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- How to evaluate a social media campaign.
- Mobile advertising: social media's biggest challenge.

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The power of myth is still strong.

WALL STREET SAYS ‘OCCUPY’ HAS MADE AN IMPACT
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ELECTIONS, ECONOMY TO LEAD 2012 NEWS CYCLE
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SPEAK WITH AUDIENCES, DON’T TALK AT THEM
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NEW OPPORTUNITIES WITH IMTs
New technologies and a change in media consumption habits give brands increased tools to bring their message to the masses.

PROFILES OF VIDEO AND BROADCAST FIRMS

WASHINGTON REPORT

COLUMN

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Fraser Seitel

FINANCIAL MATTERS
Richard Goldstein

PR BUYER’S GUIDE

EDITORIAL CALENDAR 2012
January: Crisis Commns. / Buyer’s Guide
February: Environmental & P.A.
March: Food & Beverage
April: Broadcast & Social Media
May: PR Firm Rankings
June: Global & Multicultural
July: Travel & Tourism
August: Financial/I.R.
September: Beauty & Fashion
October: Healthcare & Medical
November: High-Tech
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EDITORIAL

Why myths still exist in 2012

The best thing about the truth is that it’s easy: when you tell the truth, the world is there to back up your claim. When you tell a lie however, you have to carefully maneuver reality to align with the fly-by-night narrative you’ve created. It’s a wearying endeavor.

As all politicians have discovered however, sometimes it’s just more effective to broadcast a widely held myth than it is to showcase your strengths. Unfortunately, there are entire industries that specialize in exploiting this fallacy, of shaping content to fit the erroneous assumptions of the crowd instead of fortifying messages with the truth. Ever wonder why PR gets a bad rap?

Selling myths in 2012 is as big as ever, and the reason is simple: nonsense can make for a good fantasy. And sometimes it’s just not that incorrect information can have allure, but that the alternatives — in other words, reality — can be downright threatening. To give you an idea of how often myths are used as a rhetorical strategy, here’s a brief tally of some of the better bogus claims made by Presidential hopefuls in recent months:

While discussing healthcare reform on the campaign trail, Rick Santorum said elderly residents in The Netherlands are regularly euthanized when they arrive at hospitals for routine procedures. When a Dutch reporter several weeks later asked Santorum’s Communications Director why he would say something so ridiculous, she responded by saying that Santorum was simply speaking “from his heart.”

Newt Gingrich in December said federal laws ensuring the separation of church and state prohibit the President from using taxpayer money to send Christmas cards. Gingrich then vowed to serve as a champion to change this nonexistent law.

Ron Paul in January claimed a recent national poll concluded that “the majority of the American people” want to revert our currency to the Gold Standard. Paul was later asked to produce evidence of this study. Not surprisingly, he was unable: no such poll has been conducted.

At the Iowa Faith and Freedom conference in 2011, Santorum referenced a non-existent abortion bill that Obama allegedly supported, where “any child, prior to nine months of gestation” could be terminated. A brief history of modern political theater will show you that no matter how absurd it is, “killing children/seniors” remains a surprisingly popular debate tactic.

Gingrich has made it a point to repeatedly refer to Barack Obama as “the food stamps president.” He even falsely told an audience that “more people have been put on food stamps by Barack Obama than any president in American history.” In reality, about a half-million more Americans received food stamps under George W. Bush’s tenure than Obama. Gingrich later said federal laws ensuring the separation of church and state prohibit the President from using taxpayer money to send Christmas cards. Gingrich then vowed to serve as a champion to change this nonexistent law.

No matter how absurd these claims are, more frightening is what their seamless embedding into common parlance says about us. No matter how blatant the lie, people will believe what you say if it aligns with their core beliefs. Indeed, it’s the reason why myths still hold such prominence today, even when we possess the informational means to easily dispel many of them. People want to be right — even when they’re wrong.

Studies show that most people rarely change their beliefs when presented with an opposing outlook, no matter how compelling, detailed and airtight the alternative might be. In fact, when you think you’ve “proven” someone wrong, you’ve probably only served to strengthen your opponent’s beliefs, because he/she will now spend further time devising ways to counter your arguments. In psychological terms, this is called cognitive dissonance. It means that instead of altering our beliefs to accommodate new information, we instead concoct any number of variables to allow our preexisting beliefs to adapt and survive alongside new information. It might seem easy to convince that crazy uncle of yours that Obama is not building gas chambers for the elderly. In fact, it’s a nearly impossible task, because for him to accept the truth involves changing a portion of his identity.

The fact is, we’d experience greater personal freedom if we didn’t inexcusably bind ourselves to beliefs we acquired when we didn’t know better. In short, we’d all be a lot happier if we allowed ourselves the ability to be wrong every once in a while. — Jon Gingerich
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Wall Street PR pros say ‘Occupy’ has made impact

Most communicators in the financial services sector now admit the Occupy Wall Street movement has had a negative impact on their business, and feel the movement isn’t going away.

By Kevin McCauley

A majority of Wall Street executives now believe Occupy Wall Street had a real impact on their business, and a big chunk of them were surprised by the rise of that protest movement.

That’s among findings of a Wall Street survey commissioned and published by New York PR firm Makovsky + Co. and conducted by Echo Research.

Fifty-three percent of 150 communications/marketing executives polled at banks, brokerage houses, asset management firms and insurers agree that Occupy made its mark. Nearly four-in-five (38%) were caught unaware by the activists, saying the movement “surprised” them, according to the survey.

A robust 71% of those surveyed expect Occupy to continue its protests well beyond the presidential election.

Scott Tangney, Executive VP of Makovsky’s Financial Services group, said the poll finds that respondents believe Occupy “is not going away anytime soon and financial services executives need to be better prepared to address this issue going forward.”

Wall Street perception remains poor

A whopping 96% of Wall Streeters blame their own actions for the negative perception of the sector. Nearly three-in-four (74%) say increased regulation will help improve reputation and build trust with consumers.

Asked to grade financial services’ PR efforts in the wake of the Occupy movement, 57% give PR an “average,” “below average” or “failing” mark. Thirty-four percent give PR an “above average” grade.

Perhaps the most astounding takeaway from the Makovsky survey however: 9% of Wall Street PR/marketing professionals believe they are doing a “perfect” job.

Another March survey, this one the results of a Hill + Knowlton Strategies poll, finds that although Americans are getting more access to corporate info (a view supported by 52% of respondents), they don’t feel it is easier to hold them accountable (30%).

Facebook co-head buys New Republic

By Kevin McCauley

Chris Hughes, the 28-year-old Co-Founder of Facebook, has bought a majority stake in the venerable New Republic magazine.

As Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, Hughes plans to update NR’s online site and concentrate on development of the tablet version for owners of iPad.

In a letter posted on the NR’s site, Hughes wrote:

“It seems that today too many media institutions chase superficial metrics of online virality at the expense of investing in rigorous reporting and analysis of the most important stories of our time. When few people are investing in media institutions with such bold aims as enlightenment to the problems of the nation, I believe we must.

“Many of us get our news from social networks, blogs, and daily aggregators. The web has introduced a competitive, and some might argue hostile, landscape for long, in-depth, resource-intensive journalism. But as we’ve seen with the rise of tablets and mobile reading devices, it is an ever-shifting landscape—one that I believe now offers opportunities to reinvigorate the forms of journalism that examine the challenges of our time in all their complexity. Although the method of delivery of important ideas has undergone drastic change over the past 15 years, the hunger for them has not dissipated.”

The New Republic will “remain a journal of progressive values, but it will above all aim to appeal to independent thinkers on the left and the right who search for fresh ideas and a deeper understanding of the challenges our world faces.”

Richard Just keeps the editor job at the magazine.

Media news briefs

JAMES MURDOCH RESIGNS FROM FIVE BOARDS

Embattled News Corp. executive James Murdoch has resigned from the board of Times Newspaper Holdings to focus his attention on deputy COO duties at News Corp. and development of its international broadcasting operation.

The younger Murdoch is also stepping down from NewsCorp Investments and News International Publishers Ltd., according to the U.K.’s Telegraph, which broke the story.

These resignations break the 39-year-old Murdoch’s ties with the British newspaper operation that is the focus of the phone hacking scandal and subject to a parliamentary probe.

The New York-based executive remains Chairman of British Sky Broadcasting Group and News Corp. Murdoch said he would also step down May 18 as a board member of Sotheby’s auction house. The company said it took advantage of Murdoch’s “broad-based marketing and brand management experience and guidance regarding strategic initiatives in Asia.”

Finally, Murdoch resigned a directorship at GlaxoSmithKline’s board earlier this year.

Murdoch helmed News International, the British newspaper operation, during the phone hacking scandal that triggered the shutdown of the News of the World tabloid.
Public affairs pros stifle reporting, say journalists

A recent survey of U.S. press pros indicates the public may only be getting part of the story, due to bureaucratic barriers put into place by agency public affairs officers.

By Greg Hazley

The public is not getting the information it needs because of barriers agencies are imposing on journalists’ reporting practices. That’s the message backed by seven in 10 journalists in a Society of Professional Journalists survey of 146 Washington, D.C.-area reporters.

Public affairs officers are getting most of the blame for interfering with journalists collecting information on the federal government, according to the survey.

Two-thirds of reporters said federal agencies prohibit them from interviewing employees some or most of the time, while three-quarters said they have to get Public Affairs Office approval.

SPJ President John Ensslin said the findings were not surprising but show a “dismaying” trend.

“The strategy of spokespeople acting as the spigots of that information inevitably backfires by fostering leaks and intrigue instead of all the sunshine and full disclosure,” he said.

When interviews are granted, PAOs are often monitoring the exchanges as 84 percent of journalists surveyed said a PR staffer is present in person or over the phone during interviews.

Despite the apparent frustration, 70 percent said they have a positive relationship with the Public Affairs officers they deal with and most said the PAOs are quick to respond to queries most of the time.

“For a reporter just coming onto a topic for the first time, it is beneficial to have someone to turn to for clarity and context that may not be apparent in a subject-matter-expert’s initial response to a question,” he said. “It does no one any good if a story is inaccurate or incomplete or if the information is misunderstood.”

Verrico said PAOs should be considered “a journalist’s best friend.” He sees the Public Affairs Office role as that of a “facilitator, not a blockade to a story.”

Verrico noted the “luxury” of media outlets having a dedicated beat reporter has become rare, so government spokespersons are working with general assignment reporters more often than not.

“I consider government agency controls over who I interview a form of censorship.”

A recent survey conducted by the Society of Professional Journalists found most U.S. journalists believe the practice of enacting government controls regarding whom journalists can interview is a form of censorship.

Chart: Society of Professional Journalists

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Influencing search results with transparency, integrity

Communicators are often asked how clients can manage their reputations online. Specifically, many want to know if they can “influence” Google search results. Although it’s impossible to control search results completely, there are a few simple steps companies can take to improve their online image.

There’s quite a bit of controversy surrounding the “reputation defending” tactics prevalent in the market today — including people editing their own (and vandalizing others’) Wikipedia pages; the posting of anonymous, negative comments on articles and blog posts; paying bloggers to publish negative articles about competitors; or setting up “dummy” pages to positively influence search outcomes. It is no secret that these methods are both unwise and unlikely to “stick.” As search engines perfect their algorithms, obvious attempts at slandering others’ reputations or artificially promoting one’s own will be excluded from search results. This is all the more reason that any attempt to manage search results be done credibly and transparently.

In maintaining its integrity for being a reliable, non-biased search engine, Google already safeguards control over search results. This exacerbates the frustration that many of us feel. As Internet users become more accustomed to producing and maintaining their own content online, they invariably believe that they should have rights to edit, curate, and maintain search results — at least for their own namesakes. Though Google respects users’ rights to control their own data, (including personal information such as browsing history, enforced by its new privacy policies), Google is adamant that no one entity have undue control or influence over search results. In theory, using a search term such as “jeans” should yield a long list of retailers, with the top results varying by day or hour depending upon what sites are most popular at that moment. When J.C. Penney was discovered to be effectively “cheating” at its page rank, appearing as the number one result for everything from “jeans” to “area rugs,” Google reevaluated and corrected its algorithms to prevent this from continuing.

Sensible solutions

Whether you are acting on your own behalf or on behalf of your employer, the best advice is to enhance the search results that you can control. Fortunately for reputation management’s sake, since the introduction of “Google Panda”, the search results you can control are gaining more prominence and increasingly appearing on the first page of search results. The most impactful way to enhance the assets you can control is to start claiming your identity online in as many outlets as possible.

A key step in influencing search is to actively manage all social media sites, from the prominent to the obscure. Search engines place substantial weight upon social media sites, even if the sites are relatively unknown by mainstream users. Claiming social media profiles in your name, fan pages, and corporate pages will produce considerable influence with very little effort. This includes the well-known profile sites: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Foursquare, and Google Places, as well as dozens of lesser-known social media sites. Even obscure social media pages and directory listings, if not actively managed, will self-populate and aggregate information from elsewhere on the web. If no page exists for a large corporation, even Facebook employs this same aggregation technique, pulling content from Wikipedia. Leaving this to chance is not a wise choice for obvious reasons. Since Wikipedia is inherently an amalgam of input regarding a certain subject (“the commons”), with policies that restrict corporations or individuals from editing and influencing their own entries, it can perpetuate the spread of potentially erroneous and misleading information.

If you do not actively manage all of your social media pages, then someone else (or something else) may do it for you, with mixed results. Social media pages with outdated or factually incorrect information have the potential to be damaging — regardless of whether you deem them irrelevant or obscure. We receive many inquiries for advice about how to correct the information on these pages. Unfortunately, they tend to appear on the first page of search results. In one case, a client’s phone number was listed prominently in search results under a Google Place page. Unfortunately, the number listed was for the Pennsylvania Department of Motor Vehicles, not that of the client.

Corporations are not the only entities susceptible to automated and often incorrect listings. Individuals, high-profile or not, are also at risk. For example, searching for my own name in Google pulls several erroneous, automated listings. As predicted, most of the first pages of results are social media profiles, with a mix of profiles that I created and profiles that I did not. Automated listings on just the first page of my search results include: Yatedo.com, Mylife.com, and Whitepages.com. Although these are less well-known social media sites, they still display incorrect information, misrepresenting me, my vocation, my location, and so on. Some of these listings also erroneously predict your location, annual income, family size, and many other unsettling aspects of your (or someone else’s) life.

Owning your online presence

Companies and individuals should actively monitor search results. If you are acting on your own behalf, then start claiming profiles and correcting incorrect information before a problem starts. If you are in a position to create web pages or claim ownership on behalf of your company or your client, then do so. Be cautious to claim only official corporate pages. Best practices dictate that a corporation should have one profile only for each social media site. Once you are in control of these pages, then you will be able to edit them for accuracy and dictate how you would like them to portray you or your company. In turn, the information you control will affect the search results that you do not.

Kayla Hamberg is an Associate at Sard Verbinnen’s Digital Communications Group in New York City.
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Why Facebook Timeline will be a boon for brands

Facebook in February announced that all brands with pages on the site would be required to transition to Facebook’s new “Timeline” profile format. Here’s a primer for how the platform upgrade is expected to affect online presence, and what benefits brands can expect.

By Adam Rosenberg

After the announcement regarding its new Timeline profile shift, people were already speculating when brand Pages would undergo the same changes. We’ve seen countless articles speculating exactly what the implications of Timeline for Pages would be, and most importantly how Timeline would be used.

Here are five key things you need to know about the new brand Page format:

The timeline

Timeline for Pages serves the same purpose it does for personal profiles — it tells your story. How little or much you wish to share is up to you, but it’s important to consider what your friends or fans would be interested in seeing. Content that is emotive tends to do well, so leveraging key milestones and dates of your life and your community is suggested, particularly when highlighted in photo albums appear more prominently in the timeline, and select images or posts can be “starred” and expanded across the entire width of the timeline. Additionally, your connections’ interactions with a brand now populate that brand’s Timeline. Users can have a more relevant and personal experience by being able to see how their friends are engaging.

Cover and profile images

The cover image is one of the first things your fans will see. However, Facebook has emphasized that that space is not to be used for promotions, call to actions, or advertising, so keep that in mind as you create your cover photo and develop an engagement strategy.

Say goodbye to default landing tabs

Customized landing tabs have been used in many ways on brand Pages, but have most commonly been used as default landing pages to drive new “likes” and give new users a “controlled” first experience. It also usually included some sort of incentivized call to action that instructed users to “like” the Page to get exclusive content. With the elimination of this feature, brands can now reposition tabs at the top of the timeline to highlight those they want their followers to engage with and then use regular content updates to draw attention to those tabs. The only way you can create a default landing tab is to invest in Facebook ads with the custom tab as the URL.

The pin is in

You can now pin a post so it appears as the first post people see for seven days. After that, it will be pushed down the timeline as other content is added. Pinning content on Facebook allows brands to keep popular posts top of mind and prevents them from getting lost in the conversation. This allows brands to highlight important or campaign-specific content and ensure a higher level of visibility for this content. A weekly content strategy will become more important in order to full maximize this feature. This will also change the way you set up your editorial calendar. While some manage their content “on the fly,” this requires more in-depth content strategy to create a balance of daily content and specific pinned posts that are the most likely to receive high levels of engagement from a brand’s audience. Pinning an item at the top of your feed might be important to you if you want to draw attention to a tab that normally you would’ve had as default. Additionally, all pinned posts can be geotargeted, allowing for more localized content, which will hopefully turn into more engagement.

It’s about engagement

Several changes to the admin panel support the notion that success on Facebook will be brought on by creating engaging, smart content rather than simply launching classic advertising campaigns. Fans of Pages can now interact with the Page through private messages. Though you can no longer restrict your wall view to show only posts from the Page, you can now manually approve every post from fans before they are published. If you click the “likes” tab on any brand timeline Page, you’ll see more public analytics than before.

This increased access to analytics assists with determining how your brand’s Page stacks up against its competitors. Additionally, it continues the trend of emphasizing overall engagement on a Page as opposed to strictly qualitative data such as the number of “Likes” a Page has amassed.

There are still a number of other new changes that are being rolled out on the Facebook platform, but the overall takeaway is that your brand or organization needs to commit to storytelling of past, present, and future as the most effective way to see success on Facebook. Visually compelling content and effective storytelling will always win out over static broadcasting.

Adam Rosenberg is an Account Supervisor at Edelman Digital.
How to evaluate a social media campaign

A step-by-step guide to ensure clients are getting the most out of a social media campaign.

By Ian Lipner

One of mankind’s most alluring questions has always been “how far have we come?” The tool for calculating distance — the odometer — is particularly interesting, as it has always been an instrument that accompanies success. In fact, Alexander the Great was among the first to use an odometer. He insisted that his mathematicians figure how far he’d gone as he conquered the world.

For too long, marketers have omitted the odometer altogether. Instead, they measured distance by putting their heads out the driver’s side window for the duration of the trip and then squinting at their windswept hairstyles to their clients at the end. Then, for a while they tried to measure by squinting at only a tachometer, assuming that 8,000 RPM always eventually led to high speeds. Never mind that the car might have been in neutral.

The good news is that today, you can not only install an odometer, but also a range of other gauges to create amazing social media campaign dashboards, from speedometers to engine temperature readouts to fuel indicators — and yes, tachometers, too. Here are some tips for putting measurement in the driver’s seat:

First gear: get into your analytics

On a bicycle, the spinning hub powering the speedometer and odometer is a small disc on the wheel. In social, it’s a rich analytics platform. Whether it’s Google Analytics, Omniture or something else, get it going and get access to it immediately. URL shorteners like Goo.gl and Bit.ly add another mechanism providing direct evidence that your outreach is grabbing web visitors to the right places. Both provide data structures that essentially ring a bell every time a customer enters the door.

Second gear: define outcomes

Whether awareness, revenue or political action, what outcome does your social marketing seek? At minimum, programs should push people to areas of your web properties that advance them that outcome. This doesn’t mean social programs must necessarily directly lead to outcomes — but they should take the user to channels you control and in which you can continue the education or sales process without the din of competition for attention. These can be defined both conceptually and literally within analytics platforms as conversions — the areas of your web presence that, when visited, represent evidence that your message is creating action. Conversion sits at the top of the measurement pyramid and creating ways to define and measure it in the most relevant way for your specific organization is critical to using data for communications decision-making. Don’t lose sight of the business goal.

Third gear: define performance

Odometers track the distance traveled but a speedometer adds the concept of time, and the tachometer a measure of effort. Likewise, think across all channels while considering multiple dimensions of measurement. Volume measures that demonstrate effort might include number of unique visitors to your overall domain, number of inbound links and visits from search engines. In-depth Key Performance Indicators that demonstrate quality of audience could include number of blog RSS/email subscribers, share of voice (percentage of online articles on your key topic that include your brand) or number of articles that include your organization’s key messages. Engagement metrics might include number of Facebook or blog comments, retweets and @ replies. Some organizations even want a gauge for sentiment, often using the KPI of proportion of positive or neutral reaction to content. To get the full picture, absolutely do define KPIs in every channel in which you market — but absolutely don’t create too many KPIs per channel! If you’re not certain how performance against a particular KPI will affect the business goals you are pursuing, you shouldn’t be using it to measure performance. And the more KPIs measured the less time there is left for teams to do the actual communicating.

Fourth gear: Set goals for each KPI and each tactic.

Create a way to look into historical performance across the KPIs you’ve chosen and set expectations based on your organization’s size, reach, and level of adoption of social marketing tactics. Scrutinize competitor performance against these KPIs as well. Set your course with an intended speed, an estimated time of arrival and a desired destination that indicates your message has been received.

Ian Lipner is Vice President of Lewis PR’s Washington D.C. office.

Icahn suggests PR firm planted hit

CVR Energy is relying on PR counsel as the nitrogen fertilizer producer is targeted by activist investor Carl Icahn.

Icahn owns 14.5% of the company and floated a hostile $2.6B tender offer last month which has been rejected by CVR’s board. Icahn appealed to CVR shareholders with an open letter March 14 blasting CVR’s PR efforts which he says are criticizing his record and intentions.

“The March 12 major news organization published commentary about my record and intentions at your company which prompt me to respond directly to you,” Icahn wrote, referring to a piece published by Reuters Breakingviews. “The piece was so fraught with inflammatory rhetoric and reasons not to render your stock that I would not be surprised if it was written by a PR firm paid for by CVR.”

Abernathy MacGregor Group is counseling CVR amid Icahn’s overtures. Steve Eames is VP of corporate affairs at CVR.

The company volleyed back at Icahn’s letter a few hours later, noting “it is absurd for Mr. Icahn to suggest, as he does in his letter, that a reputable news organization such as Reuters Breakingviews would compromise its standards and allow a public relations agency to plant stories.”

In the Reuters piece, Christopher Swann wrote, “Companies on the receiving end of his tactics, like CVR Energy, have all the more reason to spurn Icahn.”
Mobile media networks are receiving huge traffic increases from mobile devices. But the prospect of turning this traffic into profit has become one of the industry’s biggest challenges.

By Silvina Moschini

I n December, 425 million users logged on to Facebook from mobile devices. Oddly, the social network giant didn’t earn a cent in advertising from this enormous flood of traffic. While the traditional version of the platform demonstrates the company’s unique profitability (it earned $3.7 billion from advertising income in the last year alone), Facebook is now faced with the challenge of making a profit in mobile spaces without affecting the platform’s usability and overall popularity.

With six billion mobile phone lines worldwide (and the number of smartphones rising sharply), there’s no doubt where a big share of future business lies for online marketing.

A recent study presented by the advertising company inMobi at the last Mobile World Congress revealed that smartphone and tablet users now consume more content through their mobile devices than through TVs.

Twitter has taken all this into account, and recently announced that its ‘Promoted Accounts’ ad product will now be made available for its Android and iOS versions. Until recently, advertising messages were available only on the site’s standard mobile website, but not on the native applications for each operating system.

In a press release announcing Twitter’s changes, the micro blogging service underlined the user friendliness of the mobile platform. According to the company, in the next mobile application updates, promoted tweets will be integrated organically, and will look similar to any other messages. In addition, they’ll appear only once in the timeline, and will disappear as soon as other users’ tweets appear.

To begin with, promoted tweets will be seen by those users who follow the brand in question, and will later be slowly integrated for all web users. For their part, promoted accounts will be shown on the ‘Suggestions for you’ feature, as happens in the PC version of the platform. Currently 55% of users active on Twitter connect from mobile devices. With this slow incorporation, the platform is betting on generating a minimally-intrusive advertising model that will not negatively affect user experience but will, at the same time, generate more income from the rise in mobile traffic.

**Facebook’s doubts**

Facebook’s current inability to generate income from mobile device advertising is one of the social network’s main worries. In fact, this was mentioned by the company itself in documentation Facebook presented in preparation for its imminent listing on the stock market.

Of course, Facebook could roll out mobile advertising tomorrow if it wanted to. But, as with Twitter, what concerns the company is how to create an advertising model that doesn’t flood the interface with adverts and drive away users. The best current bet, in principal, is to imitate the strategy of its main competitor. Just like Twitter, Facebook is planning to implement a mobile advertising solution in which adverts appear among the platform’s traditional updates.

To this advertising initiative we have to add Facebook Credits, the online payment platform with which the social network plans to establish itself in the mobile sector as a chain for the commercialization of goods and services. Through this platform, users will be able to carry out transactions through the social network (basically the purchase of content and applications), and their costs will be charged through the mobile phone operator’s bill.

**Usability with profitability**

The $64 million question remains: will advertisers be prepared to invest their advertising budget in adverts that have the same visual presence as a traditional message? Paradoxically, the success of mobile platforms is presenting social networks with a dilemma. In devices with a smaller screen, the space for generating advertising content without bothering users is smaller than that of a PC. Platforms are therefore faced with the challenge of offering new advertising modalities that manage to convince both advertisers and users.

From the angle of marketing experts, and that of businesses looking to increase their visibility via their presence on mobile devices, the challenge today has become a question of content quality. In an increasingly dynamic environment loaded with information, companies that want to stand out will have to concentrate on giving users information with added value, and commit themselves to two-way interaction as a way of reinforcing their relation with consumers.

**Marketing’s mobile future**

Currently, mobility is the great paradigm changing the ways in which consumers use the web. According to a study by Google in its marketing eBook: “ZMOT: Winning The Zero Moment of Truth,” two thirds of the world’s population sleep with their mobile phones. This means that approximately 3.3 billion people are constantly by their mobile phones, and are never separated from them during the day (or night). Little by little, the mobile phone has become one of the possessions most treasured by users. Millions use it to communicate with their loved ones, to interact on the social networks, to log on to corporate networks, visualize and edit work documents, make payments and bank online.

The “mobile economy” is on the verge of an important increase in size. According to technology research company Gartner, during 2011 the number of mobile phone users who used their devices to make payments rose by 38.2%, accounting for 141 million people. The volume of transactions registered an even bigger growth: rising by 75.9% to almost $49 billion. All this indicates that the mobile trend will only continue to grow. According to the online auction site eBay, during 2012 its mobile sales are projected to grow by 37.5%, reaching $8 billion. Furthermore, eMarketer foresees that total mobile commerce in the United States will expand by 73.1% over the course of the year. Web giants such as Google and PayPal have already entered the world of mobile transactions and are committed to expanding their presence in the market in the coming months.

There’s no doubt that the mobile revolution is going to bring with it new advertising solutions and platforms aimed at fine-tuning its potential for profitability. Consumers are already using the mobile web. The next challenge is for brands to tap into this enormous potential with intelligent strategies that don’t negatively affect user experience.

Silvina Moschini is CEO and Founder of social media agency Intuic.
Why your email marketing campaign isn’t working

Successful email marketing campaigns are typically defined in terms of their open and response rates, and ultimately, their ability to generate revenue. Many businesses wanting to kick-start an email campaign might find themselves overwhelmed, or facing a general lack of know-how for where to begin.

By Nicole Merrett

Here are several suggestions to help you craft more effective email campaigns.

Subject line is key. Everyone has heard the saying, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Unfortunately, there is a reason one because it’s a natural instinct. First impressions are critical in any form of communication. When people receive an email, the first thing they see is the subject line, which has the potential to either gain or lose their interest. Subject lines that include your company’s name as a reference and provide specifics supporting your email topic will typically gain higher open rates.

Pay attention to who it’s “from.” To understand how important this is, think about your own inbox. Would you be more likely to open an email sent from advertising@xyzcorp.com or nicole.merrett@sage.com? People don’t want to feel like they’re receiving an automated email. If readers don’t see you putting time into personalizing the “from” address, they won’t spend time considering what you have to say.

Mail merge. People love seeing their own name. It makes them feel the email was written to them personally and not sent to recipient #432. Online services have simple options to directly insert names from your contact database using a template editor.

Variety. Sending an email can be one of the most effective ways to grab readers’ attentions. However, if you abuse the efficiencies email marketing provides, readers will stop showing interest in your emails. Consistency with any marketing campaign, yet variety is equally important.

How often do you send out newsletters, event invites, and updates that aren’t just soliciting a purchase? Are you getting an active response from recipients? If not, try something new. Be conscious about how many emails you send out each week or month. How are individuals interacting with your emails? Are you following up accordingly? How are you engaging the people that seem uninterested? Some email services include click-through analytics that monitor which readers spend time with your emails or forward them along to colleagues.

Quality over quantity. It’s far more important to send out content-rich emails than it is to send out long or multiple emails. When you provide your contacts with quality content, they’re more inclined to read your emails and even forward them to friends. Gain the trust of your contacts by emphasizing quality of communication over quantity. One option is providing information they can use immediately. A seller of gardening supplies might offer a series of horticulture tips; and when a prospect is in need of planting materials, is likely to think of the insightful supplier marketer first.

Content suggestions. How can you personalize your message content? Listen to your readers — the people who take time to contact you are most likely to become customers. Study their emails, questions, likes, and dislikes. Build or improve products with your customers’ input and they will notice you appreciate them and remain loyal. Social media monitoring is one easy way to listen to and engage your readers. Pay attention to what customers are saying online about your services and your industry. Use these insights to create valuable email content.

Test everything. Test the way your email appears, not only through your own email service provider, but several providers. Test all links in your message to make sure they work. Test your graphics. Pictures are a great way to grab someone’s attention; but remember, pictures don’t always show up in email messages, so test the effectiveness of your email by viewing them in an email client with images turned off and making sure your message remains easy to understand and the call-to-action clear.

Finally, test your email with a spam check tool before sending. Spam check services review email content to see what might get caught in spam filters.

And test some more with A/B testing. Your email has passed all the tests of looking good, having working web links, properly placed images, a call to action, and has made it through the spam check, but is not getting the open rates you expected. How come? There are many reasons including time of day, day of week, frequency, message, etc.

So why not test it? Test one change at a time. For example, explore what days your recipients are more likely to open your email. Split up your list and send each set the same email on different days. Does the open rate stand out more on one day than another? A next step could be to determine the time of a particular day people are more willing to open and interact with your email. Again split your list up and send out the same email at different times of the day. A good starting point is the start of the day, day of week, frequency, message, etc.

With email marketing you never need to settle for one formula because you will often have the flexibility to make improvements as you go. So make taking advantage of trends and technology the ‘constants’ in your digital marketing programs. They will help you achieve more tangible results with your campaigns.

Nicole Merrett is Vice President of CRM & Marketing for Sage North America.
Cision, which has been threatened by a damages claim from a major U.S. publisher, canceled plans in March for a dividend, new incentive plan for top execs, and share buybacks.

By Greg Hazley

Cision, the Sweden-based PR software company said March 18 it would nix three proposals ahead of its March 26 annual meeting because of “continuing uncertainty” surrounding the litigation threat.

That included a proposed 30 million SEK ($4.5 million) dividend, a plan to implement a long-term incentive plan for no more than 13 executives, and a proposal to authorize purchase of its own shares. Cision currently holds 69,442 of the company’s 14.9 million shares and its holdings cannot exceed one-tenth of the total.

Cision said March 8 that it had been threatened with a copyright infringement action by a U.S. publisher it has declined to name. At the company’s annual meeting March 26, Cision said only that CEO Hans Gieskes addressed the situation regarding the threat adding that further information will be disclosed “as soon as possible.”

CEOs exit

In February, Cision’s North American CEO Joe Bernardo stepped down with acceptance of an early retirement package, effective March 1.

The PR software provider named North American President/COO Peter Granat to take over Bernardo’s duties under Gieskes.

Bernardo, who joined the company in 1998, has overseen a restructuring and overhaul of Cision’s operations in the region and its transition from printed media directories to digital services in recent years. The company reported 12% growth in the U.S. for the fourth quarter of 2011, although Canadian operations were down 14%.

“For the past 13 years, Joe Bernardo has been key to Cision’s success in North America, as the company transformed itself from a news clipping service and publisher of hard-copy media directories to a global software and technology company,” said Gieskes.

Bernardo was previously president and publisher of Futures magazine after stints in tech and publishing.

Granat is the former President of Cision’s European operations, joining the company from the 2003 acquisition of MediaMap.

Just weeks after announcing the exit of its North American CEO, Cision said in March that its European CEO is leaving the company at the end of the second quarter.

Yann Blandy, CEO of Cision of Europe, is slated to take that same post at Sweden-based Intellecta AB.

Cision CEO Hans Gieskes said Blandy leaves behind a European operation “in better shape than ever.”

Publisher threat

Cision said March 8 that it has been threatened by a “major U.S. publisher” over copyright infringement but does not yet know if or how the claim will affect its operations.

“It is at present not possible to quantify the likely potential liability that Cision could incur as a result of this claim,” said a statement from Hans Gieskes and CFO Tosh Bruce-Morgan on March 8. “However, it cannot be excluded that the impact on Cision’s full-year earnings could be significant.”

That revelation sent the company’s Sweden-traded shares sinking by more than 25%.

The company said it intends to work toward an “amicable solution or otherwise invoke such defense as it sees fit.”

Revenues slip overall, but rise in U.S.

Cision in February reported fourth quarter revenue slipped 6% from 2010 to 252 million SEK, but organic growth swung positive to increase four percent on strength of its U.S. performance.

It posted 12% growth in the U.S. in 2011’s fourth quarter on revenue of 165.1 million SEK, although revenue slipped 2.5% for the full year 2011 at 598.2 million.

“There are clear signs that our 2010-11 investments in sales and marketing in the U.S. are paying off,” said Gieskes in releasing the earnings, noting improvements in Europe also boosted revenue.

The company continues to struggle in Canada, where revenue fell 13% in the fourth quarter.

Divestments and currency effects put a 28 million SEK hit on revenue for the fourth quarter, but net profit jumped 150% to 25 million SEK for the quarter over 2010’s fourth quarter.

For the year, operating revenue hit 969 million SEK, down 14% from 2010 on divestments of its Germany and Finland operations, but organic growth was 0.4% for the year. Gieskes noted it was Cision’s first full year of organic growth in four years.

Fifty-eight percent of Cision’s revenue for 2011 was derived from subscriptions. It counted 13,305 customers at the end of the year, including nearly, 9,000 for its CisionPoint PR software.

Cision shed 118 staffers in 2011, although it added headcount in the U.S.
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Profiles

O’Dwyer’s Guide to: SOCIAL MEDIA

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Radio and Online Media Tours; Integrated Media Tours; Social Media Campaigns, Blogger Connect and Twitter Parties; Web Videos, Webcasts, Live Video Stream and Event Coverage; Video, Audio and Multimedia New Releases; B-roll Packages; PSAs; and Corporate Videos (sales, investor relations, product launches, branding, training and highlight reels).

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BLAZE

226 Santa Monica Blvd., 3rd Fl.
Santa Monica, CA 90401
310/395-5050
mkovacs@blazepr.com
www.blazepr.com

Matt Kovacs, EVP/GM

Blaze is the nationally recognized PR firm that attracts compelling and aggressive consumer brands that need to win. Blaze develops campaigns that help our clients create relevance in the marketplace. Utilizing comprehensive strategic communications campaigns to differentiate and elevate our clients from their competitors, we are able to exceed our clients’ expectations when it comes to positioning them to their audiences, and attracting positive attention from both consumers and the media. Blaze creates and manages interactive communities using Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest and YouTube for clients. Our social media division works hand-in-hand with the PR team to reach targeted media, influencers and consumers to support all PR initiatives. Blaze also offers full public affairs capabilities through its parent company Davies.

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CATAPULT PR-IR

6560 Gunpark Dr., Suite C
Boulder, CO 80301
303/591-7780
 Fax: 303/581-7762
gmurrel@catapultpr-ir.com
www.catapultpr-ir.com

Ranked the leading technology PR agency in Colorado, Catapult PR-IR helps B-2-B technology companies establish market-leading positions through strategic positioning and messaging, aggressive media and industry analyst relations, and social media and community building. Hence the name, “Catapult,” the firm is expert at coordinating and executing high-impact company/product launches and helping companies build and lead market categories. It strongly believes that relationships still matter and that it is vital for companies of all sizes and types to connect with key influencers on a personal level. The result is clear and consistent messaging to the market, and an ongoing “win-win” relationship that benefits both parties. Catapult’s success stems from its personal and professional service, along with partner-level account involvement and strategy. It is the preferred agency for technology companies looking to establish and build market-leading positions.


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COOPERKATZ & COMPANY

205 Lexington Avenue, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10016
www.cooperkatz.com

Andy Cooper, Principal
Ralph Katz, Principal
Anne Green, President / CEO

CooperKatz & Company, Inc. is highly-regarded for its strong strategic and creative credentials. It offers full-service public relations, creative services and digital / social media capabilities to a national client base across many industry sectors.

The firm was an industry-leader in establishing a practice devoted to helping clients develop and execute effective social media and digital strategies. CooperKatz takes an integrated approach to digital strategies and factors them into every client engagement.

Capabilities include: conversa-
tion monitoring; influencer engagement; social channels development (including building / managing profiles and pages on sites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube); creative campaign ideation / execution; Web content development; Web video production; and online crisis preparedness / support.

CooperKatz has won numerous industry awards like the SABRE, and has been honored as ‘Best Agency of the Year’ in its size category and ‘One of the Best Agencies to Work For’ by The Holmes Report.

COYNE PUBLIC RELATIONS

5 Wood Hollow Road Parsippany, NJ 07054 973/589-2000 www.coynepr.com

1065 Avenue of the Americas 28th Floor New York, NY 10018 212/938-0166

Thomas F. Coyne, CEO
Rich Lukis, President
Tim Schranner, Senior Vice President
Marie Baker, Social Media Director

Coyne PR’s Social Media Division offers integrated, strategic solutions that drive tangible business results for industry leading clients such as Disney, General Mills, Burger King, Medco, Hershey, Mary Kay, and more.

We create programs that engage consumers, build positive brand sentiment, grow communities and drive consideration. Today, every brand is a publisher and understanding how to produce content that people want to engage with and share — whether educational, informational or merely entertaining — is an essential part of the marketing mix. Social Media is more than just Klout scores or chasing Facebook “likes,” it’s about making a human connection with other people. That’s what we do best.

Coyne PR’s social media offerings include social platform consulting, community management, Twitter/Facebook engagement, blogger relations, influencer identification and communication, SEO/SEM, analytics and measurement. The agency also partners with General Mills to manage and implement initiatives for two properties: MyBlogSpark, an 8,680 member blogger network, and MyInsite, a word of mouth network featuring 250,000 highly influential brand advocates.

In addition, the agency boasts an internal digital and design group, whose capabilities include digital production, full service design, video production, website design & development, mobile applications & programs and webcasts & e-learning.

DAVIES

Headquarters: 808 State Street Santa Barbara, CA 93101 805/963-5929 jadavies@daviespublicaffairs.com www.DaviesPublicAffairs.com

Additional Offices:

John Davies, CEO
Robb Rice, EVP
Taylor Canfield, EVP
Lisa Palmer, SVP
Joshua Boisvert VP
Sasha Boghosian, Director
Caitlin Bidwell, Office Manager

Davies is the national public affairs firm of choice for motivated clients who need to win high stakes matters, the toughest crises, and the most difficult regulatory problems.

From traditional outreach to highly structured online campaigns, Davies builds and implements grassroots programs to gain (or divert) the attention necessary to favorably shape public opinion and build genuine support for their clients’ projects. By integrating social media strategy into our authentic grassroots programs, we are able to quickly and effectively reach our clients’ target audiences at multiple touch points and successfully influence their conversations.

As public affairs experts, we understand how to activate online communities and create compelling messages that motivate individuals to stand up, speak out, and take action, influencing regulatory, permitting, and political challenges at all levels. Our track record of helping clients face complicated environmental issues is unsurpassed. With a 96% success rate we’ve turned more than 500 issues into non-events — often transforming them into opportunities.

Since 1983, Davies has consistently ranked among the top strategic communications firms nationally and received hundreds of industry awards. Davies offers public affairs expertise across multiple industries, with five specialized practice areas in Energy, Mining, Real Estate, Pharma/Biotech, and Crisis Management. Clients include Fortune 100 companies and top names in 47 states. To ensure you have the right messages, strategy and tactics to win, we’re standing by at DaviesPublicAffairs.com.

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355 Alhambra Circle, Suite 800
Miami, FL 33134
305/448-7450
www.rbbpr.com

Christine Barney, CEO & Managing Partner
Christine de la Huerta, VP
Digital Park

As the new media division of three-time “PR Agency of the Year,” rbb Public Relations, Digital Park’s strategic social and interactive programs are held to the highest standard. Digital Park successfully delivers powerful online brand enhancement and measurable business results to its consumer, corporate and B2B clients.

Digital Park services include: Online Reputation Management; Web Site Assessment & Development; Social Media Marketing and Monitoring; Blogger Relations & Blog Creation; and Podcasts & Videcasts.

Check out Digital Park’s blog at www.rbbdigitalpark.com.

rbb is a national marketing public relations firm with a reputation for delivering award-winning results and best practices to clients who seek and appreciate the individual attention only a boutique agency can provide. As the champion for breakout brands, rbb works with corporations that want to challenge market leaders and also brands that are already market leader, but want to break out from traditional marketing techniques and embrace fresh opportunities that the new media world offers. Firm capabilities encompass a variety of practice areas, including B2B, financial & professional services, consumer products, real estate, travel & leisure, health & fitness, sports & entertainment, food & beverage and crisis management.

DODGE COMMUNICATIONS

11675 Rainwater Drive, Suite 300
Alpharetta, GA 30009
770/998-0500
www.dodgecommunications.com

Brad Dodge, President and CEO
Brian Parrish, Senior VP and Principal
Elizabeth Glaser, Vice President and Principal

Ever wonder what your social media strategy says about you? If you’re like most B2B marketers, you fall into one of these categories:

The enthusiast. Your business was one of the first to have a social media strategy, and it just keeps growing. You’re every-
We bring you in-house capabilities to build digital programs within existing channels and to create fully customized standalone platforms. From creating comprehensive blog content and designing eye-catching infographics to developing new website functionality and serving as dedicated community managers, our team is experienced, quick and savvy.

We focus on developing targeted digital strategies, relying on research and analytics to map out your brand goals. No matter what your digital need may be — you can count on our team to deliver.

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112 East Hargett Street
Raleigh, NC 27601
919/832-6300
www.fwv-us.com

Rick French, Chairman & CEO
David Gwyn, President / Founder

Natalie Best, Executive Vice President / Director of Client Services

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast’s leading public relations, public affairs and brand communications agency, independent or otherwise. Founded in April 1997 by Agency Chairman & CEO Rick French, FWV now employs 70 public relations, advertising and digital marketing experts. Headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., FWV also has offices in New York City, Tampa, and Los Angeles.

FWV is home to one of the nation’s fastest emerging and groundbreaking digital services practices. A leader in launching head-turning, results-driven marketing campaigns, FWV executes multifaceted digital and social media initiatives to stimulate product trials, awareness and purchase on behalf of some of the world’s foremost companies and brands, including Wrangler, SAS, Melitta Coffee, the United States Polo Association, RBC Bank, and Hood River Distillers (Pendleton Whisky, Pendleton 1910, Yazi Ginger Vodka, Broker’s Gin and SinFire Cinnamon Whisky).

Comprised of a team of specialists in audience insight, user experience, interactive marketing and online media innovation, our digital marketing experts help clients better understand, navigate and utilize existing, new, and ever-evolving communications platforms. Public relations and social media are converging at a mind-bending rate and FWV and its digital staffers continue to stay ahead of the trend. Capabilities include: digital research and strategy; online communications planning; creative development for the web including website design, online video, social media content, and interactive advertising; word-of-mouth and viral marketing campaigns; and paid online, social and search advertising.

FWV has achieved significant results on behalf of its clients, including establishing companies and brands as online authorities in their respective industries and lifestyles; providing fans and brand loyalists online communities for engagement with each other on meaningful topics; maintaining a consistent increase in engagement levels month-over-month; increasing brand affinity, reach and purchase intent for specific products; and creating unprecedented emotional connections with consumers, while delivering targeted reach in scalable and measurable ways.

**HUNTER PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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

Grace Leong, Managing Partner
Donetta Allen, Agency Partner,
Social and Digital Media Practice Leader
Samara Farber Mormar, Senior Vice President, Business Development
Michael Lamp, Social and Digital Media Strategist

Social media offers a rich, continually expanding platform to build stronger and more meaningful relationships among consumers, products and brands. Hunter Public Relations — an independently owned, mid-sized marketing communications firm — harnesses the enormous power of Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, the blogosphere, social networks and an ever-evolving roster of emerging social media platforms to revitalize brands, create buzz around...
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PROFILES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FIRMS

JSH&A

Member of the IPREX global network
2 TransAm Plaza Drive, Suite 450
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
630/932-4242
www.jsha.com
www.facebook.com/jshapr
Twitter: @JSHAPR

Jonni Hegenderfer, CEO
Jim Kokoris, President
Cheryl Georgas, Assistant Deputy Manager
Miguel Cano, Director, Digital & New Media

Social Media is all about sharing. Generating conversations within and between communities that lead to recommendations/endorsements — and ultimately — brand ambassadors. Known for its innovative, multi-platform, marketing PR strategies, JSH&A’s Social LIF™ approach creates integrated campaigns that engage consumers and build the brand’s fan base. Facebook campaigns like Reinvent a Classic for ConAgra’s Alexia, and Twizzlers Landmark Summer™ sweepstakes drive online conversations with bloggers and the Twitter community while also driving consumers to brand websites and to grocery shelves.

Online and direct-connect WOM programs like the Hershey’s S’Mores Snactivity Suite at BlogHer and the Hershey’s Virtual Bunny Trail at Blissdom have leveraged the country’s largest mommy blogger conferences to build online chatter, grow the Facebook fan base, and provide a memorable trial experience.

YouTube channels, Mobile Apps, Facebook brand pages, Twitter parties, Foursquare check-ins, blogger engagement, these are the basics of a successful social media campaign. JSH&A’s integrated PR/Digital team works closely with clients to align strategies and break-through programming with business challenges and objectives. Whether it’s a new product launch, a marketing promotion, an energizing brand-building campaign, or continuing community outreach, the JSH&A Social LIF™ process gets everyone talking.

JSH&A Social LIF™ services include: Content Creation, Community Management, Influencer & Ambassador Programs, Events, Experiential & Word-of-Mouth, Videography, Mobile Apps, Social Media Monitoring, Media Relations, and more as technology continuously evolves.

KAPLOW

19 West 44th Street, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10036
212/221-1713
email: liz@kaplowpr.com
www.kaplowpr.com

Kaplow West
795 Folsom Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
415/291-2937

Liz Kaplow, President and CEO
Evan Jacobs, CFO
David Richeson, SVP & Exec. Director, Kdrive
Margarita Miranda-Abate, SVP, Consumer
Chaim Haas, SVP, Technology & Exec. Director, Knext
Dana Glasier, Exec. Dir., Kstudio
Joanne Amorese, SVP, Finance & Operations

HUNTER PR

Continued from page 20

Apple & Eve tasked Hunter Public Relations with developing and launching a cause-related initiative to increase the brand’s presence in social media, reaching its core consumer — moms. Hunter PR partnered with the VH1 Save The Music Foundation and enlisted Cory Monteith (“Glee”) to serve as the contest spokesperson. Monteith tweeted to his followers, encouraging them to submit videos of their school’s vocal group performing an original mash-up via the brand’s Facebook page. The Apple & Eve Facebook page increased its fan base by 250% and became a viral pep rally for contest participants and their schools.

Hunter PR

Continued from page 20

new products and build awareness among key influencer groups. Winner of a 2011 Bulldog Digital/Social PR Award, the firm’s unmatched acumen and insights into social media — coupled with thoughtfully tailored programming and precise tactical execution — benefit some of the most respected companies in America including Hasbro, Diageo, Kraft Foods, Campbell’s Soup Company, Johnson & Johnson, E&J Gallo Winery and 3M.

Reinvent a Classic with Alexia.

Last year, nearly 20,000 votes were cast for the next Alexia french fry flavor. The winner, Parmesan Lemon Waffle Fries will be in stores in early 2012. Now we’re calling for gourmet-loving Alexia fans like YOU to help decide the next great Alexia french fry!

Vote for your favorite!

This year we invited 22 top food bloggers from across the country to submit their ideas to reinvent that classic fry, and then we narrowed them down to the four top finalists that we know you will love. You can watch Chef Tyler Florence’s announcement below of the four finalist’s creations that were revealed at Foodbuzz on November 5th, 2011.

JSH&A invited 22 of the top food bloggers to submit ideas to reinvent the classic fry for Alexia’s next new product offering. More than 60,000 Facebook fans cast their votes on the top four finalists.
Kaplow is redefining PR. As an award-winning, holistic communications agency dedicated to cultivating brand identities, we partner with our clients to exceed their objectives. For more than 20 years, Kaplow has helped consumers fall in love with brands. We do this by garnering unique insight into our clients’ audiences, and then creating an emotional connection between consumer and brand through storytelling across traditional and digital channels. We ensure our brands are front and center with the media, events, and people that most influence the audience they need to reach — and believe strongly in the power of authentic and meaningful messages.

Kaplow is the agency of the future, today. With our in-house digital services division, Kdrive, social media is an integral component of the signature holistic PR strategy Kaplow develops and executes for our clients. Kdrive weaves consumer engagement at the grassroots level throughout the entire communications campaign, providing a 360 degree storytelling experience for brands.

Kaplow’s Kstudio develops creative video that gives brands the opportunity to act as their own storytellers. Equipped with a full production facility, Skype interviewing station, and customized distribution center, Kstudio enables Kaplow to direct messaging while providing consumers with video content that strengthens loyalty and engagement. A new business unit, Knext, launches early in 2012 to focus on the strategic communications challenges of agile and entrepreneurial companies primed to become significant consumer brands. As a full-service communications firm with traditional media relations, strategic brand consulting, editorial, social media, and digital production capabilities all under one roof, Kaplow is at the forefront of a changing PR landscape.

Agency clients include: Avon Foundation, Case-mate, Cosmetic Executive Women (CEW), CVS/Pharmacy, Demand Media (Livestrong.com and eLlow.com), GSI Commerce, Gurwitch (Laura Mercier and RéVive), Hautelook, Kellwood Brands, Microsoft (Skype), Nexsus, Shiseido, St. Ives, Target, TheFind, Timex, Tumi, Unilever (Nexxus and St. Ives). Knext agency clients include: Enterprid, Fanatics, Kinectic, and NY Angels.

In an age when everyone is “tweeting,” “liking” and “pinning,” it’s essential to break through the noise to build meaningful relationships with target audiences online.

L.C. Williams & Associates (LCWA) builds customized, well-rounded campaigns that make the most of social channels to spur audiences to action. From buzz-building through viral videos and attention-getting Facebook or Twitter contests, to daily interactions with our robust network of bloggers, we mine the constantly-changing social landscape to make an impact for our clients.

Of course, in social media, listening is just as important as talking. Our reputation management capabilities rely on monitoring, measuring and minimizing negative chatter to keep conversations focused on the positive.

Our staff is immersed in social media and considered leaders in the industry, participating in industry panels on how to reach mommy bloggers, contributing “how to” articles to our agency blog and managing daily interactions on behalf of clients First Alert, Eureka, Electrolux, Trex, Snow Joe, Pergo and more.

Maccabee

211 N. First Street, Ste. 425
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612/237-0087
www.maccabee.com

Paul Maccabee, President
Christina Milanowski, Dir., Social Media

Tapping into the brand building, lead converting and metrics-driving power of social media, Maccabee creates social media marketing and online PR campaigns for clients spanning healthcare, food, retail and technology to help them engage with their publics. Maccabee applies a thoughtful and disciplined process with content strategies involving search, blogs, YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest.

Combining human-driven evaluation by Maccabee staff with the best measurement services, our agency provides quantifiable, actionable analytics for every campaign. A hallmark of Maccabee is a network of strategic alliances with interactive partners whose services (from SEO and Web design to experiential marketing) complement ours. Brands that have benefited from Maccabee’s social media expertise include AmericInn Hotels, Deluxe Corp., Gold’n Plump, Hazelden and RedBrick Health.

Marina Maher Communications

830 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
212/485-8800
Fax: 212/355-6318
www.mahерcomm.com

Susan Bean, EVP, Creative Catalyst Group
Robert J. Ricci, Group SVP, Creative Catalyst Group Social Media

Marina Maher Comms. (MMC) is the preeminent expert in marketing to women. The agency develops fresh insights about women and leverages our deep relationships with influencers to motivate women to act. MMC’s Creative Catalyst Group (CCG) Social Media Engagement Leaders attract, engage and activate a passionate community of women around your brand. Guided by a social media pioneer who produced a break-through online ambassador program for moms, our Engagement Leaders develop digital assets and run your social media properties, engaging your fans in an ever evolving conversation that spreads your message. Through our proprietary Influencer Mining tool we identify the followers who are most likely to become your brand’s ambassadors and then develop rich, shareable content to motivate these women to spread the word.

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7248 Bernadine Ave., 2nd Floor
West Hills (L.A), CA 91307
818/340-5300
818/618-9229
Fax: 818/340-2550
www.mayoopr.com

Aida Mayo, President
George McQuade, VP

Mayo Communications, a full service PR firm based in LA since 1995 with offices in New York, Boca Raton, FL, San Diego and Bern, Switzerland. Mayo PR offers social media, blogging, Facebook, Google+ account setup services, maintenance and reputation management services. Our clients are B2B, B2C and social cause platforms including TODAY I CAN DO ANYTHING, Hollywood, CA with a line of apparel with an inspiration message. MAYO also provides on camera media training. Our clients and services include government, smart grid technology, utility companies, nonprofits, celebrity charity and Fortune 500 corporations. Mayo also brands startups, performs product
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Stephen Marino
www.mslgroup.com
New York, NY 10019

just Get It!™

“We don’t guarantee media, we just guarantee results,” said Toby Srebnik, Dir. of Social Media at MWW Group.

At MAYO Communications, we believe that media is just one piece of the puzzle. Our team of creative digital designers, copywriters, producers and programmers, work together with our clients to create comprehensive solutions that not only get the attention, but also engage and drive results.

The May issue of O’Dwyer’s will rank the top 100 public relations firms in the U.S. Accompanying this issue there will be a profiles section where the top-100 ranked firms can discuss their practice in their own words. If your firm has been ranked by O’Dwyer’s, you should list it in your firm’s profile.
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950 Third Avenue, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10022
212/994-7800
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Amy Binder, CEO

Social and digital media are effective vehicles for reaching influencers and engaging with target audiences. RF|Binder has developed and executed many successful online media programs for various B2B and B2C clients, ranging from thought leadership on Facebook for The McGraw-Hill Companies to community building on Facebook for Dunkin’ Donuts to conversation monitoring for ACE Private Risk Services.

While we recognize that all clients have unique objectives, we always begin our social media programing with an understanding of the client’s social media footprint, with a focus on answering two WHOs, a WHAT and a WHERE. WHO are the influencers? WHO are their audiences? WHAT are they saying? WHERE are their conversations happening?

By integrating our social and digital media talent with our traditional public relations expertise, we are able to quickly and effectively reach our clients’ target audiences at multiple online touch points and successfully influence their conversations. To do so, we develop online tactics that strengthen the target audience’s emotional connection with our clients’ brands while also ensuring that all communications and messaging are on-point and on-brand.

As experts in public relations, we understand how to build online communities to activate programs with an understanding of the quickly evolving world of social media, we offer clients our knowledge, insight, relationships and a deep understanding of the quickly evolving social media sector to assist them in developing and executing communications strategies that put them in the mix of the online conversation with consumers about their brands. Our team creates and implements customized campaigns for start-up social network companies seeking to build awareness through traditional media outreach as well as established brands seeking to utilize social media solutions to engage with consumers on a deeper level.

Whether we are targeting influencers, engaging consumers directly, or driving home a brand’s message, Rogers & Cowan helps influence the way our clients’ audiences

ROGERS & COWAN

Pacific Design Center
8887 Melrose Ave., 7th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90069
310/854-8117
Fax: 310/854-8106
inquiries@rogersandcowan.com
www.rogersandcowan.com

Tom Tardio, CEO

Rogers & Cowan is the leading entertainment marketing and PR agency with offices in Los Angeles, New York and London. Our highly experienced team of professionals is at the forefront of social media capabilities whether we are creating an overarching digital strategy for brands implementing platform communications, designing and executing comprehensive, integrated social media campaigns or creating custom applications and content programs for a diverse roster of clients. Rogers & Cowan was the first leading entertainment firm to build a social media practice.

As innovators in navigating the world of social media, we offer our clients’ knowledge, insight, relationships and a deep understanding of the quickly evolving social media sector to assist them in developing and executing communications strategies that put them in the mix of the online conversation with consumers about their brands. Our team creates and implements customized campaigns for start-up social network companies seeking to build awareness through traditional media outreach as well as established brands seeking to utilize social media solutions to engage with consumers on a deeper level.

Whether we are targeting influencers, engaging consumers directly, or driving home a brand’s message, Rogers & Cowan helps influence the way our clients’ audiences
think about their brand while nurturing and building ongoing dialogue with niche communities. When it comes to digital communities, we identify the influencers who matter to our clients, get them the information they care about, and build relationships that benefit both the consumer and the client.

Our clients and projects have included Rdio, Avon Voices, Swarovski, Kraft’s Real Women of Philadelphia with Paula Dean, the launch of the Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony Collections for Kohl’s, Revision3, Anthony Zuiker’s Level 26 Transmedia Series, EQAL, Cambio (AOL & Jon Stewart), Grammy Awards/Recordings Academy social media campaign, Scion Reinvent the Wheels series, and web/mobile native development project, 19 Entertainment’s If You Can Dream, web series, GlaxoSmithKline all mommy blogger campaign, Fanta’s Search for the 4th Fanta blogger campaign, Pauly Shore’s Adopted DVD launch and other campaigns for Wheaties Fuel.

ROOM 214

3390 Valmont Road, Ste. 214
Boulder, CO 80301
303/444-9214
Fax: 303/865-3759
www.214.com

Jason Cormier and James Clark, Co-Founders

Room 214 provides social media and digital marketing solutions for iconic brands and companies seeking leadership in their markets.

Services include social media research, strategy, and execution on all aspects of digital marketing campaigns. The Boulder-based agency fosters a high culture community, consisting of a 30-member team with in-house expertise to fulfill all requirements pertaining to online customer engagement strategies, digital advertising, creative design, video production, blog and mobile site development, marketing dashboards and custom Facebook applications.

Founded in 2004, the company began by creating unique marketing programs that combined public relations with search engine visibility practices. As a leader in social media marketing since 2006, Room 214’s co-founders and Group Practice Directors regularly contribute to social media publications, expert speaking panels and quarterly trend reports.

--------ROSICA

COMMUNICATIONS

95 Rt.17 South
Paramus, NJ 07652
www.rosica.com

Chris Rosica, President

Rosica’s social media services include blogger outreach, social media monitoring (for online reputation management), follower acquisition and contest/promotions.

The agency successfully secures positive, non-paid product reviews and content on thousands of blogger sites in such categories as mommy, parenting, wedding, lifestyle, fitness, nutrition, food, spirits, beauty, fashion, and personal finance. We generate positive reviews on powerful sites (PageRank two or higher) with links to client websites. Rosica manages the product trial/review process and creates and executes blogger contests and giveaways, resulting in quality and quantity placements. Moreover, Rosica uses social media to protect the online image of companies, brands and people alike.

The firm also creates company and spokesperson blogs, YouTube channels and branded Facebook and Twitter profiles. Then, Rosica search engine optimizes the content it creates/places, using link building, content syndication tools, and social bookmarking to elevate its clients’ social media presence.

--------RUDER FINN

301 East 57th Street
New York, NY 10022
212/593-6463
schneider@ruderfinn.com

Scott Schneider, Chief Digital Officer

At Ruder Finn, we truly understand there needs to be a social component to every communications campaign, and our people live and breathe social both as consumers and as practitioners.

At RFI Studios, Ruder Finn’s embedded digital studio, a team of more than 50 designers, strategists and technologists create integrated engagement platforms for mobile, social and .com that drive real business needs. From managing Facebook communities of seven million plus to digital engagements that span more than 150 countries, from geolocation to gamification, from big data to big ideas, Ruder Finn and RFI Studios will bring your brand to life digitally in a way other agencies can’t. We’ll connect you to your customer, activate the right voices on your behalf, and provide meaningful metrics to measure your return on engagement.

These days everyone says they are integrated. At Ruder Finn we actually are. We know that to truly deliver digital, you need to combine a team of industry experts who really understand your business with a team of focused, dedicated digital specialists. Together, we’re a team with the energy of a start-up and a track record of executing and delivering award winning digital campaigns that leverage the full range of digital tools. Visit www.ruderfinn.com or www.rfistudios.com to find out more.

--------SCHNEIDER ASSOCIATES

Member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group
2 Oliver Street, Suite 901
Boston, MA 02109
617/536-3100
Fax: 617/536-3180
launch@schneiderpr.com
www.schneiderpr.com

Joan Schneider, President &
Creative Director
Phil Pennellatore, Chief
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Julie Hall, Executive Vice
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Since 2004 — before the launch of Facebook or the ubiquity of 140 characters — SA has been a leader in social media, digital influence and engagement. We are constantly evolving our social advocacy and digital influence offering to help clients navigate a changing landscape and tap into powerful social networks that must complement paid and owned to be truly impactful.

At SA, our 360 degree approach starts with building listening programs, refining the message, curating content, identifying and engaging influencers, and cultivating conversations that build relationships and develop brand and issue advocates. The leader in Launch PR®, we are always launching new ideas to keep clients top of mind with media, consumers, partners and employees.

In the new social world, we help businesses grow more social, and use social and digital technologies to grow business.

Schneider Associates specializes in Launch Public Relations®. Learn more at www.schneiderpr.com

--------SPECTRUM SCIENCE

COMMUNICATIONS

2000 K Street, 2nd Floor
Washington D.C., 20006
202/955-6222
www.spectrumscience.com
info@spectrumscience.com

Anthony LaFauce, Director,
Digital Strategy

A great story told with conviction and passion can move and motivate an audience. At Spectrum, we create stories where science is the centerpiece, and we tell them to audiences that matter most.

To craft a story that resonates, the Spectrum Digital Team first listens to what is being said and who is saying it. We develop messages that make an impact, and create a plan that tells your story to influencers via the most effective digital channel. With the bevy of digital tools available — from Facebook to Pinterest to Google+ — the right medium is as critical as the message.

Spectrum turns the traditional art of storytelling into winning digital campaigns for clients such as Procter & Gamble, Avanir and many others. Each story is unique, and we tell it with passion for our clients and their work. Read about our stories at spectrumscience.com/the-right-results.

--------TREVELINO / KELLER

949 W. Marietta St., Suite X-106
Atlanta, GA 30318
404/214-0722
www.trevelinokeifer.com
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www.prstarbase.com

Trevelino/Keller’s social media platform features an award-winning methodology that is designed to create new channels to engage B2C and B2B audiences in a socially authentic manner. Freestanding or integrated into an overall communications strategy, the firm’s five-step Social
Methodology (Strategy, Listen, Build, Engage and Measure) is winning client engagements, generating new revenue streams and delivering measurable results for its emerging and established brands. In the last six months, the firm has expanded its Social Suite to include SocialASM, a subscription-based solution created in partnership with Soket, an Atlanta technology company. The solution allows Trevelino/Keller to build and manage local store social properties for multi-unit companies, corporate and franchise to compete more aggressively at the local level. In 2012, the firm is rolling out a dynamic content publishing solution for websites and social properties from Scribit, another technology company out of Atlanta. Some of the firm’s clients utilizing its Methodology and Social Suite include TCBY, Verizon Wireless, FootSmart, Vertical Acuity, Response Mine and more.

**TRYLON SMR**

41 East 11 Street
New York 10003
212/905-6060
www.trylonSMR.com

Lloyd P. Trufelman, President

Trylon SMR has exclusively served clients in the technology, media and telecom industries since 1990. As one of the earliest PR agencies to represent online industries and also leverage online media for PR campaigns, Trylon SMR has been a digital media relations pioneer. As specialists positioned at the nexus of mainstream public relations and new technology, Trylon SMR delivers tangible results quickly, charges reasonable fees, works without long term contracts and is well-versed in all forms of new, mainstream, digital, social and emerging media. Trylon SMR implements social media campaigns that integrate with mainstream media relations tools and techniques in a complimentary manner, but do not replace them. Unfortunately, in a rush simply to appear cutting edge, some PR firms overstate the effectiveness of social media, typically at the expense of time-honored and still-relevant mainstream strategies. Some even relegate the communications function entirely to Facebook and Twitter, without any general media relations expertise in the mix. Those who rely entirely on Twitter or Facebook to advance their communications goals are not implementing a truly viable strategy. The Pew Research Center’s State of the Media report recently found that “social media are not major drivers of users to news sites,” and revealed instead that “news organizations — old and new — still produce most of the content audiences consume.” The most viral news memes originate and/or are amplified via mainstream media platforms, both digital and analog. There’s simply no single magic PR bullet. In fact, the increasingly fragmented audiences created as a result of the explosion of media outlets require that PR efforts be spread across multiple platforms. This may seem overwhelming, but the proliferation of outlets now make almost everything promotable. It’s hard nowadays to not be able to find a media channel that is interested in reporting on a particular topic, no matter how obscure. However, without good news judgment and editorial skills, it doesn’t matter. It’s astonishing how many awful pitches or silly ideas can be expressed in 140 characters.

**VERTICAL ACUITY**

2859 Paces Ferry W., Ste. 1810
Atlanta, GA 30339
678/831/2470
Fax: 678/309-1208
jfiveash@verticalacuity.com
gregg@verticalacuity.com
www.verticalacuity.com
www.scribit.com

Gregg Freishtat, CEO
Joe Fiveash, President

Vertical Acuity is the world’s first content logistics platform. The company makes it really easy to move licensed content from some of the top brands on the Web into websites. Over the last two years working with online publishers, Vertical Acuity has amassed more than 60 million pieces of fully licensed content that web publishers can inject into their site as easily as featuring someone on Facebook.

In March 2012, Vertical Acuity will launch “Scribit” (www.scribit.com), a simple “one click” platform that lets businesses publish relevant articles from across the Web to their business’s website. It’s a first-of-its-kind sharing and publishing tool that drives traffic to business sites from social media and generates deeper engagement with businesses web sites. Scribit changes the entire sharing and social media paradigm for online marketing by enabling businesses to “u-turn” social media audiences who used to look at third party web sites to start looking at that same premium content on their own sites. Unlike normal sharing, which sends people away from your site, Scribit sharing sends people to your site to read it, because that’s where the content lives. By changing the point of consumption for shared content, Scribit makes sharing a productive tool for online sales and marketing.

Scribit offers businesses a simple solution to both drive new visitors through social media and offer a better web site once those visitors arrive by curating relevant information on the web. Businesses can now share high quality content from top tier publishers and create a better, richer, always up to date site. This new traffic and content on businesses ‘web sites will drive increased sales and revenue.

**WCG**

60 Francisco Street
San Francisco, CA, 94133
wcgworld.com

Jim Weiss, Chairman, CEO
Bob Pearson, President
Tony Esposito, CFO

WCG believes social media and analytics are essential components in modern communications. The firm’s dedicated and experienced professionals are industry leaders in driving education and behavior change at all levels.

Every aspect of WCG’s work — strategy, engagement and policy — is grounded in research and analytics. Those key factors produce insights to help its clients identify the right audiences, understand their language and preferences, develop and syndicate content that resonates with them across platforms, and increases share-of-communication.

WCG knows that as the online and offline worlds converge, success lies in recognizing that “social media” is less about content and more about the context in which a message is delivered, a consumer is engaged or an issue is managed.

Content produced by WCG includes the Common Sense and Pre-Commerce blogs, and Live from Stubbs.

WCG, along with W2O Ventures and Twist Marketing, are part of W2O Group.
O’Dwyer’s Directory gives you quick access to large, medium-sized, and small PR firms and even experienced freelancers who work out of their homes. Whether you seek a long-term, worldwide relationship or need extra help on a project, O’Dwyer’s Directory is the place to shop.

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Webcasting becomes de facto tool for online presence

Lower cost and an explosion of new online capabilities have made the once-expensive practice of webcasting a feasible reality. Here’s why companies not taking advantage of this technology are missing out on a vital online communications opportunity.

By Jim Gold

When the first live video and audio were transmitted over the Internet in late 1994, the lives of corporate communicators and PR professionals changed forever. No longer was a live program transmitted by satellite a prohibitive cost. As technology has evolved, quality has improved and costs have plummeted.

Now, virtually anyone with a camera, a broadband connection and a few hundred dollars can start transmitting live images across the web. Of course, thousands of companies and organizations take advantage of that tool every day, whether it’s to reach an internal audience or to stage presentations and shows directly to consumers.

And as younger audiences start viewing more and more content exclusively on their PCs, tablet devices and smart phones, the growth of webcasting will no doubt continue its exponential upward expansion. From a PR and marketing perspective, this is all positive. And there’s no doubt that those who aren’t webcasting could be missing out on a huge communications opportunity. What was once a prohibitively expensive satellite teleconference event that a remote audience could watch, but not effectively participate in, is now a truly interactive event at a small fraction of the cost.

One of the most popular live streaming services, Livestream, streams more than one billion video minutes per month to a growing community of 20 million monthly viewers. There’s also a growing demand to allow live streaming video on personal and company websites and Facebook pages.

“We’re really now evolving to webcasting 2.0,” said Max Haot, Founder and CEO of Livestream. “The traditional webcast is old hat. It’s now all about live streaming, on-demand and interactivity. What was a one-way medium can now engage audiences from across the room to across multiple time zones.”

Companies and organizations continue to hop on the webcast bandwagon, but are communications professionals consistently getting the maximum bang for the buck? Seeing the potential to cut costs over traditional satellite or broadcast programming, however, often leads to poor planning.

“Video can be a very powerful way to communicate a message,” said Amanita Duga-Carroll, Executive Vice President of Rubenstein Communications. “As with all content creation, though, it is important to identify your target audience, and your key messages — but equally important is determining how best to use visual elements to make your message stand out.”

Nonetheless, there’s no doubt that most major and many smaller organizations need to be on the webcast bandwagon, whether it’s a small-scale internal event, such as a sales meeting or customer presentation, or on a large-scale, when you’re trying to reach hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of consumers.

But there’s an old adage, or at least as old as an adage can be in the modern era of webcasting, that says if your audience can’t see or hear the webcast, they will tune out. Therefore, if your webcast is of any importance internally or externally, cost remains important, but not at the expense of good production values.

“Clients must strongly assess their messaging and goals and produce the webcast accordingly,” said Jim Sulley, President of newscast. “Whether it’s ensuring that the room is professionally lit or deciding on whether to use multiple cameras, a webcast needs to be carefully planned in order to maximize its success.”

Sulley strongly advocates the use of multiple cameras when producing a webcast. “Not only do two or more cameras give you a variety of shots and make the show more interesting for the viewer, but you can also use your recorded assets to create archives that can live on for months or even years.”

“There are times when a single camera, low-cost webcast might be appropriate,” Sulley said, “but you need to create a look and feel comparable to the brand.”

Creating a compelling webcast is not much different than creating a compelling video. A very basic experience that is not intended to capture an audience’s attention for more than a few minutes could definitely thrive with a one-camera shoot. However, if one wants to capture the viewer’s attention for a longer period, the production needs to be much more dynamic.

“Social media is at the core of communicating messages today,” according to Marcy Simon, the secret of change specialist at Agent of Change, a full service agency accommodating the philanthropic, film, music, political, and wellness industries. “When planning a streaming event, whether live or on-demand, you need to identify why you’re doing it, what your key messages are, and how best to exploit the technology to make your event shine and have a lasting impact.”

“Interactivity brings the audience into the core of a live streamed event,” Sulley said, “making this communications tool far more powerful than any traditional communications methods employed previously. Whether trying to impress consumers or your own internal staff, it will never happen if the program doesn’t engage.”

Adding additional cameras, especially when there is more than one featured speaker, is essential. It is important to deliver content that is interesting and visually stimulating to the audience. Incorporating audience feedback via Twitter, Facebook and other methods solidifies audience attention and excitement.

If a webcast is dependent on audience participation, the producer needs to encourage interactivity so that viewers stay interested and engaged. Even if the event does not require participation, such as a concert or celebrity event, people are more likely to stay and watch if they feel like they are interacting with the webcast. They are also more likely to share and discuss the event via social media, which will drive viewership.

There’s no doubt that the age of the webcast is maturing, and the power of the webcast can be enormous. But what seems like a simple idea can be a complex production. For those without experience when producing an event, it’s essential to bring in a pro with significant webcast experience. In the scheme of things, webcasting can be a relatively inexpensive tool with potentially solid benefits.

Jim Gold is Director of Strategic Services at newscast.
Elections, economy to lead 2012 news cycle

The upcoming Presidential election and the U.S. economy’s long road to recovery will be big talking points for news stations this year, according to a national survey of broadcasters. The programming demands for many of these stations however, remains largely consistent.

By Lynn Harris Medcalf

At the close of 2011, News Generation conducted a survey of 150 news/talk stations in the top-100 radio markets (stations that broadcast in both English and Spanish), to find out how they see the 2012 broadcast year shaping up. What topics do they expect will lead station coverage?

Given the continued slow pace of the economic recovery, it’s not surprising that English-language stations named the economy as number-one topic (at 53%). It even edged out the Presidential election (which stood at nearly 46%), but these two topics together dominated broadcasters’ responses and are, in fact, intertwined.

For Spanish-language stations, the anticipated topic coverage was a bit more dispersed. Top rankings went to entertainment (at 37.5%) and health (at 25%), followed closely behind by the economy and education (both at 15%).

Interviews dominate

The survey also revealed that for both English and Spanish stations, interviews make up the largest proportion of their on-air programming. On the English side, interviews make up more than 40% of a station’s regular programming, followed by wire stories at 19%, network feeds at 17%, news releases at nearly 16%, and listener call-ins at 8%.

On the Spanish side, interviews make up 34% of a station’s programming, followed by news releases at 24%, network feeds at 18%, listener call-ins at 12%, and wire stories at 12%.

Local news takes precedence

What kinds of stories would stations prefer to include in their locally produced newscasts? Across all stations, if it’s a national story, it needs to be “big” to warrant a specially produced piece in the local coverage cycle. And most said these national stories simply must affect their local communities. This could be through a local interview or story angle.

One participant requested: “Timely news releases/interviews that affect our community.” Another suggested: “Good, factual interviews with a local angle.” Finally, another confirmed they could use interviews with local spokespeople on relevant, timely issues of the day.

Spanish language stations echoed these same requests, and said they would also welcome interviews specifically related to health and education issues that impact the Hispanic community.

So what’s the takeaway? While there’s a lot of air time for stations to fill, it’s vital for people pitching them to understand that tailoring a story is a must in today’s news environment. Making your story relevant to a station’s listening audience will increase your chances of being on their airwaves.

It will be the savvy organizations with great stories, and media relation pros who can provide stations with guests who have a compelling, timely — and ideally, local — message, who come out ahead. As one survey participant said, they’d like “Interviews that inform and challenge the events, ideas and cultures of its listeners.” Another suggested, “Real, meaningful stories, not commercials.” One thing is for sure: 2012 will not be “business as usual” for the airwaves.

Senators seek administration PR records

A bi-partisan pair of U.S. Senators is requesting information from federal agencies about PR, advertising and similar services contracts in a bid they say is aimed to root out wasteful spending.

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) have dispatched requests to 11 federal agencies to look at PR contracts in a bid to gauge “how much money the administration is spending to promote its own policies.”

Portman, the ranking Republican on the Senate’s Subcommittee on Contract Oversight, said the move is not partisan but is a reaction to “accounts of wasteful federal spending on PR contracts.” McCaskill chairs that subcommittee of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.

An unidentified Portman aide was more blunt speaking to Roll Call in saying, “This investigation will further probe this administration’s use of taxpayer-funded spin.”

The senators have asked federal agencies like the Dept. of Health and Human Services, Dept. of Energy, Dept. of Justice, and Dept. of Defense, among others, to produce documents by March 16.

Fox News, also citing an anonymous Portman aide, said the aide pointed to a Judicial Watch report last year which singled out Ogilvy’s work promoting the healthcare.gov site about healthcare reform.

Variety goes on auction block

Reed Business Information in late March put Variety, the Hollywood showbiz title, on the auction block as part of its program to focus on data services rather than print magazines.

Mark Kelsey, CEO of RBI, said Variety “has an incredibly talented team who have successfully innovated and expanded the franchise in industry news and analysis. I have no doubt the business will continue to thrive under new ownership,” according to a report on Variety’s online edition.

Variety President Neil Stiles is “confident that with new ownership, Variety will continue to thrive, innovate and provide fantastic insight into the sector.”

The magazine has covered and analyzed the entertainment business for more than 100 years.
Speaking with audiences instead of talking at them

Broadcasters that ignore social media’s power and potential are delegating their content to yesterday’s news.

By Jim Ethridge

The news is no longer something people want to just watch, read or hear. It’s something they want to live and experience.

News is instantaneous. Sometimes news isn’t even necessarily news; think Colbert and Stewart.

What does this mean for television and radio news and how will the broadcast public relations industry adapt?

National news outlets are far ahead of local news when it comes to the interactivity consumers are seeking. CNN, for example, has been asking for news footage from its viewers via iReport — where producers verify compelling, important and urgent news reports made by the public and make them a part of coverage — for almost six years.

FoxNews.com live streams every weekday from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Throughout the show, which accepts in-studio, satellite, Skype and telephone interviews, hosts consult their laptops and answer questions via Twitter.

CNN, MSNBC, ESPN and many other cable networks have similar interactivity with viewers.

Public relationships

Many local newscasters fear social media and even perceive it as a threat. For years the local news modus operandi has been to disseminate news as news directors saw fit to the audience they decide need to be reached. They never wanted to hear directly back from their audience.

They’ve always presented information the same way one visits a doctor. The physician decides what you need, puts the medicine in the needle, injects it and leaves. There’s neither give nor take between medicine and patient.

A former producer once told me that local TV stations see social media as merely a means of advertising. They want to draw viewers in, but for the most part they ignore what viewers have to say unless it’s complementary of the news cast. Social media is a conversation. Without that conversation, many local broadcasters are missing the point.

Social media is something not to fear, but to respect. A brand should want to know what its audience is thinking, but also be prepared for what that audience may have to say.

And isn’t that what public relations is? It’s public relationships … and it’s not a relationship if the dialogue is one-way as in a press release.

Much the same way lines between public relations and advertising are breaking down before our eyes, so are the lines between news and audience, TV and Internet, social media and information. This shift toward two-way communication will bring shared news to the forefront of PR.

So, what happens if local television news doesn’t make a stronger push into social media and its online presence? A vacuum will be created to be filled by others. There are already hyper-local blogs covering neighborhoods such as AOL’s Patch.com. What would happen if Patch began producing video or what if Patch presents citizen video to be monitored by citizens?

Kony phenomenon

Consider the recent Kony 2012 video about a vicious African war lord. What kind of video is it? It’s not a documentary. It’s not a Hollywood movie, nor is it a traditional network news story or some hasty citizen journalist mash-up. Yet, the Kony video has been viewed more than 75 million times — even with its 30 minute length — many more views than most successful web videos.

What makes it a success? It’s compelling. Who is behind the success? Someone who cares. Information today filters up. Citizens see the story, gather it and present it.

The old days of letters to the editor are over, too. It doesn’t take that long to be heard. millennials have come to expect a conversation with their news source, and why shouldn’t they? Are you going to pay attention to the news source that talks at you or the one that talks with you?

When the tsunami hit Japan in 2011, a friend’s sister was visiting a small coastal town where she formerly taught. When they lost contact with the sister, my friend went to Twitter and reached out to Ann Curry from “The Today Show.” The tweet was simple: “my sister American English teacher is missing in (the reactor area) please help with any news of evacuees.” Ann Curry responded to her tweet, went to Japan and found her missing sister. Who sits around and waits for news if you can be a part of it?

PR should facilitate conversations

Broadcast public relations services, at least the firms who are forward thinking, are rapidly moving ahead with new tools that will adapt client messages to streaming interactive video portals.

Live video Facebook chats are relatively new, and they shouldn’t be confused with traditional media tours because they facilitate that all-important conversation.

These are generally 30-minute interactive video “chats” between an on camera spokesperson and consumers through the brand’s Facebook page. The Q&A is in real time and participants will see the spokesperson responding on the video player embedded on the page.

Here, the social media audience is 100 percent engaged. They are looking at screens inches from their faces. They watch content, and if they like it, share it with their friends who presumably have common interests. This is much different than having a TV on in the background while you clean the house.

This type of interactive broadcast PR works for many different scenarios. For instance, a brand’s CEO can address franchisees through a private microsite that allows real time responses for that audience.

When we recently worked with a luxury automobile brand sold around the world, the vehicle’s lead designer conducted a live video Facebook chat from the Concours d’Elegance show in Pebble Beach, Calif. with enthusiasts of the brand.

The audience could view the car and the designer pointed out key features while answering questions raised by viewers. The Facebook chat attracted an international audience from as far away as the Ukraine.

In the same way that local TV news needs to adapt to what their audience’s want, broadcast PR must adapt to the new needs of target audiences, such as luxury automobile buyers. By facilitating these conversations across a variety of digital platforms you will make sure your client is riding the wave and not getting swamped by it.

Jim Ethridge is Director of Digital Services for KEF Media.

Jim Ethridge is Director of Digital Services for KEF Media.
New opportunities with interactive media tours

By Paul Gourvitz

It’s no secret that the media landscape has profoundly changed.

In March of last year, the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism released a survey that found, for the first time, that more people got their news online than in newspapers: 34% of respondents said they read news online within the past 24 hours compared to 31% who favored newspapers. The report also showed only local television news outpaced the web as the preferred source of news.

Because of this sea change, public relations firms are looking for new and innovative ways to get their clients’ messages onto computers, mobile devices, and tablets. One of the most effective new tools companies are using is Interactive Media Tours (IMTs).

IMTs are Satellite Media Tours (SMTs) for websites, blogs and online outlets, and the content lives in the editorial space of the websites. They can be produced virtually anywhere and require only a phone line or high-speed Internet connection, giving clients incredible flexibility.

So, how do you produce a successful IMT? Here are the four key things you need to succeed:

Talent. Just like with most PR campaigns, if you want impressions, you need the right talent. To give you an idea of the kind of talent you need here is a list of some of the talent we have used on recent IMTs: Kelly Ripa for Electrolux, Kate Upton, Yvonne Strahovski, Ashley Greene, Hilary Duff, Jessica Szohr, and Bernie Williams for SoBe, Tim Gunn and Jennifer Hudson for Weight Watchers, Ted Allen for N’Espresso, and Bobby Flay for Hellmann’s. Talent is the #1 key for a successful IMT.

Book sites with high traffic. Just like television and radio stations; websites and blogs have an insatiable thirst for superior content and access to celebrities and newsmakers. High traffic sites like The Huffington Post, People.com, Radar Online, IGN, AOL, the Sugar Network, Babble.com, Celebuzz and JustJared will take IMT content if you have the right talent and the segment is not overly branded. Producing a generic video and posting on YouTube and other video clearing-houses, is not an IMT. Posting a video on a website that has few Unique Viewers Per Month (UVPM) is not an IMT. A real IMT must deliver real audiences, on real websites, and the videos must be posted in the editorial space of the website.

High quality video. Even though the video will live on websites, most outlets demand high quality footage. Make sure to shoot in HD and compress and deliver high-resolution video.

Non-branded set. Sites are sensitive about commerciality. Make sure the set and the message are not overly commercial.

IMTs are a growing and essential part of any PR campaign, but they have to be done correctly. They must deliver real audiences. If they don’t, why would PR companies want to do them? Paul Gourvitz is President of Gourvitz Communications.

KOREA RENEWS SINGER BONJEAN

South Korea has renewed Singer Bonjean Strategies’ $200,000 contract through 2012 for political/media analysis, press roundtables, speeches, op-ed pieces and press releases.

SBS is the bipartisan shop of Phil Singer, former aide to Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y) and senior advisor to Hillary Clinton’s presidential run, and Ron Bonjean, who was chief of staff for Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ) and director of communications for former House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL).

The government of South Korea, which added Finn Partners ($480,000 contract) and The Nickels Group ($200,000) to its communications line-up this year, is fighting a bid to junk its freshly minted free trade agreement with the U.S. The country dropped WPP’s Glover Park Group from the roster at the end of 2011 after spending $300,000 for the year there.
Profiles

O’Dwyer’s Guide to: VIDEO & BROADCAST

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Alan Weiss (back row right) and Al Primo (back row left), Executive Producers of AWP, on the set with the “Teen/Kids News” reporting team.

To pitch stories or to learn about sponsorship opportunities, contact Tania Wilk at twilk@awptv.com. At AWP, we do it all: award-winning documentaries, (“A&E’s Biography: James Earl Jones”); highly effective fundraising videos (“Jessye Norman Sings for the Healing of AIDS” with Whoopi Goldberg & Elton John), as well as PSAs, B-roll Pkgs, Training & Corporate videos. We also excel at web design. AWP has producers fluent in Spanish and Italian. We regularly produce videos in various languages, including Russian, Mandarin and Cantonese. … and we’re nice people to work with.

ACG Communications LLC is a full-service Washington-DC area PR agency that specializes in public advocacy, legislative strategy solutions and nonfiction book publicity. Our agency possesses extensive experience working with nonprofit advocacy.


Cision (formerly Bacon’s | multivision) is recognized as the innovative leader in providing premium broadcast management applications. The company offers easy-to-use products that allow customers to monitor their brand, watch media coverage, analyze the results and present insights to selective audiences. Cision provides the largest broadcast library in the industry with continuous, comprehensive monitoring of national, cable and all 210 local markets, online viewing of video, broadcast-specific analytics, unprecedented sharing capabilities and convenient preview video functionality. Companies can now optimize their monitoring through the use of our award-winning platform CisionPoint which allows users to monitor their television, radio, newspaper, internet and social media coverage in a single application. In CisionPoint, users can watch a video preview of their broadcast hits, run press reports, share video, analyze results and present findings to stakeholders. Cision also offers DVDs and professionally edited digital clips, transcrip-
tion services, compilation reels and project-based monitoring to accommodate any range of special requests. If you’re a new customer, mention that you saw us in “O’Dwyer’s” and get your first digital clip for free.

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229 West 36th Street, 9th Floor
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212/736-2727
Fax: 212/736-7040
news@dssimon.com

Proudly celebrating over 25 years of partnership with corporate, agency, non-profit and government clients, D S Simon Productions, Inc. is an integrated video production and distribution, broadcast PR and social media video firm. Our headquarters and brand new, full-service HD broadcast TV studio are in New York with offices in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, DC. The new studio offers capability for production of talk shows, corporate video, webcasts, satellite and internet media tours and event broadcasting. It is equipped with three HD cameras, teleprompter, virtual sets, green screen production with multi-city backgrounds and custom sets from an award-winning designer.

Some of the video and broadcast PR services we provide include: Satellite Media Tours (SMTs), B-roll, Radio Media Tours (RMTs), PSAs, and award winning corporate video. Additionally, we’ve created a suite of online media communications services to help you earn media with journalists at websites of newspapers, magazines, TV & Radio stations, along with bloggers and web-only media.

**DWJ TELEVISION**

17-10 River Road, Suite 2-D
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201/445-1711
djohnson@dwjtv.com
mfriedman@dwjtv.com
www.dwjtv.com

Daniel Johnson, President
Michael Friedman, Executive Vice President

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**GOURVITZ COMMUNICATIONS**

875 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1708
New York, NY 10001
212/730-4807 x11
Direct: 310/569-5602
Fax: 212/730-4811
www.gourvitzcommunications.com

Paul Gourvitz, President
Robert Gourvitz, Producer

Broadcast public relations has changed. The blogosphere is equally as important as TV and radio. No company understands this better than Gourvitz Communications. GCI has a dynamic Interactive Media Tour (IMT) division that delivers your content into the editorial space of the biggest websites on the planet including: People.com, Cebuzz.com, The Huffington Post, Babbble.com, and hundreds of others. We specialize in delivering your message to websites with UVPM over 100,000. If you want your brand to be the talk of the web, Gourvitz can deliver this for you. In 2011, GCI produced over 50 IMTs with a wide array of celebrities including Kate Upton, Kelly Ripa, Jennifer Hudson, Tim Gunn, Molly Ringwald, Michael Symon, Bobby Flay, Jessica Szohr, Hillary Duff, Jennie Garth, Mark Consuelos, and dozens more.

Satellite Media Tours (SMTs) are a vital part of any PR plan and GCI has been producing high quality SMTs for three decades. SMTs are not only in demand from local stations, but a vital part of their daily broadcast schedule. In 2011, GCI produced over 100 SMTs with high quality spokespersons like Rashida Jones, Keyshawn Johnson, Bethenny Frankel, Angie Harmon, Mia Hamm, Brooke Burke, Stewart Cink, Melissa Joan Hart and dozens others.

Co-Op Satellite media tours are making a big comeback. Like in all PR campaigns talent is the key. Gourvitz only works with spokespersons who the media want to talk to. In 2011, Gourvitz added Elizabeth Werner as our new toy spokesperson. Ms Werner is the world’s foremost spokesperson in the toy world. In 2011, she hosted three Co-Ops for GCI, with each earning over 5,000,000 impressions. For travel clients, GCI uses “The Savvy Traveller” Rudy Maxa. In 2011, we booked 3 highly successful Co-Ops SMTs with Rudy. For technology, GCI uses “The Gadget Girl” Jamie Sorcher. In 2011, Jamie hosted 3 highly successful Co-Ops for Gourvitz — two from the floor of CES and one about Dads and Grads.

GCI also offers editing services. We have four fully loaded final cut edit systems. In 2011, we edited over 50 sizzle and clip reels for clients like: Dolce Gabanna, Max Clarity, Dove, Aruba, Old Spice and more.

**KEF MEDIA**

1161 Concord Road
Smyrna, GA 30080
404/605-0009
www.kefmedia.com
Twitter: @kefmedia
fb.me/kefmedia

Kevin E. Foley, Founder & CEO
Yvonne Goforth-Hanak, Co-President
Linda Buckley, Co-President
Amy Burton, VP, Business Development
Dwight Woods, VP, Media Relations
Jim Ethington, Dir., Digital Media

The most trusted name in broadcast and digital media services, KEF Media partners with our agency and corporate clients to produce and deliver results that matter.

We have built KEF Media from the ground up over 26 years through long-term relationships based on credibility and honest counsel.

We offer a full range of customized electronic communications services including SMTs, B-roll, PSAs, RMTs, ANRs, Internet Media Tours, secured...
media, in-market media tours, multi-media press releases, webcasts, podcasts, micro web sites, corporate film and video productions, commercials, special events and much more.

In early 2012, we moved to our new 10,000 sq. ft. headquarters in Smyrna, Ga., just eight miles from downtown Atlanta and 25 minutes from the Atlanta airport. In addition to housing production and media services, we now offer a 1,000 sq. ft. production studio.

KEF Media will once again be serving clients during the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London. We have worked with sponsors and clients at many Olympic Games cities dating back to 1984. For information on the services we are offering in Olympic Games cities dating to London. We have worked with Summer Olympic Games in a 1,000 sq. ft. production studio. In addition to housing production minutes from the Atlanta airport. Smyrna, Ga., just eight miles new 10,000 sq. ft. headquarters in events and much more.

tions, commercials, special corporate film and video produc- casts, podcasts, micro web sites, multi-media press releases, webcasts.

The newscast team producing one of many successful live remote webcasts.

The News Generation headquarters.

KEF MEDIA

Continued from page 35

London contact Linda Buckley.

1110 Second Avenue New York, NY 10022 212/883-2718 brian@finnpartners.com www.Media-Connect.com

Brian Feinblum, CMO

Planned Television Arts, a division of Ruder Finn, has been serving clients since 1962. The firm is known for delivering broadcast service to the entertainment, book publishing, healthcare, association, and corporate worlds.

Specialty services include the Satellite TV Tour (15-18 local TV interviews from one location in a single morning), a trademarked service; national and local television and radio service; and the trademarked Morning Drive Radio Tour (guarantee of 20-22 interviews with local and national radio shows in one morning). Our targeted online media campaign generates coverage with influential blogs and top Web sites.


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Shel Lustig, President Reed Pence, VP

Now in its 23rd year, Chicago-based MediaTracks Comm. provides specialized radio and internet audio services to PR professionals, including guaranteed placement radio news releases with broadcasts and streaming on-air, and online. We offer custom feed radio news releases, radio media tours, podcasts and radio PSAs. Our expertise extends to targeted placement in both the Hispanic and African American markets as well.

MediaTracks has experience in a wide range of practices, including healthcare, consumer, corporate, public affairs, high tech and not-for-profit. As producer and syndicator of the award-winning national radio programs, “Radio Health Journal” and “Viewpoints,” MediaTracks maintains contacts at thousands of major stations and networks throughout the U.S. Whether clients need national reach, targeted market placement, or streaming distribution through the internet, MediaTracks can provide the appropriate services for the message. Every project includes writing, production, tracking, verification and reporting, along with oversight by highly skilled staffers who know radio.

MediaTracks produced and syndicated the 40-segment Merck “Milestones in Medicine” national radio series. We also syndicated “A Healthier World,” a weekly national radio series for Pfizer, Inc. Radio media tours with consumer product messages have included the Got Milk “Nutrition Month” campaign, “Child Safety” for Ross Products/Wal-Mart, and CDW’s “Social Media Recruitment.” Our client roster includes AstraZeneca, Alzheimer’s Association, Walgreens, Bayer, Takeda, Eli Lilly, Novartis, MetLife, Genentech, Medtronic, Arm & Hammer, Kraft, Coca-Cola and McDonald’s. We share long-term agency relationships with Burson-Marsteller, Cooney/Waters, Edelman, Fleishman-Hillard, GCI, Golin/Harris, Ketchum, Ogilvy, Porter Novelli, Ruder Finn, WCG and Weber Shandwick.

NEWSCAST

526 West 26th Street, Suite 515 New York, NY 10001 212/206-0055 Fax: 212/206-0101 www.newscastus.com

Jim Sulley, President Jim Gold, Director of Strategic Services

newscast is a unique visual communications consultancy, providing seamless photographic and video production services along with state-of-the-art digital distribution and media relations services. Our award winning photographers, video producers, editors, and experienced media relations professionals possess top-level, national and international press experience. Our resources, combined with global capabilities to produce and distribute content, are what attract professional communicators to partner with newscast.

We work closely with our clients to understand the overall PR campaign strategy and objectives, enabling us to produce video and photos that are powerful across multiple platforms in a variety of formats. newscast’s production capabilities include web video, webcasting, B-roll packages, corporate video, PSAs, SMRs and EPKs.

Our loyal client base ranges from multinational blue chip corporations to boutique PR agencies and they keep coming back to newscast because of the strong visual content that delivers their message on the web, TV or in print.
NEWS GENERATION, INC.

7508 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 300
Bethesda, MD 20814
301/664-6448
sagood@newsgeneration.com
www.newsgeneration.com
twitter.com/newsgeneration
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www.tuninginradio.blogspot.com
Content website:
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Susan Matthews Apgood, President

News Generation is a public relations services company specializing in leveraging broadcast outlets to tell our clients’ stories and inform the public about important topics that impact their lives. Radio services include: radio media tours, audio news releases, audio bite lines, public service announcements, radio broadcast alerts, and podcasts. Television services include: satellite media tours and B-roll packages.

Why we rock: We hold ourselves to the highest standards and our unparalleled success rate speaks for itself, as does the satisfaction of our clients who consistently return to us for successful radio and television campaigns.

Our media relations team is the most experienced, knowledgeable and responsive team working in media relations today. Through our long-standing relationships with radio and television reporters, and customized approach, we have the know-how and tenacity to get the best earned placements, reaching the right audiences. All services are available in English and Spanish.

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708 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017
212/682 8300
learnmore@synapticdigital.com
www.synapticdigital.com
www.thenewsmarket.com

Nick Abramovich, CEO & President

Synaptic Digital connects brands with their audiences across relevant channels using the power of video. We are the premier content creation and multichannel distribution platform for brands, organizations and their agencies. General Motors, Honda, American Express, GlaxoSmithKline, Google, Intel, NATO, Ericsson, Panasonic and others rely on our expert video services, interactive news releases, digital media centers, and thenewsmarket.com, the world’s largest content community for journalists and influencers, to tightly manage their messages across on-air, online, social media and syndication networks. We are privately held and headquartered in New York, with offices in London, Ahmadabad, Atlanta, Beijing, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Mumbai, Munich, San Francisco and Washington, DC.

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www.washingtongroupproductions.com

Susan Stolov, President

With the advent of social media, compelling video that sends a message or promotes a cause is more relevant than ever. Much has changed in the past decade, and WIP has been at the forefront, offering videos, web videos, PSA’s, and B-roll packages for broadcast TV, webisodes, viral video distribution and social media news release development and distribution.

Since its inception, WIP has proudly produced award winning videos that address a myriad of consumer and safety issues. Our videos have taught people how to sit properly in a car to obtain maximum benefit from an airbag (distributed in every new GM truck), and how to correctly install a child safety seat (produced for the U.S. Dept. of Transportation). We have interviewed wounded warriors in San Antonio, low-income dads in Philadelphia and women fighting AIDS in Puerto Rico.

Our cutting edge videos for corporations, associations, nonprofits and government agencies are viewed by millions — on national and local newscasts, online, in corporate board rooms and at national conventions. Let us show you how to inspire, educate and inform! ★
Your PR crisis tool kit

By Fraser P. Seitel

The Cleveland Clinic is a world-renowned medical institution, to which not only Americans but foreign dignitaries have visited for quality medical treatment. Befitting such a healthcare focal point, the Cleveland Clinic over the years has witnessed its share of crises—everything from power outages and bursting water pipes to helicopter accidents and hospital shootings.

Directing the crisis command center at the Cleveland Clinic is Heather Phillips, director of corporate communications and a healthcare PR pro for 17 years. Phillips is a crisis pro, who recommends that planning is a key to getting the crisis “right.” She counsels preparation, refining and enhancing the crisis plan, practicing and training, and conducting an “after action” crisis postmortem as keys to managing crisis.

As to what, specifically, a crisis manager—whether at a hospital or any other organization—should consider primary to his or her “crisis toolbox,” here’s what Phillips says are 11 key ingredients:

1. Crisis communications plan.

   The plan, says Ms. Phillips, is most important to help determine and anticipate needs and prevent surprises when crisis strikes. The plan should clearly delineate the communication process, internal contacts, media contacts, key communication vehicles, and any directions that might be critical.

   As noted, a good plan is one that periodically is updated.

2. Statements.

   Agreed-upon statements to the media and the public should also be part of the kit. In a crisis, all authorized spokespersons—and even those not authorized formally but asked for response—should know the “party line.” Statements, therefore, should be widely disseminated.

3. Employee/leader communication.

   In a crisis, it’s important that the people inside know first what is going on and how to respond to inquiries. This means priority should be given to spelling out for employees and internal leadership, the particulars of the crisis and the intentions of the organization in responding.

   It may be a cliché to say that everyone needs to “be on the same page,” but in a crisis, it’s elemental.

4. On-hold messages.

   Also called, “standby statements,” these are statements not-to-be-volunteered that are discussed and created in anticipation of forthcoming questions. The organization’s hope is that such questions are never asked, but you need to be prepared to preempt them if they are.


   It’s important, too, that crisis managers be familiar with what’s been written—both reactive and proactive—on the issue and by whom.

   Optimally, public information officers should have knowledge of a reporter’s bias on the issues at hand before picking up the phone to talk.

6. Email blasts.

   These may be the fastest way to disseminate organizational updates and positions to a “friendly” mailing list. In a crisis, misery loves company so that the more allies you can keep aware of what’s happening, the more support the organization might be able to muster.


   Once the organization has made progress, adopted a position, or clarified a crisis situation, it makes sense to distribute that information as broadly as possible. These devices should be used to accomplish that goal.


   News conferences are always tricky. They’re unscripted, encourage nasty or off-the-wall questions, and expose management to unforeseen risks. Nonetheless, in a crisis, the public needs to see that management is willing to confront the situation.

   So a news conference might be unavoidable. Each news conference should begin with key messages the organization wants to get across.

   Questions should be prepared for, and there should be a finite limit placed on the news conference’s length.


   Using Twitter, Facebook and YouTube has become obligatory in a crisis. Twitter and Facebook are the most immediate ways to reach large numbers of constituents with key messages.

   YouTube is a good way to record a CEO in a friendly, home field environment, and then broadcast the message to the world.


   Phillips reminds us that professional public relations people should have solid instincts as to how and when to communicate and what to say.

   We, after all, are the most knowledgeable in our organizations relative to the media. So we should not downplay gut instincts in making real-time crisis decisions.

11. Flexibility.

   Finally, as anyone who has ever manned the communication helm at a plane crash, bank robbery or plant explosion can tell you—events change quickly. And all the crisis plans and simulations and role plays in the world can’t compensate for the changing facts and opinions and reality of a crisis.

   Thirty years ago, when the first Tylenol capsules were poisoned, the CEO of Johnson & Johnson, James Burke, said that his company “had to react to changing facts and situations on a minute-to-minute basis.”

   At the time, he counseled, “flexibility.” And three decades later, that’s still the wisest advice.
Benchmarking your way to financial success

By Richard Goldstein

Benchmarking is a great way to gauge your performance against other firms in the industry. It is often difficult to gauge your agency against other firms your size because of the lack of credible information.

Are you willing to turn your books over to a competitor? Information supplied by companies such as Dunn & Bradstreet are good but do not focus on industry specific criteria. They are more focused on what I will label financial statement analysis.

What is benchmarking anyway? Benchmarking is a process of computing one’s business processes and performance metrics to the industry bests and/or best practices from other industries. Dimensions typically measured are quality, time and cost.

In the process of benchmarking, PR firm management identifies the best firms in their industry, or in another industry where similar processes exist, and compare the results and processes of those studied to one’s own results and processes. In this way, management learns how well the targets perform and, more importantly, the business processes that explain why these firms are successful.

There are generally ten types of benchmarking. Most of you are probably familiar with “financial benchmarking.” This is performing financial analysis and comparing the results in an effort to assess your overall competitiveness and productivity.

There is however strategic benchmarking, performance benchmarking, and process benchmarking, to name a few.

How to go about it?

You may find it time consuming — if not impossible — to benchmark your competition. You can read the Omnicom 10K but nevertheless not walk away with useful information. You can join professional associations and ask good questions. You can hire a consultant but this can be expensive.

How do I benchmark a PR firm client? In part, I reach out to individuals I respect in the industry such as Al Croft, Rick Gould and attorney Mike Lasky of Davis & Gilbert. These individuals have a good pulse on what is going on in the industry.

I also perform ratio analysis for clients. The PR industry has specific metrics that need to be reviewed. Unfortunately, not many consultants are aware of the specific industry benchmarks that need to be looked at and tend to use generic metrics. More importantly, advice needs to be given on how to reverse a poor metric.

For example, Gould (StevensGould Pincus) has recently sent the 2012 Annual PR Agency Benchmarking Survey to agencies around the nation and the globe.

Croft, on the other hand, authored “Managing a Public Relations Firm for Growth and Profit.” This is a must read for every PR agency. Croft also publishes a monthly newsletter — Management Strategies — another must read.

Of course, there is a great deal of information that can be obtained from O’Dwyer Co.’s website and publications. I trust just by reading the monthly columns, you receive real value and guidance in operating your agency.

Gould posed a crucial question: “How can PR firm principals, especially in today’s prolonged, volatile economic environment, best position their agencies to survive — even thrive financially — now and in the future?”

There is no one solution. However some of the metrics that Gould suggests be looked at are (as a percentage of net revenue):

1. Base account salaries: 38%
2. Total labor cost: 49%
3. Rent and utilities: 7%
4. Total operating expenses: 25%
5. Agency operating profit: 26%
6. Annual revenue per professional: $236,000

There are other metrics, but these are a good start to benchmark against your numbers.

By the way, revenue per staff is usually what is reported in the major rankings. While this is a useful number, I tend to be more interested in revenue per professional. It removes the “staff” from the line and staff numbers if you will.

According to Gould, despite the positive signs, adverse economic pressures continue to impact PR agencies.

Average monthly fees charged by firms decreased from 2009 to 2010, attributable to budget cuts and client losses. While revenue per professional did increase, this could be from reductions in staffing than organic growth. We await the most recent statistics.

Two significant keys to success are managing cash and managing people.

Your firm may be off the charts on revenue per staff or professional; however, if you cannot convert “WIP” (work in progress) to cash, it does not matter what your benchmark numbers are.

Positive cash flow is more important than revenue and profitability in the hierarchy of management essentials.

If your current CFO, controller or CPA firm does not review a Statement of Cash Flows (SCF) with you monthly, add this to the list of management reports that you must receive.

Statement of cash flows

The primary purpose of the SCFs is to show a firm’s incoming and outgoing money during a time period. It analyzes cash according to operating, investing, and financing activities.

The SCF is usually prepared under one of two methods: the direct method or the indirect method. Both methods are the same except for the presentation of the operating section of the statement.

The indirect method will not meet your needs even though it is the method most used when financial statements are prepared (this may change however). Bottom line: if you are not an accountant, it will be difficult to understand.

Insist that the direct method be used. If you want more information, please refer to my column from December 2001 on odwyerpr.com. The column may be over ten years old, but the rules of the game have not changed in all this time.
WASHINGTON REPORT

Pentagon proposes moving Stars and Stripes

A Pentagon cost-cutting move that will relocate the staff of Stars and Stripes to the military's public affairs headquarters at Fort Meade, Md., has raised concerns of journalists and Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Levin penned a letter to the Defense Secretary Leon Panetta asking him to review the decision and questioning what the Defense Dept. will do to "ensure the actual and perceived independence of the important service provided by Stars and Stripes is preserved.”

The paper is independent but backed by $20 million a year from the U.S. Congress, where it has strong support.

Mel Russell, who heads the Defense Media Activity at Fort Meade 30 miles outside of Washington, D.C., has issued a directive ordering the move by Sept. 28 to save $1 million in office space Stars and Stripes spends on its National Press Club base of operations.

Russell says he can't justify to the General Services Administration in a time of budget cuts that there is no government-owned alternative available to its current commercial space.

Terry Leonard, Editor of Stars and Stripes is lobbying Congress to fight the move.

"Proving to your readers that you're independent is difficult enough in the private, commercial press," wrote St&S ombudsman Ernie Gates March 2 in urging a more thorough review of such a move. "Stripes starts from an even tougher spot.”

Pentagon officials have said the relocation will not affect the paper's operations.

Outgoing Defense public affairs chief Doug Wilson told the New York Times it's a matter of costs "in an era when the entire department is having to find efficiencies.”

The Pentagon, responding to a 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission report, in 2008 consolidated its communications apparatus at the DMA at Fort Meade, a 2,000-staffer operation with a budget of about $225 million a year.

Goldman taps PR chief

As rumored in February, Goldman Sachs in March said it has brought in ex-Treasury aide and White House Press Secretary Jake Siewart to replace its exiting communications chief.

Siewart takes the title of managing director and global head of communications for the bank as Goldman partner and global communications head Lucas van Praag, who is retiring at 62.

Reports indicated Siewart was also considering a post at PepsiCo, where earlier this month Julie Hamp left the revamping food and beverage giant as its chief communications officer.

Siewart's talks with Goldman were first reported in February by Bloomberg.

Siewart was VP of Global Communications for Alcoa in 2001 after serving as the last White House press secretary for President Bill Clinton and from 2009-11 advised Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner.

Goldman took a PR hit in March when a 12-year employee penned an op-ed in the New York Times declaring “the environment now is as toxic and destructive as I have ever seen it.”

Credit unions walk to Crossroads

The Credit Union National Assn, which represents 7,500 institutions with $920 billion in combined assets, has hired Crossroads Strategies for issues regarding member lending.

Formed in 2010, Crossroads is a Republican powerhouse firm that was established by Federalist Group and Ogilvy PR Worldwide veterans Stewart Hall and John Green.

Hall was legislative director for Alabama Senator Richard Shelby, who is ranking member of the Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Committee. Green served as deputy chief of staff to former Senator Majority Leader Trent Lott.

CUNA completed its week-long government affairs conference last month, in which more than 4,000 advocates worked Capitol Hill. They told how failure to increase the cap on member lending would hurt the business loan market.

Earlier in March, CUNA named Sam Whitfield VP-legislative affairs. He served on Lott’s staff and most recently was with the National Assn. of Realtors in D.C.

Whitfield worked in the George W. Bush White House as PA specialist at the Office of National Drug Policy and did a stint in Baghdad as press officer for the Coalition Provisional Authority.

TVEyes wins FEMA pact

TVEyes has won a broadcast monitoring pact with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, following a February solicitation.

The Fairfield-Conn.-based monitoring firm picked up a one-year contract that carries three option years. The pact with FEMA’s office of external affairs is capped at $97,600.

FEMA, part of the Dept. of Homeland Security, had asked for proposals as it sought to modernize and standardize its TV news media monitoring and headquarters broadcast operations.

While FEMA monitors coverage of its operations, it also disseminates disaster and response information to the press and needs to gauge its effectiveness.
Kosovo hires Podesta

Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008, has hired Podesta Group to a $50,000-a-month contract to strengthen ties with the U.S and deepen economic cooperation.

The contract with the country’s Ministry of Economic Development is to be reviewed every six months. Either side can nullify the agreement with 60 days notice.

Tony Podesta’s firm, which has close ties to the White House, is to keep Kosovo updated on the American political scene and maintain contact with the press and non-governmental organizations.

Kosovo, which is one of Europe’s poorest countries, gave Patton Boggs a $600,000, one-year contract last September covering bilateral ties with the U.S., foreign aid and private sector investment.

It is currently squabbling with Serbia over elections slated for May.

Syrians find PR voice

The National Change Current, a political party formed February to support the Syrian uprising against the Assad regime, has registered as a U.S. lobbyist on behalf of the "people of Syria."

NCC says its mission is to “support peace and democracy by speaking with U.S. government officials and asking for assistance.” That outreach will be via phone calls, emails, press conferences and face-to-face meetings. The majority of its activities will be PR-related.

The party calls the uprising a “civilized and moral revolution against injustice, tyranny and abuse of human dignity” carried out by young Syrians of different ethnic, sectarian and religious backgrounds.

It runs the www.nccsy.com site to keep people updated on political developments, anti-government demonstrations/rallies, sanctions and various massacres/executions carried out by Assad’s forces.

Ogilvy parlays Mexico work

Ogilvy PR has picked up global PR duties for the Mexican state of Sinaloa, a coastal region of the country that includes the tourism destination Mazatlan but is also associated with a notorious drug cartel.

Ogilvy, which is familiar with the struggles of promoting Mexico of late as global PR agency for the Mexican Tourism Board, was tapped for media relations, public affairs and stakeholders communications to spark tourism and investment while fighting negative perceptions arising from violence in the country.

Oralia Rice, Secretary of Tourism for the state, stressed Ogilvy’s government communications and experience with the MTB in announcing the hire.

The Sinaloa Cartel, the top Mexican drug gang and one of the largest such crime rings in the world, is based in the state.

Ogilvy/New York heads the work.

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. For a complete list of filings, visit www.fara.gov.

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP, Washington, D.C., registered February 21, 2012 for Hong Kong Trade Development Council, to communicate with US Government officials regarding the economic and trade interests of Hong Kong.

Quinn Gillespie & Associates, LLC, Washington, D.C., registered February 28, 2012 for Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, to provide public relations services in relation to the Interfaith Mission for Peace and Understanding trip, including press outreach, video production, and website management.

CarbonZero IT LLC, Ridgefield, CT, registered March 19, 2012 for Invest in Iceland, to support a seminar in New York City on May 8,2012 to promote Iceland as a place to do business for US companies.

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 www.senate.gov.


Crossroads Strategies, LLC, Herndon, VA, registered March 19, 2012 for Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE), Washington, D.C., for issues related to commercial member lending.


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THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB


The National Press Club, a private club for journalists and communicators, has been “Where News Happens” for more than a century. Each year, the Club hosts over 250,000 visitors at more than 2,000 events that are conveyed to global audiences in print, television and online. Our journalist members work with the NPC staff to create an ideal facility for news coverage – from a full service broadcast operation, to fiber and wireless connectivity, to audio-visual services.

PR JOBS - http://jobs.odwyerpr.com

BlogFrog is a social activation platform that partners brands and digital influencers to power and amplify online conversations. The company’s technology platform lets brands engage social influencers according to niche topics and target demographics, create advocate-driven content and conversations, and measure performance with in-depth tracking and analytics. Bloggers use BlogFrog to increase readership and traffic, create interaction with readers and followers, and increase revenue through participation in brand programs.

BlogFrog is a private company headquartered in Boulder, Colorado.

The Public Relations Manager will report directly to the Director of Marketing and indirectly to the VP of Marketing. This person will be in a highly involved role with direct access to and strong support from our Co-Founders.

The Public Relations Manager will create, source, manage and execute BlogFrog’s public relations efforts. The ideal candidate will be well versed at developing and executing winning communication strategies including but not limited to traditional press, blogs, social media, conference panels and speaking engagements. Such efforts will focus on a wide array of innovative topics that are core to BlogFrog’s marketplace such as brand advertising, marketing, social media, and enterprise B2B technology solutions.

Send your resume and a compelling cover letter highlighting your superstar qualities and past achievements to jobs@theblogfrog.com. Please put the job position title in the subject of your email.
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Plus, you’ll have access to all the news and commentary posted daily on PR's #1 website, odwyerpr.com, which has over 10 years of searchable content and O'Dwyer’s exclusive database of RFPs for PR services.

O'Dwyer's magazine, now in its 26th year, examines a different area of PR each month. Issues include practice-area specific feature stories as well as profiles of PR firms with strengths in the focus area. The agency profiles constitute the ideal starting point for companies beginning their search for PR counsel.

Editorial Calendar:
February, Environmental PR & Public Affairs
March, Food & Beverage
April, Broadcast Media Services
May, PR Firm Rankings
June, Multicultural/Diversity
July, Travel & Tourism
August, Prof. Svcs. & Financial/Investor Rels.
September, Beauty & Fashion
October, Healthcare & Medical
November, Technology
December, Sports & Entertainment

O'Dwyer's 2012 Directory of PR Firms gives you quick access to large, medium-sized, and small PR firms and even experienced freelancers who work out of their homes. 1,600 firms are listed. 7,000 clients are cross-indexed. O'Dwyer's directory is the only place you can look up a company and determine its outside counsel.

Listed firms have expertise in:

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• Investor Relations
• Employee Communications
• Internet PR
• Product Publicity
• Crisis Communications
• Integrated Marketing
• Corporate Advertising
• Lobbying
• Proxy Solicitation
• International PR

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