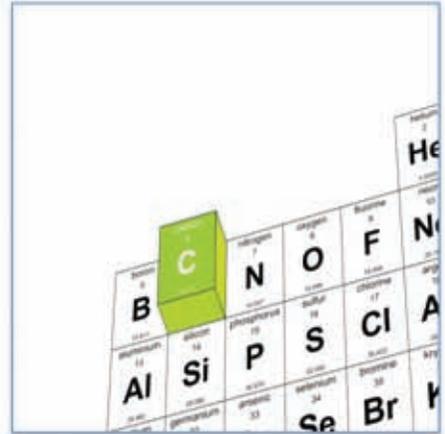
Before being dazzled — or frightened — by consulting groups or digital tools experts offering conflicting views about what you need to do in the brave new world of social media technology, companies should start with their existing public relations teams. Why? PR professionals continue to prove they are the best equipped to manage the strategic and tactical demands of social media. PR teams are also adept at ensuring these programs are fully integrated with your firm's marketing, external and internal communications efforts.

After all, PR currently serves as the voice of the company and the group that shapes, presents and guards the corporate reputation in the market. Public relations by definition should have the most holistic view of the company and its constituents, and therefore represents the safest route to selecting, managing and deploying a fully integrated, effective social media program.

More importantly, the best PR professionals counsel company executives on what not to do and where not to invest as much as they recommend courses of action and expenditures of resources. They don't have a new agenda here. Managing communications strategy and channels are simply an extension of PR's current goals and traditional role.

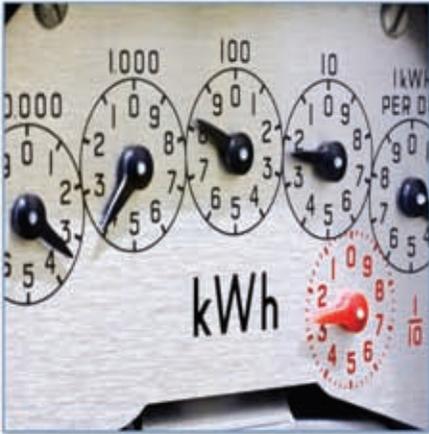
As business to business companies recognize this new and valuable opportunity to engage directly with their customers — and the need ensure their audience doesn't become frustrated by their efforts — it's also important to avoid the marketing hype and education fatigue created by the endless stream of free Webcasts, seminars and strategic plans emanating from everyone but their current PR counsel. Look first to the communications professionals in PR who are already guiding and protecting your reputation today rather than risk wasting time and money by bolting on another siloed program or adopting an unproven approach that will never integrate and only distract from your overall PR and marketing programs. This will ensure that you avoid those wild pitches and errors like you'd expect from a championship-caliber team.

Lois Paul is President and Founder of Lois Paul & Partners in Woburn, MA. ●



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Personalization: new content, audiences, strategies

Technology PR has undergone dramatic changes in the past decade, but arguably the biggest shift affecting consumers, clients and communicators today is its increasingly subjective and mobile use.

By Tony Sapienza

Take a moment to look around you and think about the technology that's touching your life. There's the device you're using to read the news: a desktop computer or (increasingly more likely) a laptop or a smartphone. There are probably messages, tweets and email alerts popping up on your screen. There may be windows running in the background with a half-written blog post, a web page for your favorite shopping site, your Facebook page or a YouTube video sent by a colleague.

Some in tech PR might recall the days when technologies we were asked to publicize were far from our reach — massive computers used only by technical professionals, software used by database specialists and design engineers. Those technologies haven't disappeared, but for tech PR folks there's a much broader landscape with more technology we, as business and personal consumers, can relate to. Around the time of the iPad launch, one telco industry watcher talked about the "15 screens" in the average home — PCs, TVs, phones, gameplayers, iPods, etc. — and opined that there's still an opportunity for more (how about a hybrid PC/TV/entertainment device for the kitchen?).

This personalization of technology has had significant implications on the practice of tech PR, opening new doors in terms of the audiences we target, the content we develop and the channels we use.

Here's a review of some of the changes we're seeing:

Less technical content. Because technology has more impact on mainstream users, we're adapting and extending our message — writing news releases and pitching media with less-technical readers in mind. For example, there's the provider of Internet security solutions who began crafting releases and pitches for gamers, parents and seniors.

Issues-driven PR. Increasingly, we're looking beyond technology topics and finding ways to connect tech products with mainstream trends and news devel-

opments. Consider one developer of full body scanners speaking out on safety and privacy concerns around these devices during the summer travel season.

Data-driven PR. With a more mainstream focus on technology, PR people are finding more opportunities to leverage consumer surveys and user data to create visibility and thought leadership. An example: a provider of mobile data services releasing findings on how consumers feel about mobile broadband.

Mainstream PR strategies. In the past, most tech PR was relegated to lengthy news releases, pitches to technology trade publications and the placement of technical articles. Today, we're taking our lead from PR professionals in areas like public affairs (a maker of power semiconductors speaking out on environmental issues) and consumer products (a provider of local online coupons going into local communities to focus on restaurant and shopping deals). These are strategies that were unheard of in tech PR a generation ago.

Technology in the mass media. Increasingly, we're seeing technology on the front pages of newspapers (the few that still print pages), discussed in radio talk shows and featured on television programs. A few months ago, Pew research released findings of a report that showed technology second only to crime as most reported news items — surpassing topics like religion and immigration (the biggest single tech storyline: texting while driving). Not that many years ago, you wouldn't see this kind of interest in technology companies and topics.

Proliferation of mobile devices. At a recent industry event, I heard some surprising mobile market figures: every 30 minutes nearly 23,000 mobile subscribers are added, and more than 73,000 cell phones are shipped (14,000 of them smartphones). Over the next five years, we can expect to see a 4000% increase in data traffic. Mobile devices, applications and data are not only technologies the PR is being called on to promote — it's also providing new channels to do our jobs.

During the hour-long presentation I was able to use my Blackberry to check email, text a team member and browse the net to get info on one of the speakers. At a recent trade show, I've been able to access photos of the editor I was planning to meet, text my client when the editor arrived and later check for coverage.

Media consolidation. While not directly impacted by the personalization of technology. The consolidation of tech media is creating new opportunities for a form of personalization — citizen journalism, with PR people often playing the role of the citizen. It's no secret that PR is transforming in the age of media consolidation, and the movement in tech PR is clearly toward content PR. Increasingly, tech PR professionals are supplementing traditional media relations — or sidestepping it altogether — and developing blogs, podcast, tweets and other forms of self-published content.

Social Media. A fitting final note deals with the topic just touched on: the adoption of social media. By now we should all be using forms of social media — blogs, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn — but the personalization of technology has created an even great need to incorporate these channels into our PR strategies, as they are often the most effective way to reach a mainstream audience. And, it's not just PR people using social media — yet another example of the personalization of technology was a news report earlier this year when the Pope went public to encourage priests to use social media to reach the masses.

While there's been this unprecedented evolution in technology personalization, one characteristic of this market hasn't changed — the incredible pace of new developments in technology markets. This has always made the tech space a standout for the PR profession, which thrives on change.

In fact, the pace of change in technology has accelerated dramatically in recent years, giving PR people not only new areas to focus their energies, contacts and experiences, but new tools to tell our story.

And with the personalization of technology, putting those tools, energies, contacts and insights to work makes life much more interesting for tech PR professionals.

Tony Sapienza is Principal and Partner of Topaz Partners in Woburn, MA. ●

Being social, when transparency isn't an option

By Dan Greenfield

Social media engagement is challenging enough in today's 24/7, always-on environment. But what if you faced added restrictions on what you could say and how open you could be? How would you gain an edge? How would you effectively engage your customer? The answer is integration and alignment.

Consider, for example, what PR and marketing professionals in the pharmaceutical, healthcare or biotech (PHB) industry are doing to address the issue of transparency.

Collaborating to address regulatory limitations, marketing goals and the public's growing expectation for open conversations is invaluable for any professional managing a social media engagement strategy.

Granted, the PHB field is unique. FDA and privacy advocates severely limit what PHB companies can communicate about clinical trial subjects, safety, and drug, biological or medical device manufacturing data via social media.

Ignoring restrictions is not an option. Nor is disengaging when 61% of American adults look online for medical information, according to a 2009 report by Pew Internet and the American Life Project.

And as Social Media Practice Lead for Accenture Interactive, Jason Breed points out, "Consumers are not bound by regulations in the way they communicate. They are free to discuss their healthcare issues with anyone they want."

That's the experience of blogger Allison Blass in writing about her life with Type 1 diabetes: "Information from pharmaceutical companies is very dry and very clean. I deal with these restrictions by relying on first-hand accounts, so I link to other patient blogs or posts on forums."

Carly Kuper, Director of Communications at Digitas Health, acknowledges that social media can be problematic for marketing and PR professionals.

"With social media, we have more tools at our fingertips, there also are more ways to screw up. Social media makes us all more accountable," she said.

Collaboration, alignment, integration

Most marketing and PR professionals don't face these same challenges, but all companies confront the issue of transparency at one time or another. So what can PR and marketing professionals learn

from companies in the PHB industry about engagement? That's where collaboration and integration comes in.

AstraZeneca Associate Director of Interactive Media Gigi Peterkin says it best: you must "first align internally to execute externally." In tapping Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and blogs as AstraZeneca does to reach patients and the caregiver community, "you need to recognize the need for quick turnarounds, identify the 'voices' of your company, tailor communications, and regularly update policies."

The collaboration process often involves working with software tools. There are plenty out there. AstraZeneca uses an employee Yammer network. As the "Twitter for businesses," Yammer, an enterprise microblogging tool, allows real-time employee engagement in a secure environment involving information systems, security, legal, communications departments in key areas of compliance.

The tools themselves are only part of the equation. You need an overall strategy in managing online properties. The following considerations have helped guide AstraZeneca's collaboration efforts.

- Determine who in your organization drives the strategy and build a network of

SMEs to implement it.

- Establish a detailed approval process for content development and information sharing.

- Be open on social media sites about the approvals process.

- Use approved language where possible, securing legal approval as needed to expedite content development.

- In a 24-hour news cycle, speed is important and an approvals protocol is key to ensuring efficient content generation.

These considerations, combined with the right tools, will help balance competing interests of government, customer and marketing. It can minimize the risks of engagement and maximize your impact.

Your company's approval process may be less restrictive, but that doesn't mean you can't benefit from looking at the steps your organization should take to better engage with external audiences. Being prepared can only help you benefit from both expected and unexpected challenges of today's social media environment.

Dan Greenfield is a media consultant and Producer of PR+MKTG Camp, an interactive conferences focused on helping PR and marketing professionals integrate social media engagement strategies. ●

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The difference between communication and engagement

In today's competitive business environment, just having a communications plan isn't enough. More companies are relying on dynamic platforms that deliver measurable results under any circumstance.

By Douglas Rozman

It's Monday morning. You're on the way to work — checking emails, voicemails and keeping track of today's "new" priorities. Sound familiar? This phenomenon of shifting priorities due to crises, unforeseen events, or even the boss' whims, can derail the best laid plans and limit our proactive contribution to business objectives.

According to a Towers Watson Communication ROI Study, high-performing organizations are 2-3 times more likely to have a documented communication strategy than low-performing organizations. In today's competitive business environment however, having "a plan" is not enough. It must be a dynamic platform that delivers measurable business results under any circumstances.

While we're busy putting out fires, the organizational landscape continues to shift around us. Baby Boomers are retiring and incoming Millennials will comprise nearly 50 percent of the workforce by 2014, according to *Harvard Business Review*. This new class of employee has very different communication preferences and intrinsic motivators than its predecessors. Today's workforce is also more-mobile and harder to reach, influenced by a 75% increase in flexible work arrangements since 2005.

Additionally, the prolonged recession has put new pressure on corporate overhead functions to contribute directly to business performance. "CEOs and business leaders increasingly see all functions within an organization through an ROI lens. As they allocate precious resources in response to funding requests, they are thinking about bottom-line impact, not feel good programs" says Jim Ivey, an internal communication executive in the financial services sector.

What does all of this mean for communicators?

First, we should consider why organizations invest in internal communications and determine where we can have the greatest impact. We can start by looking at functions that directly contribute to business results, like sales. Or support roles, such as customer service, that are held

accountable for "hard" metrics like customer satisfaction. As communicators, we too need to create a similar link with business success.

We can start by re-adjusting our focus toward influencing employee actions. Traditional communication objectives like increasing awareness, knowledge and commitment, while important, stop short of action. I recall a situation within a large financial services enterprise, where we created metrics related to increasing employee traffic to the Intranet. When asked by a senior executive how that supported business growth, we said it would improve employee understanding of the company's strategies. He then asked, "And what will that cause them to do?"

Most companies view employee engagement as the embodiment of focused employee action in support of business objectives. According to global consulting firm BlessingWhite, "Engaged employees are more productive, profitable, and customer-focused. They have a line-of-sight on their own future and on the organization's mission and goals. They are 'enthused' and 'in gear' using their talents and discretionary effort to make a difference in their employer's quest for sustainable business success."

It's not the mere existence of a world-class "rewards and recognition" program that engages employees. Rather, it's the targeting and customization of the content through various forms of communication that activates and strengthens engagement.

By fully integrating engagement into communication planning, strategy, tactics, content, delivery and measurement can be shaped by an engagement lens to more directly influence employee productivity. This strategic linkage creates an exciting opportunity for communicators to connect their activities to business performance. And by driving employee action, the effectiveness of communication is increased substantially.

Consider this checklist to determine if your communication plan is optimized to drive employee action, engagement and business results:

Have you reviewed your current com-

munication goals? Are they focused on facilitating behaviors or actions that help achieve company strategy, or on increasing employee knowledge of the strategy? For example, are your metrics for measuring employee contributions based on improving knowledge scores from an employee survey? Or, are you measuring progress on specific behaviors?

Have you identified your "drivers" of effective communication (timeliness, relevance, etc.)? Do you know how they are weighted by different groups such as corporate staff versus a call center? At a leading discount brokerage, a targeted focus on the drivers yielded a 41% increase in satisfaction with communication and a nearly 20% increase in employee engagement.

Have you segmented your workforce functionally and by demographic profile? Do you understand their communication preferences and key motivational factors, i.e. how different segments prefer to receive information and what engages employees in each group?

Are you delivering targeted and customized communication based on employee preferences and motivational factors? For an issue like increasing customer fees, are sales and customer service staff treated as priority audiences? Do they receive exactly what they need to operate effectively?

How connected is your communication plan to employee engagement? Are you still "promoting" the engagement concept and tactical initiatives related to an engagement survey? Or, have you mapped communication activities to motivational factors and found a way to influence content?

Creating communication plans and programs that reach, motivate and engage today's workforce is increasingly challenging. But, the stakes are high for communicators to deliver more relevant and measurable results to their organizations. For communication to directly impact business success, it must be adapted to changing employee preferences and motivational factors, and linked with engagement. So, remember what time management expert, Alan Lakein says: "Planning is bringing the future into the present so you can do something about it now." And, there's no time like the present to build an action-orientation into your communication strategy and begin reaping the rewards.

Douglas Rozman is Founder and Managing Principal at Communivation Consulting. ●

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Minding the store: your CEO's face here

By Ged Parton

In 1971 an iconic ad campaign debuted featuring Frank Perdue as the CEO and Spokesperson for the Perdue chicken brand. The ads included the legendary line, "It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken." Though a shy man by nature, Frank appeared in about 200 ads and signaled his personal involvement with the company by the phrase, "Say whatever you have to say, I can take it." So, what convinced Frank to be the public face of his brand and business?

Perdue was clearly committed to the success of his business and determined that the public know about his personal accountability for the product it delivered. His acceptance of responsibility is a

valuable lesson for the modern CEO and corporation.

It's widely accepted that the strength of relationship between a person and a brand or business is influenced by many factors, including planned communications such as advertising. Other factors such as consumption experience, incidental communication and competitor activity also play their part.

Within this mix of influences, some believe that the role of the CEO or other leaders can be pivotal. Synovate recently conducted a quantitative study with 100 adults in the US looking at this very issue.

Fine to be faceless?

When people rated the overall performance of a company, they said the most important factors are their recent experience (83%) and the company's service reputation (80%). Only 15% think the company CEO is important in this overall rating. Similarly, most people don't even know the CEO of their favorite company. This lack of familiarity is not surprising. In an equivalent qualitative exercise conducted simultaneously in the US and the UK, Synovate observed that few CEOs have broken into the public consciousness. US CEOs like Jobs, Murdoch, Gates, Trump and Welch are the exceptions rather than the norm.

There was one exception in the UK. Richard Branson and the Virgin brand appear to be inextricably linked in the public conscious. The narrative around Branson is positive and image building for Virgin. An often quoted story is one concerning a passenger on a Virgin flight who apparently had a bad meal experience. Branson apparently personally intervened and it resulted in a meal in a one London's finest restaurants for the aggrieved passenger.

The need to be seen

The recent Toyota incident was also much talked about in some recent focus groups Synovate conducted. In these groups, Synovate used a spontaneous association research technique called Mind Clouds to establish the current images and associations that dominate the brand.

The maps of the brand show a marked contrast between the U.S. and U.K. In both markets the positive attributes that the brand has built over many years were regularly discussed: innovative, environmental, green, quality and reliability. Of course, considering recent events, there

was some mention of the nature of the recall.

Two important points: First, in both countries it seemed people felt sorry for the company, indicating that Toyota is a good company that has suffered an unfortunate production problem. This sentiment is testimony to the goodwill built by the brand over many years. Secondly, in the U.S., Toyota's CEO Mr. Toyoda was spontaneously discussed as part of the brand.

Considering that familiarity with CEOs appears to be limited, it's interesting that there's a direct relationship between peaks in mentions and public appearances that Mr. Toyoda made to issue statements, deal with Congress and so on. Clearly there are moments when the public do care about the CEO and relate the CEO with the brand performance.

What the public wants

It's evident that people have very clear expectations at certain times. The survey showed that in response to what the CEO should be committed to, the majority stated customer service (81%) and the same number (81%) stated doing the right thing.

Indeed, it's evident that the majority want a CEO who's committed to customer service, and 66% want the CEO to personally answer for the company product or service problems in public, while only 20% want the CEO to be faceless so that the company speaks for itself.

It's clear that consumer confidence comes from knowing that someone is 'minding the store' and has ultimate oversight on what happens. For most people this confidence translates to "guarantees me the best service and experience when things go right and, more importantly, gives me the right response/approach when something goes wrong."

Personal responsibility

The need for personal ownership of service and delivery by the CEO is significant. It is fine to be anonymous for much of the time. Most people don't mind. However, particularly at times of crisis, the CEO needs to be front and center, signalling his or her personal involvement and commitment.

As one respondent put it in the context of how Virgin would have reacted to the Toyota situation: "He (Branson) would have run down the stairs himself to turn off the conveyor belt."

Ged Parton is CEO of Global Practices & Capabilities for Synovate. ●

PR news briefs

PRISM AIDS PEAS RECALL

Tennessee frozen vegetable marketer Pictsweet has brought in Prism Public Affairs to handle PR for the recall of 24,000 pounds of frozen peas recalled Oct. 15 because packages may contain glass fragments.

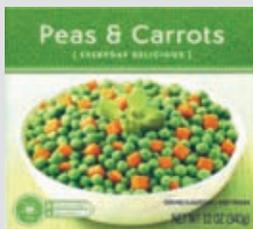
The voluntary recall includes 12-ounce packages of frozen peas and mixed vegetables distributed only to Kroger stores in the Southeast and to Wal-Mart stores throughout the country.

No injuries have been reported.

Anne Tyrrell, a senior VP at D.C.-based Prism who was previously with Blackwater and Shirley & Banister PA, and Prism partner Richard Ades, a Powell Tate alum, are handling communications for Pictsweet involving the recall.

Tyrrell told O'Dwyer's that Prism was brought in specifically to handle the recall.

The call-back follows the recall last week of eight lots of breaded okra produced by Bells, Tenn.-based Pictsweet because the product contains milk not listed on the label. An omission during the redesign of its packaging was blamed for the error, which raised concerns because some people have dairy allergies.



PR firm held liable for iTunes product reviews

By Andrew L. Goldstein

The Federal Trade Commission enforced its new guidelines on endorsements and testimonials directly against a PR agency, and its sole owner, for posting positive reviews of its client's products on iTunes. This is the first time that the FTC has enforced these guidelines.

Reverb Communications, Inc., a public relations, marketing and sales services agency that represents video game developers. The agency is solely owned by Tracie Snitker. Between November 2008 and May 2009, Reverb and Snitker posted positive reviews about their clients' games at the iTunes Store using account names that gave readers the impression the reviews were written by disinterested consumers. The posts did not disclose that the authors were connected to the producer of the video games, that they were hired to promote the games or that they often received a percentage of the sales of the games.

In December 2009, the FTC updated its Endorsement and Testimonial

Guidelines. Among other changes, the FTC's updated guidelines provided that bloggers who endorse a product or service must disclose any material connections they have with the seller of the product or service. In other words, a blogger who makes an endorsement must clearly and prominently disclose whether he/she receives cash, free products or other in-kind payments to review the product or service. If these disclosures are not made, the post is considered to be deceptive and false or misleading. In addition, the FTC specified that its guidelines apply not only to the provider of the products or services that are the subject of the endorsement, but also to the advertising or PR agency that was responsible for the endorsement, and the employees of both the agency and the provider.

On September 2, the FTC announced that it entered into a Consent Order with Reverb and its owner, Snitker. The Order provided that Reverb and Snitker were required to remove any previously posted endorsements that misrepresented the authors as independent users or ordinary consumers, and that failed to disclose a connection between Reverb and Snitker

and the seller of a product or service. The Order also prohibited Reverb and Snitker from misrepresenting that the user or endorser is an independent, ordinary consumer, and from making endorsement or user claims about a product or service unless they clearly and prominently disclose any material connections that they have with the seller of the product or service. Violations of a Consent Order may result in a penalty of up to \$16,000 per instance.

The FTC's message here is clear: any advertisement or communications messages, including blogs or other online posts, that endorse a product or service must clearly and prominently disclose whether the endorser was hired by or received any payment, free products or other consideration from the provider of the product or service. If these disclosures are not made, the provider of the product or service and/or the PR or advertising agency responsible for the endorsements, and their owners or principals, may be held liable for deceptive and false or misleading advertising.

Andrew Goldstein is a Partner at the law firm Freeborn & Peters LLP, in Chicago. ●

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Social media not just a sales channel

An Oct. 1 National Press Club panel in Washington, D.C. discussed how PR pros can integrate tools like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs into their communications strategies.

By John O'Dwyer

You can't have your entire view of social media as a place for marketing and one-off campaigns," warned Peter Waldheim, Senior Strategist for The Social Media Business Council.

"It's not just an alternative channel, but a whole new way of engaging with people and organizations that don't get that will fail and fail spectacularly because the whole thing about getting involved in social media is you need to develop an army of advocates, can't just view it as a selling channel even though that's good and can be a part of it," Waldheim said.

BP was presented as a case study of a company that suffered considerably because of a lack of involvement in social media prior to the April 20 Gulf oil spill.

Allyson Toolan, Account Executive from Adfero Group, noted how BP tried to jump in during the middle of the crisis by starting up Facebook and Twitter accounts, but unfortunately found parody Twitter accounts running in full force with three-times the following of BP's feed.

BP's Facebook strategy mirrored their traditional media efforts: they were simply pushing information out instead of interacting with followers, Toolan explained.

Not just delivering, listening

An important thing to consider is that not all social media tools work in every situation, according to Toolan. She said that you have to figure out where people are talking about you and then try to engage that audience.

James Sneeringer, director of web content for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, added a "forward to a friend" feature for articles on the Chamber's site along with a "reader comment" function. By doing this he was able to track which articles were being shared and see what the audience agreed and disagreed with.

"We were being social but not using Facebook or Twitter," Sneeringer said.

Sneeringer waited months to start using the Chamber's Facebook and Twitter accounts, preferring to spend some time joining other Facebook pages and following Twitter feeds before engaging. He explained that he wanted to get a handle on what was going on and being said in social

media before pushing out his own information.

"Often the focus is on how to deliver a message, but you must also be prepared to listen to what is going on in social media," Sneeringer said.

Sneeringer has used ads on Facebook itself to build up followers for the Chamber.

"It's an easier way to get people's contact info and then you can communicate with them rather than running a typical web banner which directs a person to your website but then you still have to get them to give you their e-mail address," Sneeringer said.

Handling critics, rumors

The panelists acknowledged that social media is a breeding ground for critics as well as fans.

Sneeringer said the Chamber was attacked on its Facebook page, but apart from removing profane comments the conversation was allowed to proceed between legitimate posters and those simply lambasting the Chamber.

Toolan noted that it's better to have these conversations happen on your own blog or Facebook page because then you can take part.

"If you've built up a good community, let it police itself," said Alan Rosenblatt, associate director for online advocacy at the Center for American Progress Action Fund.

If you need to push back, the focus should not be on convincing the attacker but convincing the unbiased trying to participate in the discussion, Rosenblatt explained.

"You want to show logically that the argument is factually incorrect or unsound and promote the work or research you've done that counters the charges or what's being said," Rosenblatt said.

Mark Drapeau, director of innovative social engagement for Microsoft, admitted that sometimes there are issues that aren't worth engaging. He continued that because Microsoft is so well known and many already have a preconceived notion of what the company is all about such as Apple fans, there's no need to get into the trenches even with influential bloggers.

"People say the cold war is done, but not when it comes to Apple vs. PC," Drapeau said.

Rosenblatt stressed that you must engage those where they choose to engage you whether it's on a blog or Facebook or you won't be effective and you'll encourage backlash.

"Consumers determine the channels of distribution, not the producers," he said.

David Faggard, Executive Officer to the Director of the U.S. Air Force Office of Public Affairs, has dealt with the rash of misinformation that often pervades the web.

He told of an incident where someone tweeted that an Air Force C17 cargo plane the length of a football field had crashed when in reality it was just doing low-level training. CNN picked up the story and ran with it on air without contacting the Air Force. The Air Force then tweeted a denial of the rumor but had to wait half a day for CNN to issue a retraction.

"Things happen so quickly in the world of social media, you don't have a whole lot of time to make a decision and implement it," Faggard said.

Faggard explained that the Air Force has acknowledged the importance of educating the lowest common denominator engaging in social media within an organization and how valuable the local perspective can be.

"You can trust an 18-year-old with the power of a nuclear weapon but you can't trust them to use Twitter or Facebook?" Faggard said.

"Ambient intimacy"

Darren Krape, Senior New Media Specialist in the Office of Innovative Engagement at the State Department, used the term "ambient intimacy" to describe how a State Department staffer connected with the students she was going to visit through Twitter prior to her trip so that when she met them in person they all felt like they knew her already.

"It was an enhanced relationship," Krape noted.

"Social media is defined as the interaction among people, not between businesses, robots, etc. It is essential that your Twitter feed has a human element," Rosenblatt said.

People will follow what you're sending out in the world of social media if it's valuable, but they'll remember it only if it's interesting and each organization approaches this differently, Faggard noted.

The event was part of a series of half-day conferences and seminars sponsored by Washington, D.C.-based Adfero Group. A seminar focusing on the new age of media monitoring is planned for late October. ●

Crowds, ideas flourish at BlogWorld Expo

By Abby Rose Dalto

The 2010 BlogWorld & New Media Expo (www.blogworldexpo.com), the first and only industry-wide conference, tradeshow and media event for new media, was the site of big crowds and bigger ideas on October 14-16 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas.

The world's largest social media conference, the three-day event kicked off with an exclusive Social Media Business Summit. The full conference continued, with more than 200 conference presenters leading sessions and conducting workshops on topics including podcast production, online marketing, how to create and improve content, how to hone writing skills, site monetization, distribution techniques and search engine optimization.

An industry-wide new media marketplace and exhibition hall hosted an extensive array of companies, products and services including publishing platforms, hosting companies, advertising networks, computer hardware and software, search engines, wireless services, aggregators, and affiliate marketing programs.

In all, the conference brought more than 3,200 attendees together to gain insights from social media thought leaders on how to gain exposure, engage with customers and grow their businesses using the latest new media technology, tools and methods and to network and connect face-to-face with potential clients and customers. More than four dozen corporations sponsored the event.

Attendees included bloggers and webmasters, online entrepreneurs, new media and communications experts, marketing directors and executives of companies ranging from small start-ups to *Fortune* 500 corporations and major networks like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Yahoo, CNN, and Fox News.

Keynote speakers included esteemed experts from various fields including Emmy Award winning producer Mark Burnett ("Survivor" and "The Apprentice"); Adam Carolla, host of "The Adam Carolla Show"; Penn Jillette, of Penn & Teller; and Mark Penn and Karen Hughes of Burson-Marsteller fame, who were the chief message architects for Presidents Clinton and Bush, respectively.

One memorable speech during the 2010 BlogWorld Expo was the work of opening keynote speaker Scott Stratten, author of the popular 2010 marketing book "UnMarketing."



Rick Calvert, CEO and Co-Founder of BlogWorld, speaks Oct. 16 at the BlogWorld & New Media Expo in Las Vegas.

Photo by Kenneth Yeung, snapfoc.us

Stratten reminded attendees to blog as often as they can. However, a blog should always contain passionate posts that deliver maximum, emotive impact. If the writer isn't feeling particularly inspired, it's best to turn off the computer and wait for another day, lest you damage the reputation of your site. In Stratten's own words, bloggers shouldn't "spread meh," they should "spread awesome."

Stratten also noted that social media sites should be seen as an embassy of any products they're selling or promoting. If the product is no good, all the social media finesse in the world won't save it

"If your product sucks, social media makes it suck harder," he said.

Beyond basic blogging

Co-Founders Rick Calvert, CEO and Dave Cynkin, CMO, first launched the BlogWorld & New Media Expo in 2007 when they realized the industry needed a blogging tradeshow.

Today, while there are numerous conferences and events devoted to blogs and social media, the BlogWorld Expo is still the only conference, tradeshow and media event of its kind dedicated solely to promoting the blogging and new media industries.

"Our attendees and our exhibitors are all telling us this is the best show we have ever had," Calvert told *O'Dwyer's*. "We are very proud that our hard work has paid off and we were able to produce a quality event worthy of our community."

As always, marketing, social media and site monetization were key topics at the 2010 BlogWorld Expo. This year, many of the sessions also focused on technologies and platforms that go beyond basic blogging and online networking, such as mobile applications, podcasts and video. ●

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The December issue of *O'Dwyer's* will feature a company profiles section on entertainment and sports PR firms.

If you would like your firm to be listed, contact Editor Jon Gingerich at 646/843-2080 or jon@odwyerpr.com

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Principal and Founder of Carabiner Communications Peter Baron.

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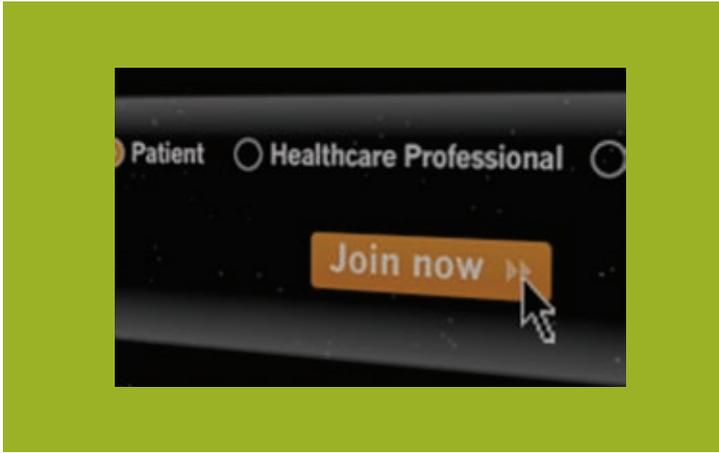
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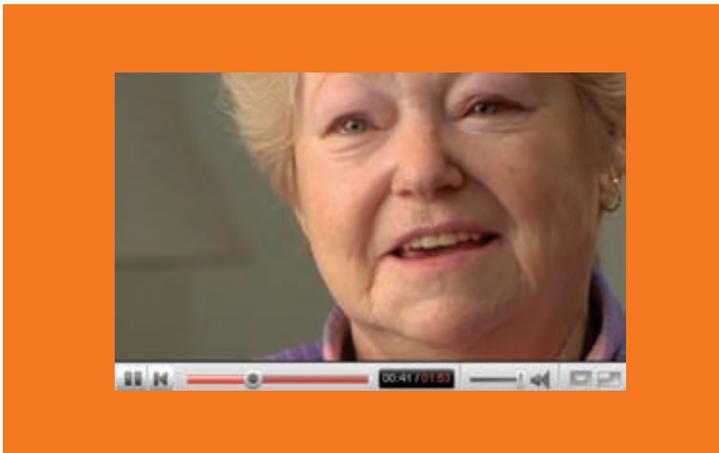


Henry Feintuch offering market entry tips to Singapore technology companies hoping to enter the U.S. The conference was sponsored by IE Singapore.

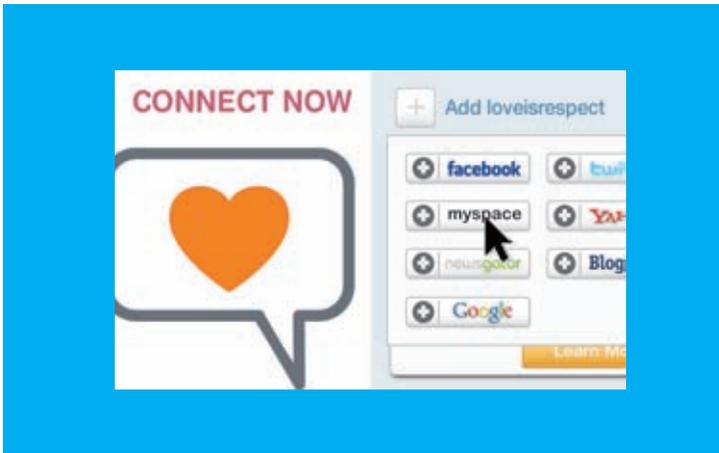
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Hunter PR's Toby Nelson demonstrates new pocket projectors from 3M at CES in Las Vegas.

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Gibbs & Soell, an independent public relations firm since 1971, has experience in a wide spectrum of technology and industrial markets ranging from consumer electronics, integrated facility controls and telecommunications products, networks and services, to e-business/new media models, software, scientific instrumentation and industrial automation equipment.

Gibbs & Soell also offers its PR counsel to businesses delivering greentech solutions which leverage technology to achieve sustainability.

Public relations services include corporate communications, marketing communications, event marketing, employee communications, leadership positioning, social networking/digital media outreach, communications research and evaluation, and communications training including I Power™, a proven, dynamic process for creating and delivering clear, concise and compelling communications.

Gibbs & Soell is a leading B2B voice online with The G&S Spark (<http://spark.gibbs-soell.com>), the agency's blog for advanced manufacturing and energy communicators.

Client Experience: ACC/ Cybersecurity Program, Chemical Information Technology Council, Molex, Nitech Corporation, PNY Technologies, Sage Software, Tridion Corporation, U.S. Robotics.

THE HOFFMAN AGENCY

70 North Second Street
San Jose, CA 95113
408/286-2611
www.hoffman.com

Lou Hoffman, *CEO*

The Hoffman Agency is an independent technology PR firm — defining technology broadly to include everything from semiconductors to software to Web 2.0 applications for consumers — with a global footprint spanning the United States, Asia and Europe. All of the Agency's offices are wholly owned and organically grown. Hoffman

excels at managing multi-country PR programs thanks to a unique infrastructure and culture that perpetuates collaboration. Toward this end, the firm leverages both thinking and content across geographies, which brings greater consistency to the program regardless of where it is initiated.

HUNTER PUBLIC RELATIONS

41 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10010-2202
212/679-6600
www.hunterpr.com
agonzalez@hunterpr.com

Grace Leong, **Jason Winocour**,
Jonathan Lyon, **Claire Burke**,
Mark Newman, **Donetta Allen**
and **Gigi Russo**, *Partners*

Hunter Public Relations is an award-winning consumer products public relations agency with deep experience in the consumer technology sector. In business for 21 years, the 75-person, independently owned and operated agency offers strategic marketing PR services including creative brainstorming and facilitation, traditional and social media relations, special event production, new product introductions, local market events, spokesperson tours and crisis counseling.

Hunter PR's experience in the tech sector has been driven by public relations campaigns as innovative as the products we represent. A strong foundation in traditional media layered with the viral power of social platforms delivers clients with the kind of hard-hitting, buzz-building placements that move product, build brands and redefine categories. In launching the world's first pocket projector for 3M and Motorola's state-of-the-art line of walkie-talkies, Hunter PR has been on the ground floor for some of the biggest developments in consumer electronics.

INK PUBLIC RELATIONS

7719 Wood Hollow Dr., Suite 155
Austin, TX, 78731
512/382-8982
www.ink-pr.com

Starr Million Baker, *Co-founder, President*
Kari Hernandez, *Co-founder, Vice President*

INK PR is the boutique agency of choice for brands big

and small in the technology and clean energy industries. INK's PR specialists bring energy, efficiency and effectiveness to every campaign, along with a deep understanding of our clients' businesses, goals and competitive environments.

INK is savvy and extremely authentic with the media and for that the press value and respect us. As a result, more than 800 tech journalists recently voted INK the best small tech agency in the U.S. in PRSourceCode's Top Tech Communicators survey.

Our big difference is we go the extra mile for our clients, always. On average, our current client base has been with us for 3+ years. They come to us and stay with us — or come back to us again from a different company — because we're smart, creative problem solvers who love what we do and it shows.

KAPLOW

19 West 44th Street, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10036
212/221-1713

Kaplow West
795 Folsom Street, 1st Floor
San Francisco, CA 94107
415/291-2937
www.kaplowpr.com

Liz Kaplow, CEO

Kaplow is an award-winning, full-service agency with deep expertise in consumer technology, mobile and Internet communications, e-commerce, software, and media.

Kaplow continues to build best-in-class technology brands such as Skype, Netflix, GSI Commerce, Coupons.com, HauteLook, CafePress, Nero and MaxPoint Interactive.

Kaplow's Kdrive social media strategies and Kstudio video production divisions work together to strategically extend client stories directly to consumers, building word of mouth and fueling conversations via social networks and other online channels.

After launching its Technology and Emerging Media practice last year,

Kaplow further bolstered its technology PR capabilities with the opening of its San Francisco office. Kaplow is now engaging offices on both coasts to take brands from interesting tech stories to mainstream consumer conversations.

K/F COMMUNICATIONS

601 Fourth St., Suite 204
San Francisco, CA 94107
415/255-6510
www.kfcomm.com

Julie Karbo & Dave Fonkalsrud, Partners

K/F Communications is a respected, award-winning PR firm specializing in technology, with an exceptional track record of establishing clients as market leaders.

From consumer products to networking and enterprise software, K/F has consistently helped to drive many of the top tech trends.

Client experience includes Digg, TwitVid, SimpleGeo, Flock, Equinix, Composite Software, Oracle, Anagran, Billeo, Covia Labs, Adility, Alacritech, Talari Networks, and the Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance.

Senior staff personally lead each account's day-to-day efforts in collaboration with client teams.

K/F employs a proprietary methodology that results in a differentiated market positioning and strategic, well executed programs that focus on our clients' specific business goals, such as increasing revenues, maximizing valuation, creating industry-leading stature for the company and executives, and attracting employees, partners and funding.

LAUNCHSQUAD

116 New Montgomery St., Ste. 620
San Francisco, CA 94105
415/625-8555
squad@launchsquad.com
www.launchsquad.com

Gavin Skillman, SVP
1375 Broadway, 27th Floor
New York, NY 10018
212/564-3665

Mike Farber, General Manager



Kaplow hosted a Skype Media Day Showcase in June 2010. During the event, Brianna Reynaud of Skype's PR team demonstrated Skype video calling on a Panasonic HDTV to Mark Spoonauer, Editor-in-Chief of LAPTOP magazine.

222 Third Street, Suite 1321
Cambridge, MA 02141
617/945-1915

Jason Mandell, Co-Founder and Partner

Jesse Odell, Co-Founder and Partner

Jason Throckmorton, Co-Founder & Partner

Brett Weiner, Partner

LaunchSquad helps emerging and fast-growing companies make a name for themselves, grow their businesses and become market leaders. The firm has 50 professionals in San Francisco, New York and Boston, and provides a suite of both traditional and digital PR services,

including video and content production. Founded in 2000, LaunchSquad was named the 2009 Boutique PR Agency of the Year and has been listed as a Top Tech Communicator numerous times by PRSourceCode. LaunchSquad works with a wide variety of innovators in software, consumer technology, media, entertainment, clean tech, mobile and infrastructure, including: 3VR, Brightroll, ClairMail, EcoFactor, Epix HD, Evernote, i365, Mochi Media, Quidsi (parent of Diapers.com and Soap.com), SCVNGR, ShareThis, Savings.com, SuccessFactors and Village Voice Media.



Led by founders Starr Million Baker (right) and Kari Hernandez (left), INK PR has flourished over the last two years with a 60% growth in staff, near perfect client retention and the addition of a clean energy practice.

View and download profiles of hundreds of PR firms specializing in more than a dozen industry areas at:
www.odwyerpr.com

LOIS PAUL & PARTNERS

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Fax: 781/782-5999
www.loispaul.com
richard_wadsworth@lpp.com

Richard Wadsworth, Vice President, Business Development

Lois Paul & Partners (LP&P) is a leading, national strategic communications agency that provides a wide range of public relations services to technology, life sciences, and clean energy companies. For 25 years, LP&P has helped small, emerging and large, established companies meet their business goals through strategic and creative PR programs, specifically tuned to each client's business goals. With a value-focused, integrity-based approach, LP&P proactively pursues opportunities that produce coverage, promote thought leadership, and disperse compelling messages to the right audiences, helping clients differentiate themselves from competitors and gain visibility and credibility in crowded markets. As a leader in social media services, LP&P also designs and maintains successful digital communications programs to help clients engage new communities of influencers. For more information, and to view current and past client lists, please visit our Website.

MAKOVSKY + COMPANY

16 East 34th Street
New York, NY 10016
212/508-9600
www.makovsky.com

Kenneth Makovsky, President
Robbin Goodman, EVP, Partner

A top independent public relations consultancy, Makovsky + Company has an award-winning reputation for its work with technology and business services companies throughout its 30 years. Services include premier business and trade media relations, digital marketing/BtoB social media programs, events and award programs, industry analyst relations, investor relations, branding and positioning. Makovsky + Company develops

strategic programs that deliver business value. Whether the focus is reputation or product driven, the firm's experienced team understands how to articulate messages and move the channels of influence, from internal committees to important external audiences. Makovsky's commitment to client delight is exemplified in its Quality Commitment Program. Measurement and accountability are integral values. Based in New York, the firm has partners in 27 countries and 37 U.S. cities. Clients include Booz & Company, Dice Holdings, Arise Virtual Solutions, Itron, Arrow Electronics, AeroCity Windpower and TransitCenter.

MATTER COMMUNICATIONS

50 Water Street
Mill #3, The Tannery
Newburyport, MA 01950
978/499-9250
www.matternow.com

Scott Signore, Principal & CEO
Patty Barry, Principal

Matter Communications, an award-winning full-service public relations agency specializing in consumer and high-technology markets, works with clients across the U.S. and Europe to deliver creative and effective programs that generate business. Matter's services include company/product launches, product reviews, analyst and media relations, online media outreach, social media, crisis communications and thought leadership campaigns. Matter Communications, headquartered north of Boston in historic Newburyport, MA and offices in Providence, RI and New York, prides itself on being a results-focused public relations organization. Among many others, clients include: ATG, CVS/pharmacy, Harris Communications, Lexar and Verizon Wireless. For more information please visit www.matternow.com.

M BOOTH & ASSOCIATES

300 Park Ave. South
New York, NY 10010
212/481-7000
www.mbooth.com

Matt Hantz, Vice President

The technology practice at M Booth & Associates partners with category leaders in a wide range of industries and disciplines, including services firms, consultancies, software developers, systems integrators and research analysts.

The firm brings a core competence in brand strategy and positioning to every campaign targeted at business-to-business audiences. M Booth works with clients to position their products and services as solutions to business needs, because IT purchasing decisions are no longer made by technology managers only. In most instances, this requires a deep understanding of the vertical industries where a technology adds value. A prime example of this is the firm's work with multiple clients in IT healthcare — in health delivery, pharmaceuticals and health plans — where the firm has been at the forefront of the discussion around electronic health records.

The practice's PR efforts were responsible for 50 percent of new business and tripling of brand awareness for a technology consulting client, as measured by a benchmarking survey of decision-making executives.

MERRITT GROUP

11600 Sunrise Valley Dr., Ste. 320
Reston, VA 20191
703/390-1500
www.merrittgrp.com

Ben Merritt, CEO
Alisa Valudes, EVP, Partner

With offices in Reston, Virginia and San Francisco, Merritt Group helps create and move markets for forward thinking companies. Merritt Group determines the right mix of communications channels — PR, marketing, digital, social media, Web — and implements strategic campaigns to make our clients' messages resonate in the marketplace. Bringing innovation and creativity to our client engagements, Merritt Group places a premium on building long-standing relationships with our clients.

Our expertise is focused in six practice areas — Enterprise Technology, Security, Communications & Networking, Government, Healthcare, and Energy / Green IT. Some of our clients include Verizon Business, Microsoft Public Sector, Booz Allen Hamilton, PGP, U.S.

Pharmacoepia, and Teradata.

RF | BINDER

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www.rfbinder.com
Twitter: @RFBinder

Amy Binder, CEO
Nancy Moss, Executive Managing Director, Boston
Gerald Kimber White, Senior Managing Director, Boston

RF|Binder stands at the forefront of the increasingly dynamic discipline of communications. The art and practice of public relations continues to evolve in the wake of the democratization of information, and we are both students and practitioners of these new strategies and tactics while remaining committed to the timeless principles of effective communication.

RF|Binder's technology practice, based in our Boston office, combines technology expertise, business acumen and communications excellence, to deliver programs that significantly impact consumer and business-buyer beliefs and behavior. We work closely with our technology clients to effectively communicate their messages through words, images, sounds and experiences. We help technology companies transcend traditional product-centric messages in a way that builds lasting market value.

Our clients run the gamut — from the world's leading multinationals to emerging venture-backed start-ups. But no matter the size of the organization, RF|Binder works with our clients to develop communications programs tailored to meet their business goals and reach their target audiences.

ROGERS & COWAN

PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER
8687 Melrose Ave., 7th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90069
310/854-8117
Fax: 310/854-8106
www.rogersandcowan.com

Tom Tardio, CEO
Sallie Olmsted, Exec. VP

Rogers & Cowan specializes in working with emerging and established technology brands whose products and services are

Continued on page 32



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Sage Communications developed an advertising and communications campaign to educate veterans on the benefits of the Post 9/11 GI Bill Veterans Assistance Act.

ROGERS & COWAN

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at the intersection of technology, entertainment and healthy lifestyles.

Our dedicated team of specialists has in-depth knowledge and experience working with consumer electronics hardware, mobile content / devices, embedded and core technologies and software, distribution technologies, video game products, consumer health and wellness, sustainable / green technologies, and social / digital media companies to introduce their products and services to the trade, business and entertainment communities as well as ultimate end-users.

Clients preparing to introduce technologies, products and services to a new industry sector benefit from senior level counsel and advisory services derived from decades of hands-on work, including new category introductions.

From concept creation to consumer launch to sustaining critical mass and momentum, we maximize media exposure, brand positioning and consumer buzz for our clients' digital content, services and devices. We are adept at translating buzz-

words and jargon into "Plain English" to deliver marketing solutions that can be clearly understood and absorbed by both B2B and consumer target audiences.

Representative clients/projects have included: Microsoft, IMAX, 3D Entertainment Summits, Oculus 3D, NVIDIA, GenAudio, Equal, Digital Entertainment Group/Blu-Con, WebSafety, Laser Light Engines, Microspace Digital Cinema, MetaTools, Razer, Rentrak Corporation, Electronic Arts, Majesco Entertainment, Shangri-La Industries, Donate Life Hollywood, GlaxoSmithKline, University Medical Pharmaceuticals and TEDMED conferences.

RUDER FINN

301 East 57th Street
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www.ruderfinn.com

Richard Funes, President,
Ruder Finn Americas

Ruder Finn prides itself on a long standing tradition of generating visibility and industry buzz for its diverse client base in the technology sector. Through integrated campaigns

that combine the best of traditional media expertise and forward-looking social media programs, Ruder Finn helps its clients expertly navigate the 24/7 media landscape and drive positive outcomes that are truly tied to a company's business objectives.

With a national team of seasoned professionals and a proven record of maintaining the top business and technology media and industry analyst contacts, plus a finger-on-the-pulse mentality, Ruder Finn has established successful partnerships with ambitious start-ups to global enterprises across a wide variety of enterprise and consumer technology companies.

Ruder Finn's expertise spans the full spectrum of enterprise, networking, mobile and consumer technologies, with specialized capabilities in vertical markets like Consumer, Healthcare, Financial Services, Manufacturing, and Telecommunications.

Ruder Finn partners with clients as strategic counselors and executional teams. Services include: CEO positioning, thought-leadership programs, executive platform development, new product and service launches, industry analyst relations, social media program development and execution, trade show and special event support, competitive monitoring and analysis, and issues management. Programs are often augmented with support for investor relations, internal communications, government relations, social responsibility initiatives and creative design.

Current clients worldwide include: Allied Telesis, Bill.com, Buddy Media, EB/Elektrobit, IEEE, Hotels.com, Kyocera Mita America, Logitech, Marvell Technology, Microsoft vertical markets, NEC Corporation of America, Radware, StubHub!, SunGard Data Systems Inc., Teradata and Women in Technology International (WITI).

SAGE COMMUNICATIONS

8229 Boone Blvd., Suite 410
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www.aboutsage.com
JulieM@aboutsage.com
Twitter: @sagecomm

Larry Rosenfeld, CEO
David Gorodetski, COO & Executive Creative Director
Julie Murphy, SVP, Public Relations

Sage Communications is a full-service, integrated marketing firm located in Northern Virginia just minutes from downtown Washington, D.C. Sage's public relations, new media and marketing programs support public sector and business telecommunications, information technology, and healthcare IT organizations, government agencies and non-profit organizations. Using our Sage approach and proven methodologies, we find the most intelligent, influential and measurable ways to help our clients grow, persuade, educate, brand, raise awareness, generate leads, recruit, and ignite action to further their business and mission objectives.

Sage specializes in B2B, B2G, G2G and G2C communications. Our PR and marketing services range from message and brand development, marketing strategy, social media, mobile campaigns, thought leadership campaigns, crisis communications, and merger and acquisition programs to traditional advertising, market research, guerilla marketing and interactive communications, among others. We help our clients break through the noise and stand out in an overly saturated technology marketplace.

SPEAKERBOX

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www.speakerboxpr.com
www.twitter.com/speakerbox
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Elizabeth Shea, President & CEO

SpeakerBox is celebrating 13 years as a top technology public relations firm. We are a forward-thinking firm that blends the best of traditional PR strategies with the creative insight into proven tactics that drive business results. As a trusted strategic communications partner, we understand how communication investments can drive top line and bottom line performance and help clients achieve their business goals. While media placements might garner high-fives, clients beating their quarterly forecast drive the most cov-

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SpeakerBox President and CEO Elizabeth Shea.

SPEAKERBOX

Continued from page 32

eted kudos.

We break new ground for our clients in vertical industries and business marketplaces; we launch new products in the categories of IT operations, mobility solutions, enterprise software, security and surveillance and more. We do it all backed by a history of com-



David Stephens, President of VMS.

mitment to excellence, honest conversations, integrity and client teamwork.

More than half of our clients have been recognized by industry accolades such as the *Inc* 500, Deloitte and Touche Fast50 and the *SmartCEO* Future 50 and Circle of Excellence. Our clients win technology-focused awards such as the eWEEK Labs “Top 25 Technologies That Changed the Decade,” Best of Interop, Network World’s Hottest Companies to Watch and the CES Innovation Award.

TEXT 100

352 Park Ave. South, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10010
www.text100.com

Aedhmar Hynes, CEO

Text 100 is a 500-person strong global public relations consultancy with a presence in 29 cities worldwide. We work with many of the world’s leading technology, internet and digital lifestyle brands including IBM, Cisco, Lenovo, MTV, SanDisk, and Skype. We are recognized as an innovator in the field of public relations, from traditional media relations to social media, and for leading the PR industry in staff development.

Our strong culture has consistently been praised globally, and we have been recognized as the Best Midsize Agency in Asia 2009, as a 2010 *Bulldog Reporter* — Midsize Agency of the Year, and one of the UK’s Best Small Companies in 2009.

Additionally, Text 100 ranked no. 4 in *O’Dwyer’s* 2009 ranking of Top Independent PR Firms, no. 8 on the *PRWeek* Agency Business Report 2009 and was named among *PR News’s* 2009 Best Places to Work in PR.

TREVELINO/KELLER

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Atlanta, GA 30318
404/214-0722
www.trevelinokeller.com
www.wheelhousekt.com
www.prstarbase.com

Dean Trevelino & Genna Keller, Principals

Trevelino/Keller, a full-service public relations, social media and brand communications firm, features one of the Southeast’s

largest technology practices. It works with established and emerging brands on a regional, national and international level. Client experience includes telecommunications, wireless, manufacturing, network security, software, SaSS, SAP, retail technology, business intelligence, ecommerce, online applications, fintech and consumer electronics. Services include media relations, analyst relations, executive visibility, crisis preparedness, award programs and trade show representation, social media, mobile applications, online communities, SEO, brand identity, marketing collateral and interactive.

As an independent PR firm, Trevelino/Keller is recognized for proprietary methodologies and partnerships. In 2005, it created the Atlas Alliance, a group of like-minded boutique firms that deliver integrated marketing and public relations services domestically and in Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. In 2006, it created the Start-Up Council, focused on supporting start-up companies by delivering multi-disciplined counsel in a gratis environment. In 2010, it launched Wheelhouse, its social marketing brand designed to deliver web 2.0 and beyond services in partnership with traditional public relations and brand communications.

TRYLON SMR

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Lloyd P. Trufelman, President

Since 1990 Trylon SMR has been an innovator in developing and implementing successful strategic media relations campaigns specifically for clients in the technology, media, telecom and related industries, utilizing a wide portfolio of integrated new, social, digital and mainstream media strategies. Trylon SMR develops and implements individually designed, cost-effective communications campaigns based on precise strategic planning and tactical execution that consistently produce tangible results. The agency’s process is based on a proprietary “reverse reporting” model. Trylon SMR

serves domestic and international clients from its headquarters in New York City, leveraging its knowledge of, and relationships with, top national, consumer, business and trade media/blogs, all without strict billable hours or long term contracts.

VMS

1500 Broadway
New York, NY 10036
212/329-5623
www.vmsinfo.com

**David Stephens, President
Darren Drevik, Director of Marketing**

Trying to make sense of the rapidly fracturing media landscape? VMS — the worldwide leader in Integrated Media Intelligence solutions — monitors and digitally captures media and advertising content in more markets than any other company.

Combining best-of-breed monitoring technologies with state-of-the-art industry analysis, and leveraging an expert editorial staff, VMS delivers the deepest and best intelligence across all key media — broadcast, print, radio, social media, the Internet and outdoor.

VMS’s products and services provide a comprehensive solution to marketing communications, public relations and advertising professionals who want to evaluate the effectiveness, impact and efficiency of various news coverage and commercial advertisements in near real-time.

The VMS News Services Division offers its clients reliable, actionable information and analytics about the news coverage those clients received on local and national television news programs, including the digital spectrum. VMS monitors and records news broadcasts from all 210 designated market areas — the only monitoring company with this scope of coverage. This monitoring is offered either through our customized services or through our innovative new InSight 3 do-it-yourself web-based platform.

The VMS Advertising Services Division leverages VMS’s global database of commercial ads, including the digital world, and offers customers the industry’s leading competitive advertising intelligence solution: AdSight.

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- Art Stevens, Managing Partner, StevensGouldPincus LLC

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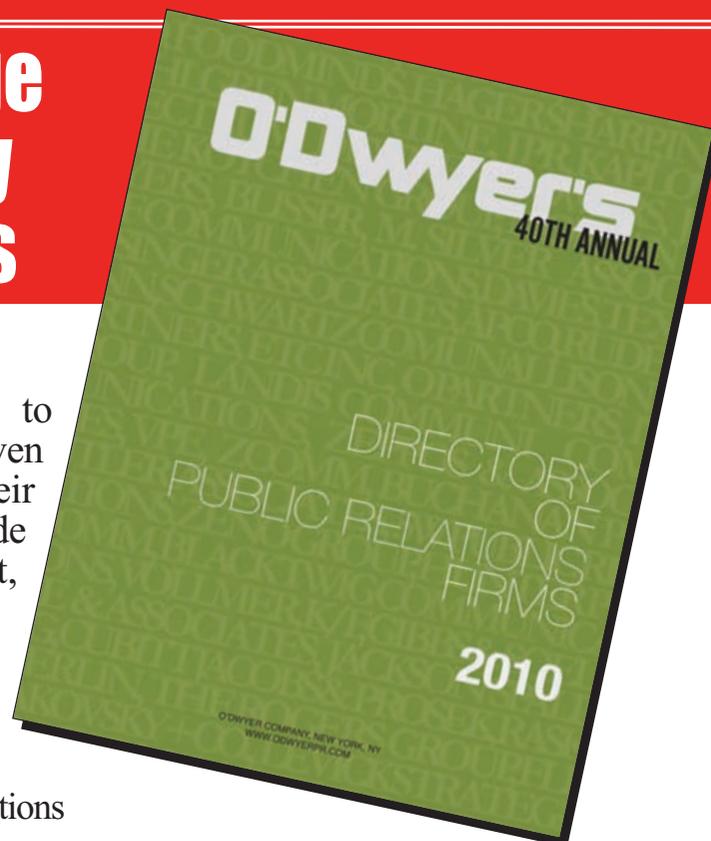
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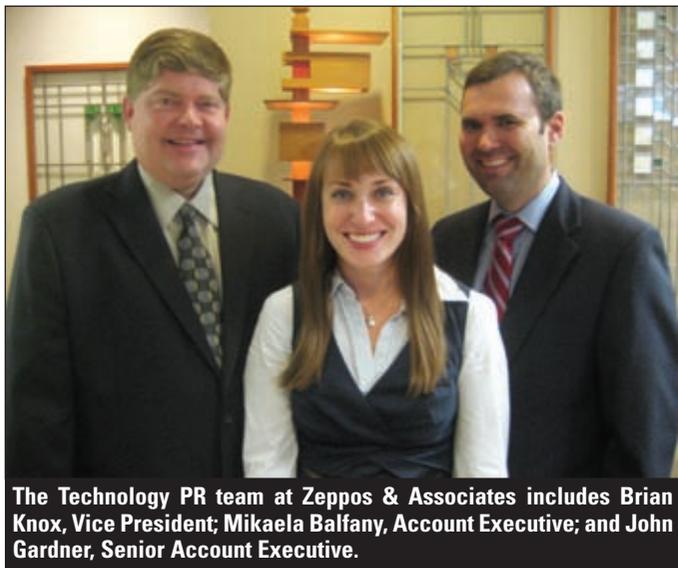
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- Thomas L. Harris, Author, *Choosing and Working with your PR firm*



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- ✓ Has brought billions of dollars in business to PR firms.
- ✓ Authoritative industry rankings, based on CPA statements, tax returns.
- ✓ Separate rankings for independent and ad agency-related PR operations.
- ✓ Firms ranked by 17 geographical regions in the U.S.
- ✓ Leaders ranked in 12 specialized categories: agriculture, beauty & fashion, entertainment, environmental/PA, financial, food & beverage, healthcare, home furnishings, professional svcs., sports/leisure, technology and travel.
- ✓ Easy-to-use, PR firms sorted geographically and by 17 types of PR specialties. Firms listed alphabetically.
- ✓ Articles on how to hire and use a PR firm by industry experts Jack O'Dwyer and Fraser Seitel.
- ✓ 7,000+ clients are cross-indexed. O'Dwyer's Directory of PR firms is the only place you can look up a company and determine its outside counsel.



The Technology PR team at Zeppos & Associates includes Brian Knox, Vice President; Mikaela Balfany, Account Executive; and John Gardner, Senior Account Executive.

WEBER SHANDWICK

600 Battery Street
San Francisco, CA 94111
415/262-5981
www.webershandwick.com

Robert Dowling, North American Technology Practice leader

Weber Shandwick's global technology practice combines PR innovation and global firepower for clients – fusing deep expertise in key technology segments. The practice provides insight on the shifting marketplace, evolving business needs and knows how to engage and mobilize key communities.

The practice's connected networks of technology professionals – among them trained engineers, journalists, respected bloggers and thought-leaders – deliver best-in-class public relations, digital, social and mobile marketing, content development and strategy and reputation management services to leading and emerging companies in nearly every sector of the industry.

The agency is a recognized leader in consumer technology, cleantech, media and entertainment, ad/marketing, enterprise, healthcare IT, security, semiconductor, storage, telecommunications and mobile.

The group's reach extends from the C-suite to the digital native, from engineers to IT professionals, from grass-roots activists to families. The mission remains clear: building and catalyzing advocates for clients, their products, services and ideas.

Weber Shandwick clients include Amazon.com, Amdocs,

Best Buy, Boston Scientific, Capgemini, Concur, Hitachi, Honeywell, Iron Mountain, Juniper, Marvell, Mashable, Microsoft, Motorola, MySpace, PetroAlgae, Polaroid, Powermat, PTC, Samsung, StumbleUpon, Symantec, Unisys, VeriSign and Verizon.

ZEPPOS & ASSOCIATES INCORPORATED

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Zeppos & Associates, an independent PR firm, has successfully represented a number of manufacturers, trade associations, technology businesses and others in a variety of assignments related to new technology and high-tech products and issues. From product launches and challenging industry topics, to public affairs matters and acquisitions, the team at Zeppos & Associates has effectively transformed technical issues and complex language into messages that speak clearly to a variety of audiences. The firm's work has successfully targeted trade- and consumer-focused reporters, editors and bloggers and communicated with other stakeholders, including government leaders, investors, safety officials, regulators and others. Zeppos & Associates has the expertise and background to understand technical concepts and apply value-added strategies to help clients reach and engage important audiences and customers. ●

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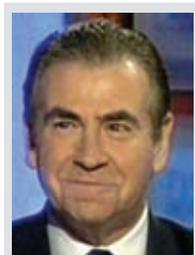
O'DWYER'S 2010 RANKINGS OF HIGH-TECH & TECHNOLOGY PR FIRMS

1. Edelman	New York	\$88,597,961	37. Dye, Van Mol & Lawrence	Nashville	708,579
2. Text 100	New York	48,600,000	38. Dawson + Murray + Teague	Dallas	680,659
3. Ruder Finn	New York	20,500,000	39. The Rogers Group	Los Angeles	637,738
4. APCO Worldwide	Wash., D.C.	16,059,511	40. Trevelino/Keller	Atlanta	630,000
5. Schwartz Comms.	Waltham, MA	10,824,392	41. Vollmer PR	Houston	611,432
6. Sparkpr	San Francisco	7,280,656	42. Edge Comms.	Encino, CA	600,924
7. Atomic PR	San Francisco	6,474,095	43. Kwittken & Co.	New York	585,471
8. Horn Group	San Francisco	6,100,000	44. Winning Strategies PR	Newark	566,206
9. Merritt Group	Reston, VA	5,604,630	45. Seigenthaler PR	Nashville	547,307
10. Airfoil PR	Detroit	4,853,225	46. Dukas Public Relations	New York	527,000
11. Matter Communications	Boston	4,100,000	47. Ron Sachs Communications	Tallahassee	515,830
12. Allison & Partners	San Francisco	4,020,579	48. Feintuch Comms.	New York	502,555
13. Jackson Spalding	Atlanta	3,385,321	49. Linhart Public Relations	Denver	501,693
14. Coyne PR	Parsippany, NJ	3,130,000	50. CooperKatz & Co.	New York	492,080
15. SS PR	Glenview, IL	3,000,000	51. 5W Public Relations	New York	474,014
16. Shelton Group	Dallas	2,799,731	52. Hunter PR	New York	436,921
17. Pierpont Communications	Houston	2,500,000	53. Lane PR	Portland, OR	409,710
18. Gibbs & Soell	New York	2,347,883	54. Nyhus Communications	Seattle	391,495
19. Kaplow	New York	2,300,000	55. Zeno Group	New York	372,947
20. RF Binder Partners	New York	1,800,000	56. L.C. Williams & Assocs.	Chicago	322,136
21. Cubitt, Jacobs & Prosek	New York	1,800,000	57. Moore Consulting Group	Tallahassee	321,317
22. Trylon SMR	New York	1,537,249	58. New West	Louisville	249,000
23. Spring O'Brien	New York	1,500,000	59. Guthrie/Mayes & Associates	Louisville	248,621
24. Makovsky + Co.	New York	1,500,000	60. Zeppos & Associates	Milwaukee	232,375
25. Bateman Group	San Francisco	1,479,209	61. Landis Comms.	San Francisco	187,200
26. Gregory FCA Comms.	Ardmore, PA	1,311,500	62. McNeely Pigott & Fox	Nashville	170,102
27. Affect Strategies	New York	1,296,525	63. Rosica Strategic PR	Paramus, NJ	133,192
28. Gibraltar Assocs.	Wash., D.C.	1,116,255	64. The Kotchen Group	W. Hartford, CT	110,466
29. M/C/C	Dallas	1,000,000	65. Bridge Global Strategies	New York	92,890
30. Lambert, Edwards & Assocs.	Grand Rapids	964,663	66. Maccabee Group	Minneapolis	87,771
31. K/F Comms.	San Francisco	893,301	67. TransMedia Group	Boca Raton, FL	85,000
32. Levick Strategic Comms.	Wash., D.C.	875,495	68. Rasky Baerlein	Boston	80,226
33. Borders + Gratehouse	San Francisco	856,495	69. Public Communications	Chicago	76,803
34. Catapult PR-IR	Boulder, CO	834,397	70. O'Malley Hansen Comms.	Chicago	60,000
35. Schneider Associates	Boston	829,250	71. Boardroom Communications	Plantation, FL	50,000
36. Middleberg Comms.	New York	800,000	72. Red Sky Public Relations	Boise	34,122

Beware of the blog

By Fraser Seitel

Normally, I agree with Jack O'Dwyer (Don't shoot me!). It generally makes sense to be candid with and available to reporters.



Fraser P. Seitel has been a communications consultant, author and teacher for 30 years. He is the author of the Prentice-Hall text, *The Practice of Public Relations*.

The key to media relations, even in the day of Facebook and Twitter and YouTube, is still building relationships. The closer your relationship with a reporter, the more he or she "trusts" you, the better it will prove for your client. The more solid media relationships you enjoy, the more valuable you will be

as a PR practitioner.

So a front-line responsibility of PR people is to treat journalists amicably.

And then there are bloggers. And that's where the time-honored advice of getting along with reporters must be modified. For bloggers are, indeed, a different breed.

Bloggers are journalists with less pay, less credibility, and occasionally, more clout than traditional journalists.

In some industries, like fashion, bloggers rule the roost, especially at the various "Fashion Weeks," where such new media personages as The Sartorialist and Fashion Toast blogs receive coveted front-row runway seats.

As important as some bloggers are getting to be, public relations people still must approach them with great care. Sometimes, that means avoiding them completely.

Indeed, the watchword in dealing with bloggers is, "Cuidado."

Here's why:

Speed over accuracy.

There are 126 million blogs on the Internet, and 99.99% are virtually meaningless, read by few people and picked up by no news services. But there are a handful – TMZ.com, Gawker, TechCrunch, among them on the national level – which are followed religiously by lots of people, including the national media.

Why?

They often "scoop" the general press. How?

They care less about "accuracy" than they do about "speed."

That's why TMZ is there at midnight when Lindsay Lohan gets sprung on bail, or TechCrunch rushes to print with the news that Twitter is looking for larger office space.

It makes no matter whether these



Blogs often scoop the regular press, favoring "speed" over "accuracy."

reports are based on rumor or fact. Speed is what counts, whether right or wrong. And that spells "trouble" to public relations people concerned about getting the story correct.

No respect for nuance.

To a blogger, there are no shades of grey. You either did it or you didn't. Blogs are breathless and categorical. Nuance has no place.

That's why Baptist preacher Eddie Long, accused of sexual improprieties with male parishioners, is already referred to as "homophobic" on the blogs.

Or why Facebook founder Marc Zuckerberg's \$100 million donation to Newark schools is blasted as a "PR move to counteract" a nasty film about him.

Or why a Nicaraguan diplomat found with his throat slashed "may have killed himself because of a recent AIDS diagnosis."

Unlike newspaper gossip columnists who must show concern for libel and slander, bloggers display little such compunction. Occasionally, a run amuck blogger's feet will be held to the fire, such as last week's takedown by Citigroup attorneys of a left wing blog's publication of a confidential Citi report.

But generally, blogs know no middle

ground. They blast and burn, and if they turn out to be wrong ... so be it.

Little formal training plus no supervision.

Newspaper, magazines, television and radio station news units generally insist that recruits have journalism experience or education. Newspaper commentary is no place for a raw rookie.

Conversely, what is the requisite to become a qualified blogger?

One must have access to a computer.

That's it. No degree. No experience. You don't even need pants!

Many bloggers, in fact, sit around in their pj's, typing away in their basements, hoping somebody, somewhere will read their pronouncements.

The danger, of course, is that a blog reader, learning of the latest scandal or mistake or crime or faux pas, reportedly committed by a celebrity or company or cause, isn't aware that the writer of the exposé in question has little experience, training, or supervision and probably has little clue of the veracity of what he has just reported as gospel.

The point is that an awful lot of bloggers ought to be ignored by PR people, because to answer their questions is to empower them with a credibility they don't deserve.

You become the story.

And there's another reason to think twice before speaking with a garden variety blogger.

Like Rodney Dangerfield, bloggers get no respect. Most of the time, they toil anonymously in their dark rooms, with few outsiders paying attention to their ramblings.

Until somebody talks to them.

When a PR person speaks to a blogger, he or she not only gets quoted – often verbatim, to fill space – but also becomes a vital part of the story.

That's why when Goldman Sachs became the blogosphere's favorite villain, Goldman's acerbic PR chief Lucas Van Praag became a frequent blog target.

Traditionally, effective PR has operated behind-the-scenes. More often than not with the blogs, when a PR professional speaks to a blogger, the story becomes more prominent, and PR is pushed out front to center stage.

That's another reason to think twice before speaking with your neighborhood blogger. ●

Impact of 'Small Business Jobs Act'

By Richard Goldstein

My last column discussed financial analysis for PR firms. This month was expected to be a follow-up. That plan changed with President Obama signing the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 on Sept. 27. The new law includes a number of important tax provisions for businesses large and small (especially PR firms), and changes for individuals as well.



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

Increase in expensing deduction

Section 179 of the Internal Revenue Code allows certain taxpayers to elect to immediately expense certain depreciable property placed in service during the year rather than depreciate the property over several tax years.

For tax years beginning in 2003, the maximum allowable expense deduction increased to \$100,000 and was adjusted annually for inflation from 2004 to 2009. Congress subsequently raised this dollar limitation for 2008 and 2009 to \$250,000. In 2010, the pre tax law deduction was scheduled to revert back to the pre 2003 amount of \$25,000.

The 2010 Jobs Act again changes the tax law for tax years beginning in 2010 or 2011 allowing a deduction of \$500,000.

For tax years that began in 2009, the tax law prevented taxpayers that placed property in service from benefiting from Section 179 if more than \$1,050,000 of qualified property was placed in service during a tax year. The Jobs Act however changes this from \$1,050,000 to \$2,500,000. This change will definitely benefit larger PR firms to expense more property in 2010 or 2011. Note, that for tax years beginning after 2011, there is a \$25,000 dollar limit and a \$200,000 beginning of the phase out amount.

Property subject to section 179

Under pre-Act law, property that qualified for the Section 179 expensing election was limited to depreciable tangible property purchased for use in an active trade or business, including "off-the-shelf" computer software (tax years beginning before 2011).

The Jobs Act changes the above for any tax year beginning in 2010 or 2011 to elect up to \$250,000 of qualified real property as Section 179 property. Qualified real property can include certain leasehold improvements. The property must be depreciable property acquired for use in a trade or business and is subject to certain exclusions including air conditioners or heating units.

By way of example, assume in 2011 that ABC PR placed in service \$600,000 of qualified leasehold improvement property and \$300,000 of other Section 179 property. For 2011, ABC can expense no more than \$250,000 of the cost of the leasehold improvements and no more than \$250,000 of the cost of the other Section 179 property.

While the unused portion of the Section 179 can be carried over to a subsequent year, no amount attributable to qualified real property can be carried over to a tax year beginning after 2011. Accordingly, if your agency is contemplating placing real property in service in 2010 or 2011 and you are concerned that the expensing deduction will be subject to carry over due to the "taxable income limitation" (not discussed in this column), consider placing the property in service in 2010 to allow for a carryover of the unused deduction to 2011.

Bonus first year depreciation

A taxpayer may claim a 50% bonus depreciation allowance in the year qualified property is placed in service. Generally, the new tax law extends the 50% first year depreciation for one year making it available for qualifying property placed in service in 2010 as well as 2011 for certain long-lived property.

Depreciation of automobiles

A depreciation deduction can be claimed for passenger autos subject to certain dollar limits that are adjusted for inflation. (Note, so called closed end auto leases do not qualify since the auto is not purchased.) For an auto placed in service in 2010, the limit is \$3,060 (light trucks and vans \$3,160). The Jobs Act generally increases this amount by (not to) \$8,000.

By way of example, assume a taxpayer places in service a new \$40,000 passenger vehicle. The taxpayer is allowed a

first year (2010) depreciation allowance of \$11,060 (\$8,000 + \$3,060).

Health insurance costs and self-employment tax

A self-employed individual can deduct as a business expense the amount paid during the tax year for health insurance for the taxpayer; the taxpayer's spouse; the taxpayer's dependents; and, effective March 30, 2010, any child of the taxpayer who hasn't attained age 27 as of the end of the tax year.

Prior to the law change, a self-employed individual's health insurance costs were not deductible in determining net earnings from self-employment. Net earnings from self-employment are generally trade or business earnings, less deductions permitted by the Internal Revenue Code that are attributable to the trade or business, plus the individual's distributive share of partnership income or loss. The deduction is limited to earned income from the trade or business for which the health insurance was established. Accordingly, you may recall that the deduction is claimed on page 1 of form 1040 as an adjustment for adjusted gross income.

Under the new law, for tax years beginning after December 31, 2010, the income tax deduction allowed to self-employed individuals for the cost of health insurance is allowed in calculating net earnings from self-employment for purposes of the self-employment tax.

By way of example, assume Mary is self-employed and paid \$13,770 for health insurance coverage. Mary can deduct \$13,770 in computing her net earnings from self-employment.

The 15.3% self employment tax rate applied to the premiums is \$2,107. Mary's savings will actually be less. Assume Mary's self-employment earnings are at least \$120,570 (\$106,800 OASDI (social security) plus \$13,770 deduction). Mary will see no reduction in the 12.4% OASDI tax. Only the 2.9% HI tax (Medicare) which has no ceiling will be reduced. In addition, because the above-the-line deduction allowed for one-half of the self-employment tax is reduced; the Act will cause an increase in income tax. A technical correction may be needed to fix this problem. In the interim, there is no great savings here. ●

Lessons learned (to date) from BP's PR disaster

By Arthur Solomon

The old BP monarch is now officially in exile, banished to a lucrative position in oil-rich Russia. The new BP monarch, as of October 1, now presides over an era of good feeling, or so BP hopes.



Arthur Solomon is a former VP for Burson-Marsteller.

By now, we must have heard and read millions of words from local and national government officials, BP spokespeople, hard news reporters, feature reporters and pundits. And we have been subjected to a

barrage of TV commercials portraying the good work that BP says it is doing to right the wrong.

But what are the PR Lessons Learned, to date, from the oil spill disaster that occurred under the benign neglect era?

During a self-inflicted crisis situation there is little sympathy for the company and skepticism of statements by corporate spokespeople.

News Briefs

OMNICOM MAKES MOVE ON MASLOV

Omnicom has acquired a majority stake in Moscow's Maslov PR, which was Ketchum's partner on work for the Russian Federation. Ketchum received \$7M from Russia and its Gazprom energy operation during the year ended May 30.

Maslov now becomes Ketchum Maslov, led by Michael Maslov and Serguey Chumin, his business partner.

The Moscow deal is joined by another OMC PR move: acquisition of Amsterdam's Excerpta Medica, the pharmaceutical communications division of publisher Reed Elsevier Group.

Excerpta Medica (events, education, customized publishing) becomes part of Adelphi, a unit of OMC's diversified agency services operation.

Meanwhile, OMC CEO John Wren reported today that PR revenues rose 5.1 percent to \$280M during the third-quarter. The ad/PR combine registered a 5.4 rise in Q3 net to \$174.6M. Revenues rose 5.5 percent to \$3B. ●

The more corporate officials play the media game and make themselves available to the media on a continuing basis, the more they will be criticized for what is said.

The new head honcho at BP, Robert Dudley, read from the same script as dethroned CEO Tony Hayward, when he said that the company had not been negligent.

CEOs are not a good choice to be the spokesperson during a crisis situation. They're used to asking questions, not answering them.

The PR ploy of continually using a CEO to apologize for a crisis situation, may be placed on the back shelf, as it should have been years ago; doesn't have the believability factor (if it ever did).

Acknowledging that using corporate spokespersons to defend the BP remedial efforts after the spill might not be the most believable tactic, BP began using spokesmen with roots from the Gulf in its TV commercials; also not believable considering who they worked for.

Because of their propensity to talk to the media too much without having the science and facts to back up their words, the BP situation, a major environmental disaster, is now also a "Pinocchio-like no one believes what you say crises," where every statement a BP spokesperson says is greeted with skepticism.

A new corporate public face has no effect on the negative press coverage of the crisis.

During continuing news coverage of a major disaster, PR crisis specialists are largely irrelevant. (But didn't we learn that from the Tiger Woods, Goldman Sachs, Toyota situations?)

A company in a major crisis situation is helpless to limit the scope of an investigation or limit it to its current problem.

It's best to wait until a problem is solved before embarking on a PR and advertising campaign. All the money spent trying to refurbish BP's image might have well been thrown into the Gulf because of the continuous flow of media reporting on past and present BP safety problems.

BP's TV ad campaign during the disaster — we're here until the situation is made good — in many ways echoes the campaigns of U.S. automakers of the past few decades.

Regardless of the continuing abundance of stories about how bad their cars performed, the automakers bombarded the networks with commercials saying their cars were great. Like saying, "don't

believe what you are told by impartial sources: trust us," (also the theme of cigarette ads with actors in white coats, prior to Congressional action).

The truthfulness of the TV/P.R. ad campaign suffered a cataract-like condition, when a September 3 *New York Times* story, reported that BP warned Congress that it may not have sufficient money to pay for all the damages if it is prohibited from getting new drilling permits in the Gulf.

The best that companies in a media news crisis can hope for (see Goldman Sachs, Toyota), is that a more schmaltzy crisis will occur that will provide a new target for the media line of fire.

Congressmen feigned surprise before the camera when Tony Hayward gave what were most likely pre-packaged answers to their questions. Did they really expect him to incriminate himself and his company?

Perhaps remembering the picture of the cigarette executives raising their hands and trying to bamboozle Congress and the American public during the tobacco hearings, Big Oil execs effectively prevented the BP crisis from engulfing their companies by not playing "band of brothers" and distancing themselves from BP. This was accentuated when several companies said they would create a rapid-response system for deep water oil spills in the Gulf.

Never letting a good crises go unused politically, national Republican spokespersons, when being interviewed by the media, tried to make the Gulf disaster "Obama's Katrina" by continually saying Obama's response was too little, too late.

Regardless of the severity of a disaster, the politician's blame game never stops (and the cable media doesn't mind rehashing the carbon copy complaints).

For many PR firms, advertising agencies, news people, TV commercials makers and the stations that use them, bad news is often good news. BP has spent more than \$100-million dollars on advertising thus far, to show that they are a good corporate citizen.

The BP response to the oil spill can be published, as is, and used as a guide of how not to act during a crisis. But best to publish it to fit into a loose leaf binder. A sequel may be needed.

But the most important Lesson Learned is that the BP story will be with us for years and all the advice given by PR crises specialists can't make it go away until it runs its natural course. ●

Sanchez debacle is teachable moment for PR

By Ron Levy

The PR lesson learned from now ex-CNNer Rick Sanchez is that bright people can say stupid things to journalists, so PR pros must be ready if a client mouths off.



Ron Levy, founder of NAPS, is research director at the PR services company.

The time to prepare is now, not when your phones are ringing for comment and lawyers order you to keep mum.

The PR need to prepare is urgent because bad press can lead to not just embarrass-

ment but (a) lawsuits from many claiming hundreds of millions in damages, (b) lost sales to customers and dealers annoyed with the company, (c) loss of legislative support from legislators with a big minority population in their districts, and (d) hastily conceived and expensive “good deed” projects to show that “we love these people.”

The obvious way to prepare is by assembling numbers on how many minority members a client employs, bios/photos of minority executives, causes supported and awards earned from minority groups. (It’s not hard to get some accolades read into the Congressional Record.)

A low-cost way to deter high-cost lawsuits is by doing a mailing to employees and having the general counsel talk to senior corporate executives about how the company totally backs compliance, not only because it’s the law but the right thing to do.

If trouble comes up, an internal investigation must be conducted by the corporate lawyer, not a PR person. That’s because non-lawyers can be subpoenaed by anyone suing the company and made to tell what they know — everything they heard, true or not, even speculation no matter how extremely unlikely and damaging.

Neither lawyers nor their investigators can be subpoenaed because their information is a “privileged work product.” The lawyers can say “we are investigating this situation very carefully and not taking anything for granted because we want to consider all sides.”

If media pick up the “all sides” comment, the public will get the message that there’s more than one side, and hold off on deciding who’s right and wrong.

It’s important to understand what’s okay

and what isn’t. A brilliant young executive in her mid-20s once came to me in tears with this complaint about an account supervisor: “He hates me because I’m a lesbian.”

I took her to lunch and told her: “He has every right to hate you. He also has the right to hate Jews, Catholics, straights or anyone else. If he says or does anything improper, I’ll fire his ass on the spot, but he has a right to think what he wants.”

A year or two later the young exec left to complete her PhD in English and today she is a professor at a top university. The account guy was fired instantly some weeks later after he said the wrong thing to another woman.

Why was he against women? I didn’t know or care. Why do smart corporate executive sometimes say stupid things? I don’t know that either. Some learn prejudice from their parents just as people get religion and values or lack of them from parents.

But your phone will ring if a remark is made like that of Rick Sanchez. Be prepared for the call. ●

News Briefs

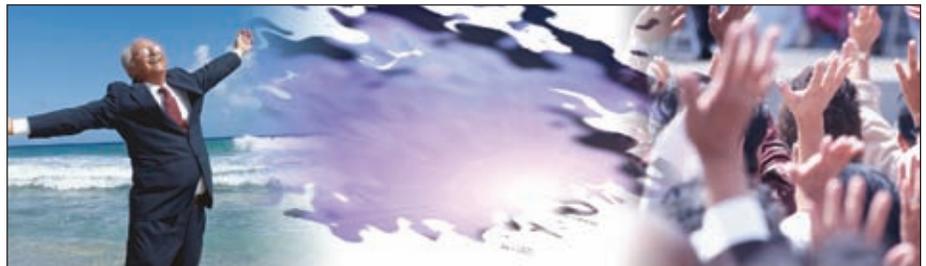
Study: CEOs not ‘social’

Although most CEOs are quoted in the news and use speaking engagements to reach audiences, most are not using social media and the Internet for that purpose, according to a Weber Shandwick study.

64% of that top group of CEOs are not engaged digitally with external audiences, compared with 93 percent that used a more traditional route — quotes in major publications — and 40% who booked speaking engagements to non-investor audiences.

Weber Shandwick found that most CEO online visibility is limited to what’s said about the executives on Wikipedia. Only 36% make appearances in social media channels or on their company’s website, which most often comes in the form of a letter or “message from the CEO” -type posting.

Beside letters or CEO messages on company websites, which are utilized by 28% of the so-called “socialized” CEOs, some have turned to video or podcasts (18%), while fewer than 10% use Twitter, Facebook or external blogs. ●



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We're nutty and inaccurate, says PRSA delegate

By Jack O'Dwyer

Derek DeVries, PRSA Assembly delegate who spearheaded a "pen gifting" gag on us at the Assembly Oct. 16, says we have "completely missed the mark" in covering it.



Jack O'Dwyer

DeVries, who teaches at Grand Rapids Community College and has his own firm, said there are a lot more angles to the pen-gifting than we have indicated.

"Jack O'Dwyer Misunderstands PRSA 2010 Assembly Flash Mob," was the headline of his Oct. 17 blog after he saw our story. We interpreted the pen-giving by about 20 delegates as some sort of recognition which would be the worst nightmare of VP-PR Arthur Yann who has made clear his dissatisfaction with our coverage of the Society.

We were denied press passes to the annual conference of the Society while other trade reporters got them.

The Society's official stance is that we don't exist, a message carried to our office by chair Gary McCormick and COO Bill Murray in March. But the videotape is proof that we do.

DeVries et al have no idea how seriously they have dented the "PR" aimed at us by Society leaders and staff.

We are goofballs

The pen-gifting was not confined to the Assembly.

The "flash mob," said DeVries, was extended to the entire 2010 conference, "so if you see Jack O'Dwyer in the hall, take a moment to present him with the 'tribute,' of a disposable pen."

DeVries is now doing serious back-pedaling. He said in his blog that the pens were given by "a bunch of goofballs like me who happened to be delegates."

Society delegates are "goofballs?" This will not sit well with the Society PR staff or board. We thought the delegates were the crème de la crème of the Society.

The DeVries blog also slings a number

of darts at us including we're a "curmudgeon," that like John Nash, our "version of reality" does not match what is experienced by others (i.e., we're nuts), that our description of the pen-giving was "less than accurate," and that such inaccuracy will be no surprise to "a lot of PRSA members."

The pens recognized our "tenacious, if occasionally misguided work to cover the Society," he also said.

Society can't show any inaccuracy

We challenge DeVries or anyone connected with the Society to show us anything inaccurate in any of our coverage. What Society leaders and staff engage in is a smear campaign that lacks details. Our opinions that they don't like are based on facts.

DeVries says Society members "occasionally disagree" with our "interpretation of the conference/Society happenings."

They never disagree. When we bring up criticisms such as withholding transcripts of the Assembly for the past five years, withholding names of delegates, or refusing to discuss making a PDF of the members, directory, leaders just don't respond.

We publish fully documented criticisms of the Society but the leaders only respond with silence or undefined attacks such as we're just "too negative." They refuse to meet with us or even talk to us on the telephone.

DeVries: that "wasn't really me"

Back-pedaling even more, DeVries tries to distance this gift-giving from any official act of the Society.

"The Society had nothing to do with the flash mob," he said on his blog. This reminded us of Anne Dubois, chair of the Universal Accreditation Board, saying she was not in that role when she made a comment on the Society e-group about non-APRs on the board.

UAB policy forbids it from interfering in the governance of member organizations. She said she was there as Anne Dubois the Assembly delegate and not as Anne Dubois the UAB chair.

DeVries is now giving us the same argument that he stopped being a delegate and turned into a "goofball" when he gave the



Nutty, or just tired? Jack O'Dwyer catches some Zs during a break at the Oct. 16 PRSA Assembly. This was the only photo VP-PR Arthur Yann sent to us a week after the Assembly.

Photo courtesy of PRSA.

hotel's disposable pen to us. How many Derek DeVrieses are there?

O'Dwyer is society's no. 1 competitor

We posted on the DeVries blog that the reason for the Society's bashing of us is that we're its No. 1 competitor.

Our website, with ten years of stories, editorials, databases, etc., as of Dec. 31, 2010, dwarfs its website, which is only partially searchable. Major stories like the Committee for a Democratic PRSA are barely touched on its website.

The October *O'Dwyer's* magazine had 60 pages including 18 full page ads and 12 partial pages.

The current *Strategist* of the Society has 50 pages and 10 full page-ads.

While the Society talks about PR in general, each issue of the *O'Dwyer's* magazine includes a focus on a specialty such as healthcare, tech or financial and provides documented net fee rankings of the leading firms in each category.

Specialization is major trend

Specialization in PR is a trend that is at least 20 years old that is not addressed by the Society's APR program.

"Certification" of specialties was discussed a couple of years ago by Society leaders but little has emerged.

Other O'Dwyer products not matched by the Society are our Directory of 1,700 PR firms, our *PR Buyer's Guide* to 1,000 products and services in 57 categories and our weekly *Jack O'Dwyer's Newsletter*.

The Society, we acknowledge, has many services that we don't provide. Both organizations should be working together for the advancement of PR people. But the Society decided long ago to wage competitive war against us. ●



PRSA Assembly delegate Derek DeVries.

VMS replaces CEO

Monitoring company VMS has ousted CEO Peter Wengryn in a management revamp started this summer.

David Stephens, a Managing Director based in Australia for medical publisher Wolters Kluwer Health, has been named



Stephens, Wengryn

President of VMS, reporting to Chairman Robert Waggoner and taking on full operating responsibility.

Waggoner, who leads clipping and media contacts supplier BurrellesLuce, cited Stephens' experience in senior information and software, as well as his work in the international arena, as key to the hire.

Stephens, who was educated in Australia, oversaw WKH operations in China, India, Japan, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand guiding a turnaround of its securities and insurance group in Boston. Previous stints included Thomson, Lend Lease, and McKinsey & Co.

Wengryn joined VMS as its Chief Financial Officer in 1999 and was tapped as CEO three years later. He handled the company's transition from providing tape of broadcast clips to a services and consulting business steeped in monitoring.

VMS is the longstanding veteran in a monitoring sector of PR services that has seen a series of up-starts and significant upheaval in the space as technology improved and social media came on the scene.

"VMS has a strong market reputation and platform for growth," Stephens said in a statement. ●

AOL taps comms. chief

Former MTV corporate communications executive Lauren Hurvitz is joined AOL last month as head of corporate communications for the Internet portal.

Tricia Primrose Wallace stepped down as communications chief at AOL

this summer after more than 10 years there.

The Internet company, which made a splash by acquiring TechCrunch last week, split from \$111 billion merger partner of 2000 Time Warner last year.

Hurvitz was Executive VP of Corporate Comms. and Public Affairs at MTV, which she joined after eight-years at WPP's Robinson Lerer & Montgomery in 2004.

Wallace was also an RLM alum. ●

Allread named PCI Prez

Jill Allread has been promoted to President of Chicago-based Public Communications Inc.

The 47-year-old executive joined the firm in 1995 as principal.

Allread was a reporter for a dozen years and PA/PR director of Chicago Zoological Society's Brookfield Zoo.

She serves on the executive board of Girls in the Game, a group that nurtures leadership and self-esteem in girls through sports. She also is a commissioner of the Illinois Natural Preserves Commission and president of Openlands, a conservation group.

At PCI, Allread joins the leadership trio of CEO Dorothy Pirovano and Executive VP Ruth Mugalian.

The firm has 50 staffers. ●



Jill Allread

Experiential firm adds Dome

Veteran Chicago pro Doug Dome has been named President and Chief Creative Officer at Gigunda Group, a 16-year-old Manchester, N.H.-based experiential marketing agency. He works out of his longtime base of Chicago.

Dome had been running his own shop for the past three years, following the 2004 acquisition by Hill & Knowlton of his 1997-founded firm Dome Communications.

"The fact that Doug had so many options in front of him yet chose to bring

his talents to Gigunda is incredibly exciting for us," said Gigunda CEO Ryan FitzSimons.

He has been CCO and Managing Principal of Carmichael Lynch Spong, U.S. Creative Director for H&K, and Managing Director of PR and events at Foote, Cone & Belding.

Gigunda clients have included Procter & Gamble brands like Charmin, Tide and Bounty, as well as Sony, GlaxoSmithKline and Toyota. ●

Fiber moves to Weber

Lorie Fiber, who established Edelman's healthcare practice in Los Angeles and handled its life sciences work in the U.S., moved to Weber Shandwick as Executive VP and GM of Southern California.

She will report to Cathy Calhoun, the Interpublic unit's North American President.

Fiber spent nine years at Edelman, departing as Executive VP and Founding Partner of its DJE Science specialty unit.

Earlier, she was a member of the Executive Committee at FischerHealth, which was scooped up by Porter Novelli. At FH, Fiber focused on medical devices and the diagnostics group. Fiber also established the PR department for the L.A. Regional Foodbank, the second biggest unit in the Second Harvest network.

Fiber will work closely with Laura Schoen, global healthcare practice chair. ●

eBay vet joins F-H

Richard Kanareck, ex-communications director for eBay's European operation, is the new managing director of Fleishman-Hillard's London office.

At eBay, Kanareck was in charge of the online auction house's repositioning campaign in a dozen markets.

F-H CEO Dave Senay says Kanareck's hire is part of his firm's effort to offer integrated global communications packages to its clients. Kanareck will work to make sure that clients are "completely at home in the digital world."

The ex-eBay staffer has 15 years of PR experience and reports to Kevin Bell, regional president of F-H's U.K., Africa and Middle East operations. ●

U.S. force in Afghanistan extends media analysis pact

The public affairs office for the U.S. force in Afghanistan has given a six-month extension to its foreign media monitoring and analysis vendor SOSi International.

“Disruption or loss of this service will directly affect the war effort in Afghanistan,” said a document justifying the move to add six months to the pact without putting it out for bids. The value of the extension to March 31, 2011 was redacted in the document.

SOSi won the contract in an open competition in 2006, a process which outlined a contract with options through 2010 worth up to \$67M. Its latest assignment was set to expire on Sept. 30.

The federal government said in July that it intended to extend the contract by six months and it received no response from other vendors, making the move effective Oct. 1.

SOSi’s media operation is based in Kabul. Its analysts track reporting and identify media trends related to the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan.

The federal government said it plans to review the pact in a competitive process in the near future, possibly two to four months, but cited delays caused by the review of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan completed in May that may affect an RFP process.

The Rendon Group previously handled the media analysis work for the U.S. Strategic Operations Command before the 2006 review. ●

NIH eyes PR pitches

The National Institutes of Health has issued an RFP to assemble a roster of firms to handle various communications and public affairs assignments over the next five years.

The resulting contract, known as an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity pact, will be for a base year with four options. A handful of firms are typically selected from an RFP process to compete for assignments under IDIQ terms.

The assignments, outlined broadly in the Oct. 6 RFP, will cover tasks like research, media analysis and outreach, PR, and social marketing, among other communications assignments.

The NIH is the medical research arm of the federal government and has an annual budget of more than \$30 billion and is based in Bethesda, Md.

As previously reported, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, like the NIH part of the Dept. of Health and Human Services, is planning a similar review later this month or in November.

Proposals are due Nov. 17. Documents can be downloaded at odwyerpr.com. ●

McFarlane heads Southern Sudan Lobby

Robert “Bud” McFarlane, who was President Reagan’s National Security Advisor, registered Sept. 23 with the Justice Dept. as president of the U.S.-Southern Sudan Development Co.

Voters in southern Sudan go to the poll in January to decide whether oil-rich South Sudan becomes independent or remains part



of a unified country.

Sudanese living in the U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Egypt will also vote.

That tally was part of a peace treaty ironed out in 2005, a pact that ended two decades of war between north and south. More than 1.5M people died.

McFarlane has been providing oral advice to south Sudanese officials on “enhancing the professionalism and readiness of the security forces,” “attracting foreign assistance from the U.S. and other governments,” and lining up private sector cash for infrastructure projects.

According to McFarlane’s federal filing, he has worked to promote the interests of Southern Sudan for the past two years, receiving a payment of \$700K in ’08.

McFarlane’s work put him in contact with Gordon England, Deputy Secretary of Defense; Gen. William “Kip” Ward, Commander of the U.S. Africa Command, and Pamela Fierst of the State Dept.’s Sudan Policy Group. ●

Mortgage trade group taps SVP

Mexico’s Committee of Tourism and Conventions for the image-tarnished Mexican State of Baja California hired Allison & Partners to lead a six-figure tourism PR campaign starting last month.

The trade group for mortgage bankers in Washington, D.C., has filled its vacant senior communications and marketing slot after four months as mortgages draw national interest.

Barbara Van Allen, Chief Marketing Officer for disability employment non-profit NISH, has been named Senior VP of Communications and Marketing for the Mortgage Bankers Association.

“I am very excited to join the MBA at such a critical time in the industry’s history,” she said in a statement.

The appointment comes as the mortgage sector endures sustained scrutiny and pressure mounts on banks and regulators amid reports of shoddy lending and foreclosure practices.

She’ll join the trade group Nov. 1, taking over for Cheryl Crispin, who held the post for eight years before leaving in June for the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association.

Van Allen was managing Director of Global Communications at Cushman & Wakefield and director of corporate communications at ITT after a seven-year stint on the Hill.

The MBA counts 3,000 member companies. ●

State outlines public diplomacy corps

The U.S. State Department said Oct. 7 that it has finished the framework for its public diplomacy operations, naming six assistant secretaries as well as a deputy assistant for international media engagement experienced in the Arab world to put a public face on U.S. policies overseas.



Dana Shell Smith

Dana Shell Smith, an Arabic language spokeswoman and media hub director for State in Dubai, has taken the international media engagement post. She will be among a handful of U.S. officials who will appear on Arab news shows to give a U.S. point of view to coverage.

Judith McHale, Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy, said in March that the new position would be created, saying it was to be created with the State Dept.'s public affairs bureau to give "high level attention" to foreign media.

Smith was a public affairs officer at the American Institute in Taiwan and was embassy spokeswoman in Jordan after a stint in Tel Aviv handling public diplomacy for the U.S. embassy in the Gaza Strip. In addition to Arabic, the Foreign Service Office speaks Chinese, Hebrew and Spanish.

In addition to Smith, six deputy assistant secretaries comprise

the PD framework overseen by Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Judith McHale.

McHale said in a statement that a key goal of the new advisors and framework is to ensure a "close integration" between PD and policy formulation.

The new deputy assistants and their bureaus include Spencer Boyer, who handles PD and public affairs for Europe and Eurasian affairs; Grata Holtz, who handles PD and strategic communications for Near Eastern affairs; James Moore, overseeing south and central Asian affairs who was minister counselor for public affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Turkey from 2003-06; Fabiola Rodriguez-Ciampoli, western hemisphere affairs and former comms. director for Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.); Jennifer Park Stout, east Asia and Pacific affairs and a former Hill staffer, and David Bruce Wharton, African affairs and directed PD and public affairs for the Africa bureau since 2009.

A GAO report released in July outlined significant cutbacks in U.S. public diplomacy since the 1990s, but McHale announced a plan in February to "revitalize" the framework of PD ahead of its budget request for 2012.

McHale told the Senate Foreign Relations committee in March that the new regional deputies would be established to put a PR perspective in senior policy talks. ●

FARA News



NEW FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT FILINGS

Below is a list of select companies that have registered with the U.S. Department of Justice, FARA Registration Unit, Washington, D.C., in order to comply with the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, regarding their consulting and communications work on behalf of foreign principals, including governments, political parties, organizations, and individuals.

The Cedar Group, LLC, Fairbanks, Alaska, **registered September 28, 2010 for Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States**, Washington, D.C., regarding improving and deepening relations between the United States and Taiwan.

Hills Stern & Morley, Washington, D.C., **registered September 1, 2010 for Government of Aruba**, Oranjestad, Aruba, regarding assisting the principal on issues of bilateral cooperation between the Government of Aruba and the Government of the United States.

Garvey Schubert Barer, Washington, D.C., **registered September 30, 2010 for Global Guardian Trust**, Tokyo, Japan, regarding researching and analyzing Legislative and Executive Branch policies, proposals and actions that could impact fisheries policies of the Japanese government or the fishing practices of Japanese fishing vessels.

Lobbying News



NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT FILINGS

Below is a list of select companies that have registered with the Secretary of the Senate, Office of Public Records, and the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Legislative Resource Center, Washington, D.C., in order to comply with the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. For a complete list of filings, visit <http://sopr.senate.gov>.

Blank Rome Government Relations LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered October 7, 2010 for Marine Spill Response Corp.**, Herndon, Va., regarding monitoring and reporting on Congressional hearings, legislation and Administration policy related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Capitol Counsel LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered October 14, 2010 for Cisco Systems**, Washington, D.C., regarding legislation pertaining to cyber security and net neutrality.

Carmen Group Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered October 8, 2010 for Boulder County**, Boulder, Colo., regarding wildfire recovery in Boulder County.

Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies, Washington, D.C., **registered October 14, 2010 for U.S. Travel Association**, Washington, D.C., regarding pursuing legislative reforms of visa policies and policies relating to arrivals and departures of passengers at U.S. airports.

Patton Boggs LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered October 13, 2010 for Association of Institutional Investors**, Winchester, Va., regarding issues related to regulatory developments following passage of the Dodd-Frank Act.

Dan Perrin, Washington, D.C., **registered October 15, 2010 for American Bankers Association**, Washington, D.C., regarding healthcare reform and health savings accounts.

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Public Relations Manager Excelsior College	Albany, NY, United States	9/10/2010
Public Relations Account Executive Miller Brooks	Zionsville, IN, United States	9/09/2010
Director of the Office of Communications and Public Relations Virginia Commonwealth University	Richmond, VA, United States	9/09/2010
Public Relations Manager Goodyear	CA, United States	9/08/2010
Airship Public Relations Manager Goodyear Tire	Pompano Bch, FL, United States	9/08/2010
Manager, Brand Public Relations Martek Biosciences Corporation	Columbia, MD, United States	9/07/2010
Director, Brand Public Relations Kellogg Company	Battle Creek, MI, United States	9/07/2010

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