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O'Dwyer's

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THE FINANCE ISSUE

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Most Americans find PR pros responsible for disinformation.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DRIVES TRAVEL CHOICES

Ethical and ecological concerns can affect a destination's appeal.

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Revenue growth rate is basically unchanged in the last three years.

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Big tech and financial companies compete for share of wallet.

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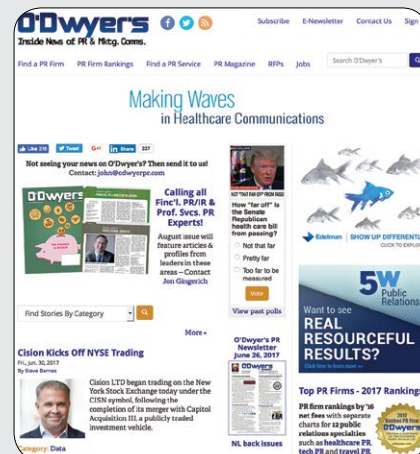
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The uncomfortable reality of Trump 2.0

It's early, but I'm calling it: Donald Trump will walk between the raindrops to win handily the nomination in 2020 for another four years. Sorry.

Look, I'm not happy about it. History is on my side here—since World War II, only three U.S. Presidents have failed to secure a second term in a general election—but more importantly, several key Trump political victories have made it difficult for the Democrats to turn 2020 into anything other than a referendum on his character. Normally that would be enough, but if there's one thing our current political landscape has taught us, it's the sad reality that many voters have decided the economy takes precedence over inflammatory and bigoted rhetoric—even when it comes from the President of the United States.

Poll after poll shows employment/the economy, immigration and healthcare remain the top priorities for Americans. The current U.S. unemployment rate sits at 3.7 percent, the lowest in 50 years. Trump's response to the migrant crisis and the Supreme Court's decision to allow his administration to temporarily divert \$2.5 billion in military funds for construction of the border wall have buoyed his supporters' convictions that Trump has made inroads on immigration matters central to his presidency. For all his many, many (re: many) faults, Trump never left campaign mode and continues to deliver on every election promise. Rightly or wrongly, when he rolls back EPA regulations to please heavy-polluting industries or escalates a trade war with foreign governments, his supporters believe he's moving the country in the right direction.

Trump arguably benefits from one of the strongest cases of the Rashomon Effect we've witnessed in generations. He's validated the compost of bad ideas his supporters have quietly cultivated in their minds their entire lives, and as a result, he can do no wrong. There appears to be no moral bottom, no bridge-too-far for a demographic that's finally seeing daylight after being on the losing side of the culture wars for three decades. It doesn't matter that a trade war with China could hurt U.S. companies' bottom lines. It doesn't matter that funds appropriated for military pensions are being redirected to pay for the border wall. It doesn't matter that 900 migrant children have been taken from their parents a year after the Trump admin. said it would stop family separations. It doesn't matter that cutting taxes and raising spending causes the debt to go up, not the other way around. It doesn't matter that a Quinnipiac poll found more voters now believe Trump is a racist than former Alabama Gov. George Wallace. Trump has demonstrated the PR adage that as long as you make consumers feel they're being represented, as long as you can make them feel good without challenging their worldviews, anything goes.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party again seems poised to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory as it faces off against an opponent whose current 43-percent approval rating marks the highest of his presidency thus far. The latest round of debates among this (mostly) unimpressive cohort of candidates has confirmed that the Democrats just haven't learned a thing from 2016. We found out three years ago that you can't simply be against Trump; you have to actually offer something. What we get instead is more inner-party division, the usual more-liberal-than-thou pedantry and a lot of lofty, pie-in-the-sky policy plans that seem engineered more for securing Twitter plaudits than connecting with blue collar voters in the Midwest. Trump won the 2016 election because he focused his energy on running the electoral map in crucial swing states Democrats had ignored. Democrats, by and large, have continued to ignore this battleground, and as it turns out, that electoral math might work even more to Trump's favor this time: a recent Pew Research study found voters in the Midwest identifying as liberal have dipped while conservatives in that region have remained roughly the same, setting up Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota as easy Trump wins in 2020.

Not that some of us care. In a few months, Warren or Harris or Biden will emerge as the clear candidate, and the infighting will hit a fever pitch, due either to the fact that the candidate is a woman/man, because he/she is too progressive or not progressive enough, or because he/she takes corporate donations and therefore wears the toxic "centrist" badge, which is to say, they're covertly in league with the GOP. Many won't even vote, because we've internalized the idea that voting is somehow the equivalent of a love letter while willfully ignoring the idea that not voting affirms that we're fine with the way things are.

For a candidate to defeat Trump, he/she has to disrupt the historic disruption Trump brought to presidential politics when he announced his candidacy four years ago. Voters have to want something, and a candidate has to crystalize a rallying cry around a promise to fulfill that shared desire. So, what do we want? Anyone but Trump, right? See what I mean?

It's over, folks. Barring some unforeseen, cataclysmic circumstance—another recession, for example—Trump will win a second term. This will happen. Place your bets: I'm willing to eat a crow buffet if I'm wrong, but I don't think I am, and I suspect many of you agree. ○

—Jon Gingerich

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Fake news a 'major' problem in U.S.

More than half of Americans consider PR professionals are "very" responsible for the ongoing scourge of disinformation in the U.S., and fewer than a third believe that the sector is making a worthwhile effort to combat the fake news problem.

By Jon Gingerich

A majority of Americans now consider the spread of disinformation in the country to be a "major" problem, according to a report from the Institute for Public Relations.

The IPR report found that an overwhelming majority of Americans (86 percent) now consider fake news to be a problem in the U.S. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) now see disinformation as a "major" problem in society, on par with gun violence (63 percent) and just below terrorism (66 percent).

More than half of respondents (51 percent) said they now encounter disinformation at least once a day, while 78 percent reported seeing it once a week and 89 percent said they see it once a month.

Americans' newfound skepticism in the media has had palpable effects: fewer than one in four respondents now profess having "a lot" of trust in any single news source.

A majority of Americans cite fake social media accounts as the source most responsible for spreading fake news (55 percent). Politicians followed (45 percent) as did,

specifically, President Trump (40 percent). The Russian government took fourth place (34 percent) followed by political activist groups (33 percent). Nearly a third (32 percent) blamed Facebook, which was the only social media platform to appear by name on the list.

As it turns out, the PR industry takes its share of the blame as a party viewed as responsible for sharing disinformation: 65 percent said marketers and advertisers were "very" responsible for spreading disinformation, and 58 percent said the same about PR professionals. Only about a quarter of Americans (26 percent) said they maintain some trust in PR practitioners to provide accurate news and information.

Among media outlets, Fox News (30 percent) and CNN (28 percent) were cited most often for being the most responsible for spreading disinformation. Political party lines were clearly a factor in respondents' answers here: 41 percent of respondents identifying as Democrats blamed Fox for spreading disinformation, while 47 percent

of Republicans blamed CNN for the same deed.

Paradoxically, the parties seen as least responsible for sharing fake news in the U.S. were the respondents themselves. Only 11 percent of respondents said "people like me" were responsible for sharing fake news, and only 11 percent believe their families do so. In fact, nearly a third (31 percent) cited family members as an information source they trust "a lot." Other trustworthy sources included Internet search engines, local newspapers and local broadcasters.

And when it comes to who Americans think are doing the best job to combat misinformation, once again that award goes to the respondents. More than half (55 percent) think they and people like them are making the most effort to fight fake news. Slightly more than half (51 percent) cited the Supreme Court, followed by fact-checking sites such as Politifact and Snopes. Nearly half of those polled (47 percent) said they often consult other sources to ensure the news they see is accurate and true. ○



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Social responsibility, safety drive travel decisions

Americans have grown more conscientious regarding what ecological or ethical impacts their traveling choices have on the destinations they visit, though growing concerns over safety may deter travel to some places, according to a study on Americans' vacationing habits.

By Jon Gingerich

More Americans have embraced the new sharing economy when it comes to travel, and have grown more conscientious regarding what ecological or ethical impacts their traveling choices have on the destinations they visit, though growing concerns over safety may deter travel to some international destinations, according to the latest "Portrait of American Travelers" survey conducted by travel, hospitality and entertainment marketing agency MMGY Global.

MMGY's annual study, which analyzed the habits, priorities and preferences of American travelers, found that the average American plans to spend about the same amount on vacations this year as they did in 2018 (\$5,025, compared to \$5,038 last year) even though they reported slightly fewer average trips (3.2 in 2019, compared to 3.5 in 2018).

The study discovered that Americans have now adopted a more conscientious approach to travel, either due to environmental concerns surrounding issues such as climate change or how their traveling habits may impact the destinations they visit.

More than half of American travelers (60 percent) believe "overtourism"—or the overcrowding that occurs when too many tourists visit a particular place—will have a significant impact on what destinations they choose to visit within the next five

to 10 years, and 48 percent think climate change will have a significant influence on what destinations they visit during the same period.

Corporate social responsibility initiatives appear to have made an enormous affect in influencing consumers' travel-related purchasing decisions. A majority of American travelers (62 percent) cited corporate responsibility as a reason for their loyalty to an airline, and 60 percent said the same for the hotels they use when booking vacations.

More Americans said they chose a travel service provider during the last year based on perceptions of sustainability and environmental considerations (13 percent in 2019, compared to eight percent last year).

The study also discovered that, either due to cost or the allure of staying somewhere unique, more Americans are now embracing the sharing economy that's disrupted the travel sector in recent years. According to the study, the percentage of U.S. travelers who relied on shared accommodations during a vacation jumped 45 percent in the last year alone.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (76 percent) said they enjoy vacationing in a home away from home in 2019, up from 68 percent in 2018, and nearly the same number (74 percent) said arranging shared economy accommodations this year was a good experience, compared to 67 percent

in 2018. More than two-thirds this year said they want to stay in unusual places (69 percent), compared to only 56 percent last year.

MMGY predicts that 34 percent of all American travelers will rely on sharing accommodations next year.

Finally, the MMGY study discovered that safety concerns are elevated among travelers this year, perhaps in light of high-profile news items focusing on an alleged uptick in crime and kidnapping in Mexico as well as the more recent stories involving American travelers who've died while visiting the Dominican Republic, stories which have tainted both destinations' reputations. Safety is now second only to cost as the most significant barriers to Americans' travel, according to the study, beating out language barriers, travel time and access to quality healthcare. The importance of a destination's safety is particularly high among Millennials: the study found that safety was up in importance this year for traveling members of this generation, from 79 percent in 2018 to 85 percent in 2019.

MMGY's 29th annual "Portrait of American Travelers" survey polled nearly 3,000 U.S. adults who've taken at least one overnight trip of 75 miles or more during the last year. Data was collected in February and research was conducted by the agency's insights unit, MMGY Travel Intelligence. ○

PR industry growth remains flat

The PR industry in North America grew by 4.8 percent in 2018, reflecting a revenue growth rate that has remained essentially unchanged for the last three years, according to a report.

By Jon Gingerich

The North American PR industry grew by 4.8 percent last year, according to an annual survey conducted by PR merger and acquisition consultancy Gould+Partners.

Gould+Partners' annual poll, which focuses on agency net revenue growth, suggests that revenue gains in the PR industry have remained essentially at a period of stasis for the third year in a row, as growth was also 4.8 percent in both 2017 and 2016,

compared to the industry's 6.6 percent growth in 2015 and 7.8 percent growth in 2014.

Midsize firms—or PR firms accounting for between \$3 million and \$10 million in net revenues—brought in the highest net revenues last year, growing 9.1 percent (or average annual net revenues of about \$6.4 million). PR agencies boasting between \$10 million and \$25 million in revenue reported growth of 8.6 percent (or about \$15 mil-

lion). The smallest firms—those with under \$3 million in revenue—were up 6.4 percent (or about \$1.8 million), while the largest firms—those in excess of \$25 million—netted the lowest average growth, gaining only 4.2 percent (or about \$156 million).

The survey also found that PR firms located in the U.S. Northwest lead as the top region for revenue gains, followed by the Northern California, Southwest and Washington D.C. metro regions. Last year, Northern CA topped the list as the leading growth region, followed by D.C., the Southwest and the Southeast.

Gould+Partners' seventh annual Net Revenue Growth report was based on data provided by approx. 250 North American PR agencies. ○

Fintech 2.0: Wall Street and Silicon Valley face off

As competition heats up among tech giants, a question arises: how will fintech startups, Big Tech and traditional financial services companies carve out share of wallet? And how will the marketing mix rebalance in a world where Goldman could go head-to-head with Google?

By Julia Bloch Mellon

Apple Pay and Google Pay own the digital wallet market. Amazon and Alibaba have already loaned billions of dollars. And Facebook wants you to use Messenger to pay your friends back for dinner. Make no mistake, Silicon Valley tech giants are climbing into the financial services playground.

In the decade following the recession we've seen fintech startups precipitate incremental change in the financial services space. Disruptors have reimaged components of the financial services puzzle and nudged Wall Street into the digital age, creating the competition necessary to force traditional financial companies to compete on multiple fronts: product innovation, user experience, transparency and value.

But ultimately, fintech startups and Wall Street giants played nice. Many financial services companies saw the writing on the wall and decided that if they couldn't move quickly enough to incubate those innovations in-house, they could join forces with newcomers through strategic partnerships. It turned out this was the beginning of a mutually beneficial friendship, resulting in a huge win for consumers.

In 2015, Jamie Dimon gave his ominous warning that "Silicon Valley is coming." Wall Street was able to weather the storm in subsequent years, but they're not out of the woods.

With a deep user base, tech looms large

For Wall Street, Big Tech poses a threat to financial services that is, well, bigger. Amazon, Apple and Alphabet—currently the second, third and fourth largest companies in the United States—have something that the small fintech start-ups lack: Scale. A lot of it.

If Fintech 1.0 was all about plucky startups working to elevate the standards that consumers expected from financial services companies, Fintech 2.0 is about Silicon Valley behemoths turbocharging that mindset to their expansive user base with the backing of billions of dollars of capital.

These companies bring to the table the best cloud, data and AI resources on the planet. No one knows better than these giants how to surround a customer with an experience so seamlessly connected that the ease of use is worth the sacrifice of pri-

vacy (something traditional financial firms have struggled to deliver).

This is, in part, because most tech players have maintained reputations as friendly giants. Their Net Promoter Scores soar high above big banks. People are willing to give a company like Google all their information if it makes it easy to toggle between their laptop, their phone and an IoT device. What if Google's deep data troves could give you a holistic view of your financial picture too?

What does this mean for Wall Street? The bar for best-in-class UX is about to be raised again.

2020 could impact competition

Regulatory headwinds could slow Big Tech's penetration into finance. Just last month, Congress made moves to stymie Facebook and friends from launching their take on a cryptocurrency, Libra, with the aptly named "Keep Big Tech Out of Finance Act." And, in the first Democratic debate, Senator Elizabeth Warren called for the breakup of America's largest tech players. With an election around the corner, it remains to be seen whether the House and Senate will turn red, purple or blue. But the political parties in power certainly will influence the future role that Big Tech can play in the financial services ecosystem.

Regardless of how things evolve, in the early innings of Fintech 2.0, Big Tech has already changed the game.

The future of financial marketing comms

Let's face it: Wall Street and Silicon Valley come from very different marketing communications schools of thought. As they square off in the fight for share of wallet, there are marketing and communications lessons that Wall Street and Silicon Valley can learn from one another.

Dear Big Tech, don't forget thought leadership: In the years following the Financial Crisis, finance became commoditized—in product and cost—and the best way to win customer trust was in a race to capture share-of-voice through thought leadership.

Big firms launched thought leadership programs—often composed of a combination of proprietary research, earned media, content, and social/digital activations—that dug into consumers' emo-

tional relationships with money, explored the role gender dynamics plays in investing and provided the tips to help people navigate financial decisions. Part group therapy, part actionable financial insights, consumer finance marketing communications became more human. This financial expertise and thought leadership is what sets traditional financial players apart from tech giants.

As Big Tech matures in the financial services realm, it could stand to take a leaf out of Wall Street's book, by going to market above product, addressing consumers' real desire for financial tips, education and empathy.

Wall Street, it's time to evolve your value prop: Wall Street also has a big lesson to learn from Silicon Valley.

If Big Tech knows how to do one thing, it's to cultivate a user experience that is simple, well-designed and engaging. As these tech players dive fully into the financial services competitor set, customer expectations for user interface, PFM, smart analytics and AI are about to climb yet again.

In order to continue to thrive, traditional financial players will need to prove that they can match their counterparts in cultivating a compelling user experience that centers around an excellent product. As tech players challenge traditional financial models, Wall Street will need to make sure they're focusing on price, product and innovation as much as their competition is.

Wall Street has shown itself to be resilient and—by and large—willing to evolve to keep up with their customers' expectations. If they can continue to lead the way in financial thought leadership while delivering on UX, they stand in good stead for the future.

The financial services marketplace is entering a second wave of rapid evolution. But if Wall Street and Silicon Valley can learn a little from each other, then, ultimately, the end user will come out on top.

Julia Bloch Mellon is Senior Vice President of Financial Services at Bliss Integrated Communication. ○



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Finding opportunity, compelling stories in a bear market

How some companies—both past and present—have disproved the adage that what goes up must come down.

By Valerie Christopherson

Every seasoned and successful investor lives by the mantra “Sell high, buy low,” yet few among the uninitiated are brave enough to follow this sage advice. It’s understandable, given that many of us find the stock market and investment strategies complex and hard to grasp.

At the same time, it’s ironic considering our country’s history of recessions, which have occurred with surprising regularity since 1797 when land speculation in the New World caused widespread panic. Expected though excruciating, recessions are, in fact, far more common to the cycle of business than the current economic climate we’ve been enjoying since June 2009, at which point recovery began after the market bottomed out in 2008.

Alas, true to Isaac Newton’s law of motion, what goes up must come down. And when it does, it’s only natural that some businesses and entrepreneurs will run for cover while others embrace a crash or a market correction like a cold shower in the desert at high noon.

Recognizing the opportunity for new beginnings and different approaches often requires a compelling brand story and balanced perspective in how peaks and valleys are viewed. Businesses that panic at the sight of a market sloping downward tend to spin their wheels, with their thoughts tied up by fear. On the other hand, companies that take the valleys and peaks in stride strategically use slow times to tap into their creative resources, designing new products or services and crafting targeting marketing and publicity campaigns that increase engagement with an existing customer base and grab the attention of new audiences. Recent history provides us with a plethora of examples of companies that took on the bear market of 2008—the worst recession since the Great Depression—and thrived. Here’s how they did it.

Clear messaging that cuts to the chase

Plain and simple, Groupon entered a slumping economy in November 2008 with an irresistible offer: Deep-discounted goods and services. With clear messaging and an easy-to-navigate website, it served the goal of businesses to keep moving products while giving consumers a needed financial break. Word of mouth spread quickly about the company that offered local deals daily, and in just two years Groupon settled into 35 countries and 300 markets, with an an-

nual profit of \$500 million.

Building a brand identity that lives up to its customer promise

At the peak of the recession in 2009, Netflix did next to the impossible by gaining three million new subscribers, all while a video rental giant lay dying. Its choice of TV and movie streaming plans and disc delivery services allowed subscribers to temporarily forget their financial worries and watch unlimited hours of entertainment a month at a bargain price. With a great brand identity that lived up to its customer promise, Netflix continued on an upward trajectory and today retains more than 148 million subscribers globally.

Reaching audiences beyond traditional channels

The wildly popular coffee retailer Starbucks, founded in 1971, was on the fast track, opening, on average, two stores per day between 1987 and 2007, at which time it hit a virtual wall. Stepping back, the company shifted its focus away from bureaucracy and realigned its operations to connect emotionally with customers by engaging and campaigning through new social media channels including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Customers were able to share their views and offer opinions on products, services, store aesthetics and corporate social responsibility, many of which were taken into account and became the new foundation of its reformed brand: an altruistic, community builder that cares for the environment.

Along with the Amazons, Fords, Dominos and other mavericks that survived and thrived through the shrinking economy, tenacious brand builders—large and small—could be found in every industry, even our own. After working in public relations for 10 years, I founded Global Results Communications in 2005 to serve the growing high-tech sector, which included the consumer electronics and mobile industries. It was a seamless push up and over the hill primarily because of the kinds of clients we attracted. They were innovative, courageous entrepreneurs charting new courses and mainstay organizations brazenly moving forward despite the obvious obstacles. Trusting our instincts and playing to our strengths, we leveraged the fear permeating the market and positioned them as confident and courageous market leaders. And it paid off.

Telcordia Technologies, one of GRC’s earliest clients brought on in 2006, was at the time headquartered in Piscataway, New Jersey. Guiding the company through the downturn and beyond, Telcordia was generating revenues of \$739 million by 2011. In an all cash transaction, on a cash and debt-free basis, it was successfully acquired by Ericsson for \$1.15 billion in 2012 and became a wholly owned subsidiary of Ericsson. Still part of the GRC portfolio, the company was rebranded as iconectiv in 2013. Today, iconectiv is an invaluable client and telecom powerhouse that provides network and operations management, numbering, registry and fraud prevention solutions to the telecommunications industry.



Valerie Christopherson

Nuance Communications, a pioneer in voice recognition and conversational AI technologies for the healthcare, banking, enterprise and automotive markets, has been a GRC client since 2006, at which time it was a \$600 million company. With continuous placements including interviews and features in top-tier media such as National Public Radio, *Fast Company*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and Mashable among others, Nuance became a trusted source for the press corps and a recognized industry thought leader. By 2018, it had grown to a \$2 billion company on the cutting edge of the most advanced biometrics and voice-assisted solutions for fraud prevention, as well as an automotive visionary helping to design the cockpit of the future for the world’s largest carmakers.

Along with world-class clients across the globe, GRC has continued to expand to include all vertical markets touched by technology including healthtech, healthcare, IoT, automotive, retail, financial services, greentech, advertising and marketing, social and many more.

While evolving our scope of capabilities to include today’s most advanced digital and social mediums, we remain not only committed to staying ahead of the technology curve but also focused on the fact that telling a compelling story transcends any market, bear or bull.

Valerie Christopherson is Founder and CEO of Global Results Communications. ●



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Rethinking content marketing's spot in the sales funnel

As organizations demand ROI from their content efforts, marketing teams are focusing lower on the sales funnel to be more targeted in their approach.

By Ken MacFadyen

The question that inevitably faces all PR and communications professionals is how to assess and track the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. To be sure, certain tactics lend themselves to quantifying ROI. The measurement capabilities of most digital platforms, for instance, help explain the growth of online advertising, which has come at the expense of traditional print or broadcast campaigns. As it relates to content, however, while marketers can certainly track the reach of specific initiatives, measuring the impact is more difficult to pin down.

In financial services, for instance, the goal of content is very often more targeted than simply creating awareness. And, arguably, traditional advertising and PR efforts are just as effective if not more so in maximizing exposure for a brand or product. Content, on the other hand, is counted on to fuel social media campaigns, but it is also a vehicle to tell a more nuanced story—one that creates differentiation against a broader peer set and resonates with prospective clients with specific needs.

For this reason, the most effective integrated PR programs don't think of content solely as a "top of the funnel" tactic to create brand awareness and reach a mass audience. It's instead created with a very specific objective in mind. Rather than solely making consumers aware of the brand, it has an important, actionable additional purpose: it's designed to stimulate intent that either nurtures ongoing relationships or drives conversion or specific actions. The upshot is that when marketers focus on the "bottom of the funnel" in devising their content strategies, they can prioritize the topics that are most likely to influence a specific audience and then they can track and quantify the impact in delivering distinct business outcomes.

For many, their approach to content marketing has evolved over time. Given the rise of social media and automated marketing platforms—requiring a steady stream of content to fuel digital campaigns—thought leadership certainly complements efforts to create awareness. For a number of reasons, though, some forward-thinking companies are revisiting their approach, and impact is no longer defined by the size of the audience reached, but rather the actions it helps to stimulate.

Quality counts

One of the biggest factors driving marketers to rethink their content strategy relates to just how prevalent thought leadership has become. Our agency published a study that found 96 percent of the top 100 global fintech companies produce thought leadership on a regular basis. This study followed our research last year that found 88 percent of the world's largest asset managers utilize content as part of an integrated PR and communications strategy. This has created something of a flood of thought leadership, making it more difficult to stand out just by producing content, alone. To be sure, regular and consistent thought leadership provides an important cue to show that asset managers and fintech providers are investing in their business and that they have a position or view on relevant trends in the market. In fact, the ubiquity of content marketing across asset management has also made it conspicuous when firms don't produce thought leadership in any capacity.

At the same time, the explosion of content marketing across finance—and most industries for that matter—has raised the bar for those who expect the effort to show a material impact. For one, it's only become that much more difficult to reach decision makers without a very targeted strategy. When just about every RIA and asset manager offers an annual and mid-year market outlook, for instance, marketers are hard pressed to reach an audience that extends beyond existing clients.

Amid this flood of content, if the topics and themes covered or the views conveyed are designed to appeal to "everyone," it's unlikely it will resonate with or influence anyone. Thought leaders in finance—from Howard Marks and Warren Buffett to David Rubenstein and Ben Horowitz—didn't gain a following by parroting conventional wisdom.

Finding validation

Another consideration that has marketers rethinking their content strategy reflects the effort required to create compelling thought leadership. This generally isn't a problem for the world's largest asset managers, who may employ an entire "newsroom" of ex-journalists to churn out new articles, videos and infographics on a weekly or even daily basis. But for smaller operators, who don't have these resources available, content can

demand a lot of time and effort from key executives, who obviously have other day-to-day responsibilities. Even firms that hire an outside content-marketing agency will generally dedicate time to brainstorm on topics, conduct interviews with ghostwriters, and then iterate new content pieces before they're ready for publication.

Given the effort required, those who move the effort forward will want to know that the "juice is worth the squeeze." Web analytics can track how many people accessed the article and how long they may've spent on a given page (the implication being they're actually reading the content). Online forms can also be used to augment lead-generation activities and track specifically who accesses a given article. The catch, however, is that it's difficult to measure the extent to which a content campaign actually influenced a new client conversion. This kind of feedback generally stems from anecdotal evidence, when a new client proactively tells their relationship manager that they read or accessed a particular piece. It's just as rare, though, that this positive affirmation ever makes it back to the marketing team.

Take dead aim

Make no mistake, these are issues aren't unique to content marketing; but it underscores why it's so important to have a very specific objective in mind when creating a content strategy. Communications teams need to identify not just the audience they want to reach, but also the actions they hope to trigger. The more specific they can be, the easier it is to assess the results at the end of and throughout a given campaign.

Most private equity firms, for instance, raise a new fund only every four or five years. So, their goals around content may be as simple as providing a touch point to stay in regular communication with their current investors, informing them of new developments and market trends and remaining top of mind for when the firm returns to the market to fundraise for subsequent vehicles. Other PE firms, however, may use content to reach business owners in specific sectors and facilitate deal sourcing. In this case, they can develop content that speaks to a very specific niche within a given sector. They can then pinpoint the desired audi-



Ken MacFadyen

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How to get positive press from negative events

The art of finding a silver lining in the face of disastrous situations.

By Frank Tortorici

Everyone dreads bad news. And all public relations executives dread bad news about their clients.

But if you're a crafty PR person, sometimes a piece of news that's overall on the negative side can be turned into a positive story for your client.

One example that comes to mind is the preponderance of bad news about major companies being hacked by wily cyberthieves, resulting in thousands of customers' personal information being dangerously exposed. While this kind of thievery brings comfort to no one, it presents an opportunity for PR practitioners in the cybersecurity field. Because these incidents are growing in number and damaging the reputations of once respected companies such as Target and Home Depot, CEOs and other top executives are hungry for advice regarding how to keep these cyber wolves at bay.

Enter cybersecurity experts. If you have a client that fits this description, be sure to take advantage of the cyber horror stories in the news. Pitch your broadcast and print media contacts that your expert is available to discuss the ramifications of the current cyberattack on other businesses and consumers. Put a positive spin on the bad news by having your client offer tips on how the public and corporations can best prevent such disasters.

Another type of story in which a PR pro can turn the bad into the good concerns the reporting of negative financial results for

public companies. Countless PR executives are confronted with conveying disappointing corporate earnings from time to time. The skilled communicator will work to put the damage reported in perspective and craft an as encouraging message as possible to worried shareholders and stakeholders, and the media.

Identify the positive events in the company at earnings time. There's no way to not report the negative financial numbers but coat them with details of hopeful activity on the horizon when sending reports to shareholders and when pitching reporters. Share news of new or expanded office openings, of innovative products in development that will ultimately result in better news for your shareholders, and of promotions and additions in executive staff.

By relaying news in this manner, you're not hiding the bad news/numbers but doing your public relations duty of accentuating the positive to protect the brand and its image. In reality, you could be looking after the interest of current and future stockholders whose investments and shares may very well increase based on the rosier developments you are emphasizing.

Another example of the PR practitioner doing the job well in the face of distressing news involves responses to calamitous events in your client's locality. Think of a situation where a toxic or poisonous substance has been reported to have been inadvertently leaked and is endangering the physical and mental well-being of a town or city.

team to prioritize the topics being covered, the messaging or views that are most likely to resonate, and the specific call-to-action they hope to stimulate.

Content doesn't necessarily need to reside at the very bottom of the sales funnel to be effective. Even in the middle of the funnel, content can be an effective tool in stimulating or fostering a dialogue that allows the sales team to have more impactful conversations as they descend down the funnel. With one client, for instance, we were able to create content that zeroed in on a very specific audience and need state—asset owners who are insourcing their investment operations. We then distributed the article through a sponsored campaign on LinkedIn that pinpointed the specific institutional investors who could access the thought leadership in their feed. Without realizing exactly how targeted the effort was, the targeted audience responded because the

Our agency has a client that does extensive research on asbestos contamination and legal precedents that have been set in terms of corporate litigation on such "toxic tort" cases. We jump at the chance to show how our researcher clients can add much needed perspective to any stories involving damage to property and/or individuals.

With our client's background, it can offer examples of how the potential damage in such cases is often much worse than what is actually incurred by citizens or the government. We arrange interviews for the appropriate researchers to tell the real story of what usually happens in these incidents to local daily newspapers and nightly news programs. These experts can explain the effects of asbestos and other substances and any possible remedies, both physical and financial in nature.

It's the duty of the PR pro to be ready for negative news events and to consider every way any clients can be called upon to add encouraging perspective. Throughout the history of publicity, the smart PR executive has taken advantage of such situations. It's a part of the trade to inform the public of ways that it could benefit from the expertise of your client companies and it's a component of your pact with your clients that you'll capitalize on any chance of presenting the company or product in the best possible way.

Frank Tortorici is Senior Strategist of Media Relations at Marketing Maven. ○



Frank Tortorici

Content marketing

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ence for distribution and through a targeted email campaign, gain instant feedback in tracking open rates, inbound inquiries and ultimately new investments. Most investors would agree that if content helps secure even one deal, it's well worth the effort.

As part of a recent panel on the topic of content marketing, one participant in the venture capital industry highlighted that they'll go so far as to create content with one specific prospect in mind. He added that generally they operate under the philosophy that the firm's partners will be "hand delivering" content to as few as two or three prospective founders in a specific industry. The ROI, in this case, is black and white: whether or not they're successful in securing an investment. This kind of hyper-focused approach allows the marketing

content spoke to a very specific scenario. The campaign, in turn, was able to deliver a measurable and material impact.

It's also important to keep in mind that even when a piece is created to address a very specific goal, it can still ascend "up the funnel" to catch a wider audience over time. Once a content piece is created, for instance, it can then be repurposed as a contributed article in a third-party publication, published as part of a curated quarterly newsletter, or distributed widely across social media or at conferences and events.

But to truly speak to a decisionmaker and drive business outcomes, content marketers should first have a sense of who they're trying to talk to in order to be effective. This is why the focus is gravitating to the bottom of the funnel in conceiving and publishing thought leadership.

Ken MacFadyen is VP and Head of Content at BackBay Communications. ○

The power of financial content

Three keys to unlocking a content marketing program for financial services clients.

By Alex Stanton

Today's financial firms increasingly need ways to stay on the minds of potential and existing clients. With the advertising noise now louder than ever—atop a heavy cost—content marketing offers one of the best options for financial firms looking to make a splash.

However, many financial services firms get tripped up at the get-go, not sure where to start or how to create an effective program. Having worked with many of these firms as they've navigated the ups and downs of a changing marketing landscape, there are a few considerations the most successful have in common.

Think broadly

Content marketing is a wide arena of communications that transcends any one medium. White papers, brochures and social media posts are often the first things that come to mind, but there are also proprietary surveys, infographics, thought leadership videos, podcasts, email marketing campaigns, digital slideshows, interactive data graphs and much more. The only thing that makes a content program “standard” in financial services is its focus on building brand affinity and reputation rather than direct sales.

It's important to be clear about the role content marketing can play. Much like a media relations program, content marketing is a mid-funnel communication that helps you stay top-of-mind among those who already know you and gives your leads team a natural, meaningful way to stay front of mind until the right prospect makes a buying decision.

Being clear and realistic about program goals can be a challenge, especially if your company, like many financial services firms, is new to content marketing. In these situations, it often helps to have an outside voice. Does your HR team need support with recruitment? A content marketing program can help attract talent by engaging existing employees as brand ambassadors. Struggling with the program direction or finding the time to implement your plan? An agency partner can be critical in overcoming these roadblocks.

Capture your knowledge

Once you've defined success, you must figure out what you're going to say. Many firms perceive this as a roadblock, but almost all companies are already saying quite a bit; it's just not being captured and rede-

ployed.

Do an audit of content you already have. Does your company have a media relations program? You can use both the published stories and the interview discussion to pull out tidbits of content. Does your company put on an annual conference? Those slides are filled with content gold that can be repurposed all year.

There are four key areas where nearly every financial services firm is already producing content:

Company and executives. Launching a new product, hitting a goal milestone, attending an industry conference—many things your company does in normal course—can be compelling content if framed within your wider market perspective.

News and media. Insights from media stories about your company and independent commentary can be culled and repurposed for months—sometimes years—within a content marketing program. You can also use industry news in the same way. Is there a story that you think would be of interest? Share it along with a company executive's take on the topic.

Customers and partners. You work hard to give your clients your best work, and to win more of it, you need to highlight what you've done. Are there advice memos or reports you've sent to a client that you can revise to be applicable to a wider audience? Can you showcase your expertise across different products like case studies, podcasts, and e-books?

Employees. Existing staff are your best assets in increasing recruitment and enhancing retention. However, decision influencers and potential clients will also be interested in who your team members are as people. Discussing career journeys, highlighting volunteer programs they do with and without the company, and finding ways to elevate their customer successes are all effective ways to bring this to life.

Repurposing existing commentary is one of the reasons content marketing is so cost-efficient: you aren't reinventing the wheel.

Start small


In addition to its flexibility and efficiency, content marketing is inherently scalable, making it ideal for firms—and their compliance departments—who are just dipping their toes into the waters of proactive com-

munications.

One of our clients began by simply wanting to get more out of an annual customer conference on which they spend a lot of time and money. We used the conference presentations to create well-styled white papers and concise videos that were distributed to a select prospect list, and then further reworked into a series of leave-behinds used throughout the year. The reach of that original presentation was increased 100 times at a fraction of the initial cost of creation.

Starting small is key: you'll want to measure how an initial program performs and iterate based on the lessons learned from that campaign. As you grow the program, you may need to tap partners like a communications agency to drive program execution, or a design firm to enhance visuals and further the program's success.

In my experience, many firms that have initially been concerned about committing to a content marketing effort have quickly gotten ROI from this cost-efficient, controllable communication. In 2020, we'll see even more financial services firms expanding their content programs, taking advantage of their efficiency, scalability and reputation-enhancing benefits.

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



Alex Stanton

PR news brief

Wells Fargo banks on Cogent Strategies

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

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

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

As part of its turnaround plan, Wells Fargo tabbed Derek Flowers, a 21-year company veteran, to head its newly created strategic execution & operation office.

Flowers reports to interim CEO Allen Parker, who replaced Timothy J. Sloan in March.

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



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A blueprint for corporate reputation

Closing the gap between perception and reality is critical to preserving corporate and financial clients' reputations and maximizing shareholder value.

By Ryan Barr

Warren Buffett famously said, “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.” Who am I to disagree with Mr. Buffett? According to the Reputation Institute, intangible value—including corporate reputation—makes up 81 percent of market value. This means a one-point increase in reputation yields a 2.6 percent increase in market cap, which translates into an average of \$1 billion.

However, corporate and financial communicators know that if a company is going to market now, it doesn't have 20 years to build its reputation. With 24/7 media, globally connected social networks and online marketplaces, investors, influencers, customers and employees can alter the perception of a corporate brand in the blink of an eye.

As corporate reputation impacts valuation, communicators must close the gap between the reality of a company's current operational status and the perceptions of key external stakeholders. And, the vast array of external influences can interfere with a company's ability to control its narrative. Given this, it's more important than ever for a company to use all the tools at its disposal. Where to begin?

It starts with storytelling. Financial and corporate communicators need to build compelling narratives rooted in data that show an obtainable goal, all to be measured by a roadmap that tracks a company's progress. For all companies, financials are the obvious—and sometimes most critical—gauge of success. It's fairly straightforward: tell your stakeholders what you're going to do: increase sales, control expenses and grow the bottom line; execute your plan; and then report back. Unfortunately, financials are only one metric used to measure a company's success and not all companies are at the same moment in their lifecycle.

A narrative must go beyond the numbers. Stakeholders must understand the vision of the company; what are you trying to achieve beyond growth. Start-ups and early-stage companies too often default to, “We're a disruptor in an industry that has been stagnant for too long.” Great, but what does that truly mean? Disruption has become a cliché. What are you really doing as a company? Solving the last mile of affordable and efficient transportation; bringing life-saving preventative medicine to those most in need; providing connectivity and

speed to rural populations? All of these are disruptive and also showcase achievable goals. Build a story that people can relate to, follow and rally behind.

Now that you have your story and you know what your audience wants to hear, **you need to reach them where they are.** Not every stakeholder is reading the same publication, visiting the same websites or even using the same social media channels. Your audience is as unique as you are. You need to understand how they consume information. Whether it's a commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* or a thought leadership piece in *The Atlantic* or a listicle on BuzzFeed, make sure you're telling a consistent story that is relevant to the outlet's specific audience. Ensure that you employ this approach through all your communications channels. While the appeal of a “third-party” endorsement in earned media remains the holy grail for many, it's not the only means of connecting and influencing key audiences.

Developing original content provides an opportunity to control the narrative, but it will also allow you to showcase your corporate DNA. As mentioned, companies aren't solely evaluated by financials alone because corporate culture, management credibility and even likability are a part of intangible value. Original content highlighting customer success stories, community involvement and corporate evolution can engage stakeholders in ways companies never dreamed possible 20 years ago. Go ahead, show off your creativity and bring your story to life. Make sure you stay true to your brand and remain relevant in the eyes of your key audience.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, **the role of communications isn't solely the responsibility of the CEO, executive team or communications professionals.** I'm not suggesting you move the responsibility from the top of the organization. That would be ridiculous! I am, however, suggesting that there needs to be a top-down and bottom-up strategy.

The CEO and executive team remain the primary source of information, consistently conveying the corporate narrative during every interaction including media interviews, conferences, investor meetings, employee townhalls and customer engagement.

Additionally, employees from all levels must be involved in the external communi-

cations approach; they're a company's most valuable asset. When they believe in a company's vision, mission and purpose, they'll be brand ambassadors and help close the gap between inaccurate external perceptions and internal realities. It's important to provide employees with the training and tools that adequately equip them to advocate for a brand. They're on the frontlines, speaking with customers, partners and colleagues daily. If they're not properly trained, they can inadvertently be the cause of the spread of disinformation.

Additionally, companies must create social media guardrails and provide the tools for online employee advocacy programs that will afford their brand the opportunity to dramatically increase their reach. Not only is their reach broader and highly relevant, the cost to implement employee advocacy programs is a fraction of advertising. There's no reason for your number-one asset to be sidelined. Get them in the game.

Closing the gap that exists between perception and reality is critical to preserving corporate reputation and maximizing shareholder value. Remember to build a narrative rooted in data and designed with purpose; understand your audiences to ensure relevance and reach them where they are; and deploy a holistic communications approach that empowers employees to be advocates and stand aligned with executives. Follow this blueprint and you won't need 20 years to build your reputation.

Ryan Barr is Managing Partner at Finn Partners and leader of its global financial services practice. ○



Ryan Barr

PR news brief

MMGY acquires NEXTFactor

MMGY Global acquired Vancouver-based travel and tourism strategic planning agency NEXTFactor Enterprises Inc. Financial terms were not reported.

NEXTFactor provides strategic planning and marketing services for clients in the tourism and travel sector. It was founded in 2015 by CEO Paul Ouimet.

The agency's name will change to MMGY NextFactor. Ouimet will remain at the firm as partner and MMGY NextFactor president. While MMGY NextFactor's Vancouver offices will remain for the time being, agency staff told *O'Dwyer's* that MMGY intends to open a new office this fall to accommodate the NextFactor team as well as other MMGY Global brands.

NEXTFactor accounts for MMGY Global's seventh acquisition in the last three years, the latest in an aggressive acquisition spree borne out of a significant equity investment the firm received in 2016 from Peninsula Capital Partners.

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Financial communications: thinking past day one

The successful execution of a merger or acquisition requires a PR partner who's able to ensure the company's message resonates beyond Wall Street.

By David Roady

The traditional financial communications roadmap, particularly in the case of M&A transactions, has always pointed to the importance of “day one.” Communications advisors have—justifiably, under the old paradigm—devoted their energies to preparing for announcement day, strategizing how communications would be orchestrated, how outreach to stakeholders would be managed, and above all, securing the best possible headline in the financial paper of record.

Media was the focus, and if a financial communications professional obtained the media coverage that her client hoped for, she could head home with a feeling of a job well done. All of that has now changed, and companies undertaking financial transactions that focus their attention solely on announcement day risk catastrophe.

The financial crisis signaled a seismic shift in the way companies do business in this country in more ways than one. But lost amidst the attention on mortgage-backed securities and subprime loans was the fundamental change that took place in the financial communications industry. In response to the 2008 financial crisis, the federal government assumed an activist role in the private sector that it won't relinquish any time soon.

That's not to say antitrust regulators, CFIUS or any other government body that influences the M&A landscape is new, but their influence on the successful execution of transactions has grown exponentially. Case in point: the average time to close an M&A transaction has increased from 124 days in 2010 to 212 days in 2018, and some of the most highly scrutinized transactions take longer: Bayer-Monsanto closed after 745 days, and AT&T-Time Warner closed after 600 days.

One need only examine the sectors driving M&A activity to understand why this is happening. With highly regulated industries such as industrials, energy, technology and healthcare dominating the transaction landscape, announcement day is just the first step in what may be a long process to ensuring close. And that's what companies now look for from their communications counsel: a partner that can play a key role in ensuring certainty to close.

What does that look like? It can depend on the transaction, the jurisdictions involved and the various regulatory con-

cerns, but fundamentally it looks like a communications firm that looks beyond the New York financial media and towards the beltway and the broader universe of stakeholders. In tactical terms, it means taking a campaign approach to M&A transactions, much like one would with issues advocacy or crisis management.

Thinking about transactions as strategic advocacy campaigns is the most effective way to ensure that deals are consummated. This campaign must be seeded on announcement day with messages that resonate beyond Wall Street; there's nothing more challenging than attempting to walk back day-one rhetoric that touts increased pricing power at the expense of consumers.

This isn't to say investors should be neglected, but they can't be the only focus of a company's communications and must be balanced with other stakeholders who can just as easily terminate a deal. M&A transactions are fundamentally longer-term plays for value creation. A day one stock price jump is nice, but consistently improved revenue and margins two years down the road is nicer.

Building an advocacy campaign around a transaction requires taking a unique approach to every client, but there are three guiding principles that can inform a successful communications program.

Companies and their advisors must map their key influencers and conduct coordinated, regular outreach to them. This requires going a level deeper than, say, finding lawmakers on a congressional map that are responsible for districts touched by a particular deal. Companies need experts who understand what those officials' priorities are, what issues their committees are examining, and what outside groups might exert influence that could positively or negatively impact a deal's ability to close.

For example, if a company was acquiring a competitor in the agricultural space, it would need to not only communicate with members of the House Committee on Agriculture, but also influential industry groups and farmers who have the willingness and capability to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill.

Companies should always look to secure third-party advocates who can speak to a transaction's merits with an independent voice. It's a given that a company will support a deal it's seeking approval

for—but having respected opinion leaders lend their support can be instrumental in ensuring close. Once again, this requires specialized expertise—to use our previous example, communicators with deep knowledge of the agricultural industry who know the key players, know what their issues are and can craft outreach strategies that will effectively garner their support.

Companies need to understand that not everyone is going to like the transaction announcement they've made, and need to prepare to communicate effectively in the face of opposition. This could be anything from consumer advocates to activist shareholders and,



David Roady

increasingly, the active fund managers playing a role in shaping M&A negotiations and creating obstacles to closing major transactions. Being able to plan for the known detractors and react to the unforeseen opponents can make or break any M&A deal.

There's no magic bullet to ensuring that an M&A deal is closed, particularly in our increasingly uncertain political environment. But it's critical to understand that the game has changed, and that closing the book on announcement day is only the beginning of an effective financial communications strategy. Everyone likes to see their name in the *Wall Street Journal*—but only when the ink is dry on the final regulatory approval is a communicator's job done.

David Roady is a Senior Managing Director in the Strategic Communications segment at FTI Consulting. ○

PR news brief

London Stock Exchange invests in Teneo

Teneo is handling the London Stock Exchange Group as it negotiates a massive \$27 billion (including debt) deal to acquire Refinitiv financial data provider from a consortium led by Blackstone Group.

Known for its Eikon desktop terminals, Refinitiv would put the LSEG in competition with Bloomberg, Intercontinental Exchange Group and CME Group.

The deal would transform the more than 300-year-old LSE from matching up buyers & sellers of stocks into a high-tech seller of financial information/analytics.

The LSEG released a statement July 27 “regarding press speculation” surrounding the deal to confirm takeover talks with Refinitiv.

An acquisition would increase LSEG's global footprint and deepen customer reach.

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Don't take my word for it, listen to Bill Gates

Sage advice that can prevent start-ups from finding themselves in a reputational crisis.

By Thomas P. Butler

Bill Gates, one of the great technology entrepreneurs of our time, is credited with saying: "If I had one dollar left, I'd spend it on PR."

Over the years of speaking to some of our different clients, CEOs or other C-Suite thought leaders about defensive or aggressive strategic agendas and professional servicing budgets, I would've loved to have suggested, don't take my word for it, just listen to the advice of Bill Gates! If only it was that easy.

Last year, our firm had the opportunity to onboard a new clean chemistry technology firm. Its patented innovation has the potential to revolutionize fire science and the massive struggle much of the Western United States and Europe has been having in containing wildfires.

The strategic messaging shaped for that start-up, its CEO and earned media in many markets across the nation, propelled them into the arms of waiting private equity investors competing to have a piece of the potential next "can't miss" market innovation. We all win when the client embraces collaboration.

Just recently, in a call with that same CEO, we went over their growth plans, possible acquisitions and customer accounts that appear to be on the runway.

The CEO recognizes that by deeply engaging with and utilizing strategic communications and public relations counsel for more than just earned media, corporate shareholder interaction and social marketing, the company and its core principles get the added eyes, ears and instincts of practitioners with years of experience, as a trusted sounding board.

When clients simply won't listen

I've also experienced the opposite side of the spectrum, when the client is simply not tuned into taking anyone's advice.

As a young practitioner, then at a large agency, I accompanied the founder and CEO of a well-known commercial brand to federal court for his guilty plea. He had apparently "left off the last-S for savings," a refrain from his well-worn TV commercials, but in this case, it was for failure to pay taxes.

The hearing and aftermath seemed to go according to plan, until he saw a network TV crew at the front and rear door of the courthouse. He panicked, forgot about our

prepared public statement and sprinted for a taxi instead. He gave the news just what they wanted: A new lead story. Instead of a considered and serious response, cameras captured a CEO sprinting away from them, a caricature of a powerful man trying to duck responsibility. His investors, franchisees and corporate team regretted his actions right away.

In February, I read in Bloomberg News about a startup delivery company whose recent round of funding valued the company at \$7.1 billion. The company was in the news for purported wage theft, by deducting and keeping tips given by customer through its app, which were intended for delivery drivers.

The company's co-founder and CEO then told Bloomberg, "It's unfortunate that the activities of others have mischaracterized what we've been doing for two years." He then continued to defend their business model, saying, "There was no coverage of this (scandal) two years ago."

How could a company, with such technological promise, growing market share potential and significant investors be so imprudent and allow themselves to get in such a reputational bind?

Perhaps because by May the company continued to welcome more investors as its valuation reached \$12.6 billion. Does that mean the company's problem and accusers went away?

July came and so did a star *New York Times* investigative reporter, who went undercover for six days as a delivery person for this company and three of its competitors, including Uber Eats and Seamless, for a Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations experiment. The journalist's story confirmed and chronicled similar wage theft, as was alleged months earlier.

In the world of Twitter, tens of thousands of news feeds—including those belonging to its competitors—are now jam packed with harmful messaging that will certainly have an impact somewhere along the line. Elected leaders in the cities where they do business are now also aggressively denouncing their business practices, promising investigations and legislation to mandate tighter regulations and strict penalties.

Importance of C-Suite communications collaboration rings true

I'd prefer to contrast that regrettable case study with a smart, forward-looking client call I received this past winter while I was away on a family vacation. My phone rang and it was a longtime client, the Chair and CEO of a financial firm. Her call and questions related to something that her company would likely not be taking action on, or even announcing, until perhaps the fall of that year, more than six months into the future. She respected and valued our opinion and thoughts.

The message to us from the leader of the company was, you're a valued partner and earned a seat at the table, but it also served as a fresh reminder to put on our thinking caps, and study all of the pertinent communications matters or examine if any pitfalls exist on the path to the company's continued growth and success.

In many cases, the road to long-term agency and corporate partnerships can begin at the crisis stage. It's a time when the actions of true communications professionals can have tremendous value on a company, its executive leadership or its brand value. That goodwill should carry forward with a results-driven approach and sage guidance, along with continued diligence and dedication.

I've been fortunate throughout my career to have many smart and remarkable CEO-leaders who have allowed us to be an integral part of their team. They include the leaders of large pension funds, corporate shareholder activists, banks and Wall Street firms, municipal comptrollers, serial-entrepreneurs and—unfortunately for them—a few corporate leaders under the duress of litigation or corporate restructuring, who called on us to help them navigate through tough times.

It's my opinion the ideal client relationship is one where the company brain trust works closely and collaboratively with their communications team leadership. And that the CEO who can successfully recognize and entrust their ideas and vision to the communications team will benefit shareholders, channel partners and customers via a superior reputation and brand experience.

Thomas P. Butler is President of Butler Associates, LLC. ○



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The cost of being 'woke'

Brands have begun taking stances on social issues and adopting purpose-driven communications in an effort to forge stronger emotional bonds with consumers, but this practice carries its own risk.

By Andrew Healy

As with all sectors, the role of the communications function within financial and professional services has gone through a dramatic overhaul in recent years. From the explosion of social media to personalizing and tailoring the way news and content is shared with clients, to implementing a content marketing plan to tell stories in different ways, our industry has almost had to adapt to constant adaptation.

While this has created a mountain of opportunities and allowed our profession to expand its horizons and get a bigger seat at the executive table, it has also presented a flurry of challenges and landmines for brands, one of which has dominated the marketing and communications world this year: the rise of purpose driven communications.

When I started my career 15 years ago, a rule of thumb was that financial and professional brands and their executives avoided commenting on social issues as if they were the plague. The downside risk was simply too great for companies to consider. "We've never done that before," was a common response to new ideas in an industry that—especially back then—was extremely slow to try new things.

And perhaps the biggest reason brands were reluctant to be vocal on certain issues was that consumers simply didn't expect them to have an opinion.

It's almost quaint to think back on it now, but pre-social media, the relationship between consumers and brand was much different than it is today. It was almost understood by consumers that executives at financial institutions were focused on what they were hired to do: grow, lead and run successful operations. No one seemed to care what companies felt about politics, culture or social issues. In fact, commenting on this type of story might even come off as unusual.

How times have changed.

Over the last 10 years, the relationship between companies and their constituents has changed dramatically. Some of this was driven by internal needs, as brands recognized the value of their workforce and saw that having a more human/less rigid cul-

ture helped attract and retain top talent.

Social media opened doors to a financial landscape that had previously been almost entirely walled off to the public. And as firms attempted to rehab their image post-Financial Crisis, they adopted a more open and engaging level of interaction which grew over time and changed consumers' behavior and expectations. Now, firms often get accused of trying to hide and "no commenting" their way out of things, which simply didn't occur much pre-2008.

While there's myriad benefits to taking a visible and vocal stance on timely social issues today, brands need to consider a lot of angles and avoid feeling pressured to jump into every conversation taking place. "Woke-washing" is being said left and right these days, rightfully so, and you'd be hard pressed to attend an industry conference and not overhear a discussion about the pros and cons of this.

Through our work with clients and observing the media landscape every day, here's a few tips on how to navigate these waters:

Be authentic. Consumers have extremely well-honed BS detectors and if companies are seen as jumping on a bandwagon simply to make money, it can have disastrous effects on customer loyalty and future revenue.

Don't feel pressure to jump into every social conversation. This ties back to authenticity. Brands can't be all things to all people, so they don't need to opine on every topic that captures the public's attention. Spreading yourself too thin can backfire and make people question whether you truly care about something or if it's just a marketing ploy.

Think long and hard about social issues you want to add your voice to and ask yourself, "Do we deserve to be here?" "Do we have a history we can point people towards to show them we've cared about this in the past?" "Does this connect back to our DNA in a way that gives us a chance to share our voice, or are we stretching a bit too far here?"

Embrace internal communications. While securing positive media cover-

age is a mainstay in all communications strategies, don't overlook the power that employees have today. A company's workforce today is more engaged and vocal than ever before. As we've seen several times this year, they're rallying together to spark discussions about key issues within their companies, and in some cases are even working with the C-suite to change certain procedures.

A company's workforce is the most important thing they have. Don't overlook this critical audience. Engage and listen to them.

Many expect to see a course correction in purpose driven communications at some point, which—as with a traditional market correction—is something that's healthy and can help re-set the stage and balance things out.

It's important to recognize that many companies are dealing with this on the fly for the first time, so it's natural to see some misses here and there, and in many cases, companies do actually genuinely support something that goes beyond their traditional set of topics.

But this is a sensitive area that's only going to become more volatile as time goes on. Consumers are adjusting their expectations of what they want companies to be and say, so it's a dynamic that's literally changing by the day.

As with many of the new challenges that have arisen in the communications space over the last several years, companies are experimenting, learning and adjusting their strategy in real time, so progress is being made. And as brands begin to recognize the advantages and risks inherent with engaging in these kinds of conversations, they're forcing themselves into thinking more strategically about the best course forward.

Andrew Healy is a co-Founding Partner at Water & Wall Group, an integrated marketing and communications agency supporting financial and professional brands. ○



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Adapting to constant change

Three truths for marketing your financial firm in 2020 and beyond.

By Joe Anthony

Thirty years ago, when our agency was founded, no one could tell you what the full impact of the Internet would be for marketers. At the time, publications like *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Time* and *Life* conferred credibility and projected thought leadership for industry leaders, pop culture titans and newsmakers from around the country and world. When a company or brand was ready to tell its story, it thought more in terms of campaigns focused on how it wanted to deliver their story and less about how people received the information. After all, the channels were few and information was not as easily accessible.

Today, the Internet has proven to be a revolutionary factor in how marketers approach their jobs. The face of media has changed, with some old-school mastheads like the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* managing to remain relevant while many others have shuttered their operations. Just look around and you'll note that names like BuzzFeed and Business Insider have already put previous media giants like *Life* and *Money* in the rearview. Marketers have to imagine new ways to reach audiences by dialing back direct mail

campaigns and conceiving ideas like brand takeovers of The Skimm or Morning Brew email news bulletins. Change is constant and the pace of that change is only accelerating.

What can marketers count on as they set the table for 2020 and beyond? Here are three truths that matter today:

Brands need to be broadcasters, not just publishers. It seems that just as financial brands were getting into the swing of things with content publishing and applying metrics to blog distribution, the video content beast splashed into the picture and made much of that content feel diminished in relevance, if not obsolete for some consumers. The ubiquity of the Internet hasn't only caused this development but has also forced companies to meet the demand. Creating thoughtful video doesn't have to be costly or time-consuming. Nor does it need to sacrifice quality. Some agencies, like ours, have developed responsive video content programs to meet audiences where they are.

Campaigns are still relevant, but one-offs can be just as impactful. Financial marketers looking to engage their buying

audience—whether it's composed of financial intermediaries like advisors, or the general consumer public—need to realize that information-gathering is more fragmented than ever due to the proliferation of venues that provide information for people to consume. What matters more than the efficacy of an ongoing campaign is the individual merits of each piece of content, communication and visual or video your team produces in support of its products and services. If communicators and marketers fall victim to the “more is more” approach, without concern for quality, the overall impact of their storytelling efforts is likely to diminish.



Joe Anthony

Content is king and distribution is queen, but third-party credibility remains the knight in shining armor for communicators. There's no longer any question that ascendant brands need to develop content. But getting that content into the hands of the right audience is just as important. For those in the financial marketing and PR realm, the inescapable truth is that trust, visibility and credibility remain essential for the success of promoting a financial institution and its products and services. Consistent media coverage can breed familiarity for buyers and centers of influence. It can also serve to bolster your search engine presence and provide quality, shareable content for your social media efforts. Most importantly, strong press recognition lends credibility with buying audiences that place a premium on trust. So, yes, the media landscape has shifted, but this change hasn't undercut the influence media can have on how your company is perceived.

As we approach the third decade of the 21st century, marketers can appreciate that there have never been more varied and extensive opportunities to reach their intended audiences. The flipside is that the sheer volume of messaging today's audiences have access to can make it more challenging for your brand to stand out. Although content published through owned channels can reach people who already compose your current network, a well-defined public relations strategy is vital to engage with those coveted consumers who aren't yet part of your core audience.

Joe Anthony is President of Financial Services at Gregory FCA, a full-service, strategically integrated public relations firm headquartered in suburban Philadelphia. ●

Museum of PR unveils Harold Burson collection

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

He said Burson was the “most disruptive force in the room” and widely admired by the 40,000 Burson-Marsteller staffers that he employed during his career.

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

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

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

Shelley Spector, founder of the Museum, kicked off the affair that was held at the WeWork meeting space at 85 Broad Street. Spector profiled Burson's career path from stringer at the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* to combat engineer following the invasion of Normandy to covering the Nuremberg Trials for the American Forces Network to creation of B-M to crisis communications work for Tylenol and Coca-Cola.

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

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

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

He also took group selfies with the appreciative audience members. ●

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The right to be wrong

Public opinions, private data and Twitter's proposed flagging policy.

By Michael Priem

Twitter recently announced a plan to begin placing a notice over tweets from high-influence political leaders it believes violate its standards regarding abusive behavior. On the surface, this didn't seem significantly different from the motion picture industry's rating system or more detailed advisories posted prior to programming on Netflix and other on-demand networks. Dig a little deeper, however, and one realizes what made this protocol particularly dangerous is the platform's intention to apply it selectively.

Initially, Twitter's censorship policy would apply solely to posts from political figures with large followings. But why not from everyone with 100,000 followers? Or less? In other words, why not to everyone, period? Why not to you and me?

The answer, of course, is because we'd never stand for it.

One of the most troubling aspects of Twitter's proposed policy is the regulatory door it would open and its potential to shut out an increasingly broader set of influencers. If Twitter flags tweets from political figures with at least 100,000 followers, when might it begin doing the same to brands with large audiences? What if someone in the back room decided an image in your post doesn't show enough diversity? Or your message doesn't provide "unique context" unavailable from other brands?

This is about more than just freedom of speech. It's really about freedom of choice. Living in a free society should mean you have the right to share your thoughts, no matter how ill-informed or offensive they might be. In short, you have the right to be wrong—and the right to suffer the outrage of others who disagree with or downright despise you.

We can't outlaw ignorance. We can't legislate kindness. All we can do is avail ourselves of the opportunity to answer and enlighten and actively fight back, using the freedom and media resources afforded us.

I'm no fan of political figures—or others—who use social media to bully those who don't share their opinions or ambitions. But I'm a rabid fan of freedom and the accountability that inevitably comes with it. The proposed flagging policy by Twitter would absolve digital bullies of that accountability, and I believe that prospect has played a key role in their abandonment (or at least delay) of such a plan.

From where I sit as an entrepreneur and marketing firm CEO, the biggest danger of

social—and other media—isn't the public opinion one shares out of choice, but the private data that could be collected and shared without our consent.

One of the biggest shifts I've seen over the past 18 months has been the increased role personal data now plays in the marketing process, and the concept of data as a valuable "natural resource." We hear plenty of buzzwords like AI and Big Data, but that doesn't mean they're being used in their proper context. There's an entire spectrum of adoption to be considered within the ad-tech, marketing and consumer segments.

When it comes to today's data, there are multiple "middlemen" involved. It might be a publisher gathering data around users consuming their content. There's also data collected around consumption at the ad unit level. Then there's site-level data based on how we interact on a marketer's site with advertiser data being collected within that. And then you have third-party Internet data providers helping marketers figure out how to more effectively reach new prospects through data matching and look-alike modeling.

Who owns all the customer data being collected? Is it the consumer, who chose to share it knowingly or otherwise? Or those who put in the time and money and effort to collect it?

The entire idea of multiple parties within the supply chain all collecting and utilizing data has created a gigantic gray area around the rights and roles and actions and ownership of different types of data.

On the matter of data privacy, I think we've got to separate the issues of true "privacy" and "regulation." We're still very early in the era of data usage and the portability of data, so there's a lot of ambiguity or subjectivity and a lot of boundaries haven't been clearly defined.

Because technology can move more rapidly than regulations, we're stuck in a time when there are a lot of missed cues, and true leading-edge technologies are creating new conflicts we haven't begun to address. What are those areas and boundaries? Where should regulations be instituted? And can we all be trusted to self-govern?

The biggest surprise over the past 18 months has been the evolving role consumers play in marketing, and the way their voices are being heard. As technology advances, we're seeing a different type of advertising and a different kind of consumer, one much more cognizant that data is

driving the ad impressions they see. There's been a consumer awakening that makes them skeptical of how brands are utilizing that data: "How do they know? Why am I getting this?"

Consumers also want more control over which data is being collected from them, some assurance that it's being done the right way, and more equilibrium between what they share and what they get. Because we now perform so much of our personal consumption, product exploration and shopping journey online, consumers are taking a more active role in determining what's shared and what's "private."

Interestingly enough, there's a plethora of research that proves customers are actually more upset by not having their data used properly and being served irrelevant advertising or experiences, instead of leveraging that data to provide content that actually helps enrich their online journey.

At the same time, smart digital consumers also realize there's a relationship between content and commitment, that their personal data is the currency of the internet, and if they want all that online content without personal cost, then they're going to "pay" with more personal information.

In this way, consumers are casting their vote in support or defiance of brands. The consumer's loyalty to or equity in a brand is no longer measured simply in terms of sales revenue, but also by the degree of access our consumers choose to grant us.

So, in the end, whether we're talking about public opinion or private data, the best approach not only comes down to a matter of choice, but—as Modern Impact's Dominic Friend recently suggested in his blog, *Woke*. It's the Real Thing—also boils down to one precious word: respect.

As long as we have respect for our audience—for each other—there's a natural equilibrium, an effective give-and-take. If we believe we're giving something of value, we need to feel we're getting something valuable in return. If there's a genuine value proposition, then there's a healthy relationship between tweeters and their followers, between brands and their customers. Respect has always been a critical part of any successful value proposition and the most important component to building consumer trust.

Michael Priem is Founder and CEO of Modern Impact in Minneapolis. ○



Michael Priem

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Richard Dukas, Chairman and CEO and Seth Linden, president, Dukas Linden Public Relations.



Among its diverse clients, New York City based Butler Associates represents the Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association, which owns and produces the world's largest auto show.

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Rick Anderson, financial practice head, is a former chair of PRSA's financial communications

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Maira Conlon, President

Financial Profiles is a strategic communications firm that specializes in creating value in terms of valuation, reputation, talent or other measurable results. The firm was founded in 2007 by a group of recognized industry professionals with deep knowledge of investor relations, communications, finance and journalism.

Financial Profiles partners with public and private companies, pre-IPO companies and asset management firms to provide strategic counsel, value-based corporate positioning and messaging, and access to investors, analysts and the press. The firm offers a range of specialized services including fully outsourced and project-based investor relations, IPO preparation, M&A support, corporate positioning and messaging, media training and media relations, and crisis communications support.

In addition to our financial communications expertise, clients often engage us for B2C communications, including brand positioning, research, peer group analysis, media strategy, content creation and marketing, and digital and social media strategy.

The firm has a demonstrated record of success in leveraging best-in-class communications to help companies distinguish themselves, enhance credibility, and build Wall Street and media support that leads to growth and access to capital. Financial Profiles is frequently engaged to execute integrated investor relations and public relations programs.



Rick Anderson, Senior Managing Director and head of financial services practice, Feintuch Communications.

A research-based, customized and proactive approach is taken with each client engagement, nimbly applying the best talent for each client need from a diverse set of skills and expertise with the goal of achieving measurable ROI. This has led to long-term client partnerships and repeat client engagements.

Client engagements include Aristotle Capital Management, BlackRock TCP Capital Corp., Byline Bancorp, Columbia Banking System Inc., Cresco Labs, Crop One Holdings, Duluth Holdings, Flexsteel Industries, Green Thumb Industries, Infrastructure and Energy Inc., General Finance Corp., Midland States Bancorp, National Assn. of Corporate Directors, National Assn. of Theater Owners, Oaktree Capital, Pacific Premier Bancorp, PPM America, Sterling Bancorp Inc., STORE Capital, Two Harbors Investment Corp., Victory Capital, Western Asset Mortgage Capital Corp., William Lyon Homes, William O'Neil & Co., among others.

FINN PARTNERS

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Ryan Barr, Practice Leader and Managing Partner (NY)

This year, Finn Partners' Global Financial Services Practice added industry veteran Ryan Barr as the agency's first global financial services practice leader, building on the recent acquisition of London-based financial services firm, Moorgate Communications. The Finn team advises companies on strategies to navigate today's highly competitive markets and complex regulatory environments. They also help clients achieve successful business outcomes through purposeful sto-

rytelling and integrated communications and identify the most meaningful ways for clients to engage key audiences and inspire action. In today's ever-changing environment where technological advancements have turned every consumer, partner and employee into real-time brand advocates, Finn's seasoned experts understand that companies today must engage customers and clients in a way never before imaginable. Whether broadening brand awareness, building appreciation for clients transforming an industry or driving adoption of new products and services, Finn's Financial Communications practice combines smart data and analytics with creative programming and flawless tactical execution to deliver on our agency promise—be bold, meaningful and amazing for clients.

FTI CONSULTING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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Mark McCall, Global Segment Leader

As a leading global communications consultancy with more than 30 years of experience advising management teams and boards of directors, FTI Strategic Communications has an extensive track record of helping clients engage with their key stakeholders in order to protect their freedom to operate and advance their business interests.

Our financial communications professionals provide an unparalleled combination of deep sector expertise, local market knowledge, and broad capabilities in M&A communications, restructuring and financial issues, investor relations, corporate governance, proxy fights and shareholder activism, corporate reputation, digital and social media, and employee engagement. We counsel public and private companies on a wide range of scenarios, including transformative and bolt-on acquisitions, friendly and hostile takeovers, initial public offerings, capital raises, and activism defense. We approach each situation with a focus on foundational message development along with disciplined and nimble scenario-based planning that draws on our prior experience, but is unique to the situation at hand, to anticipate various contingencies and potential outcomes, while ensuring coordinated and consistent communications.

FTI Strategic Communications' approach to financial communications is grounded in the understanding that every stakeholder—including investors, analysts, regulatory agencies, elected officials, journalists, employees, partners, vendors and NGOs—must be considered. To that end, our integrated suite of services in financial communications, corporate reputation and public affairs in all the major markets around the world provide a holistic solution for clients that is unmatched in the industry.

GLADSTONE PLACE PARTNERS

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Steven Lipin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Lauren Odell, Partner and Chief Operating Officer

Gladstone Place Partners' diverse and experienced team is designed to meet the evolving strategic communications needs of leading companies' CEOs, boards of directors and heads of communications. We are a highly focused firm with four core practice areas: financial communications, corporate reputation and strategic positioning, issues management and corporate governance communications.

Clear communications and effective engagement with a wide range of constituents are critical to the business success and long-term reputations of our clients. As a new firm with decades of experience of business, our professionals put their collective base of knowledge to work in helping companies and organizations navigate complex and sensitive matters, bringing to bear a relentless focus on sound independent advice and best-in-class execution. We understand the complexity and super-charged nature of today's communications environment, which is why we have social and digital capabilities embedded in our DNA.

Clients seek out Gladstone Place for counsel on a range of matters, including mergers & acquisitions, shareholder activism, IPOs & spinoffs, crisis situations, strategic positioning issues, and corporate governance communications.

Gladstone Place strives to build long-term, trusted relationships by delivering the highest quality work product, paired with uncompromising ethics, integrity and judgment. We are a highly-focused firm, determined to always be there for

our clients' most critical communications needs. Our work is underpinned by a culture of strong ethics, professional excellence, high integrity, meritocracy and diversity.

GREGORY FCA

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Joe Anthony, President, Financial Services

Joe Hassett, SVP, Investor Relations

Seeking a communications partner that knows the ins and outs of the financial services world? Our team of seasoned financial services public relations and investor relations professionals has served as the agency of record for more than 300 financial industry firms since our founding in 1990. With a strong track record in generating A-list media coverage and executing innovative digital media campaigns, there is a reason why RIAs, asset managers, broker-dealers, mutual funds, banks, insurance carriers, FinTech companies, and other financial firms call on us.

Our professionals understand the street, market expectations, and how to communicate in a highly compelling, compliant manner that generates interest, creates followings, and builds shareholder value. We can identify and tell your story, deliver it to both the buy and sell side, introduce you to investors and institutions as well as the financial media that drives markets.

Media relations, Investor relations, Social media strategy, Blogging and Editorial services. Content marketing. Media training. Issues management/crisis communications. All from a firm that knows the financial industry and the audiences our clients are seeking to reach.

Media training is available on-site or in our Philadelphia studios.

ICR

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Established in 1998, ICR partners with companies to execute

strategic communications and advisory programs that achieve business goals, build awareness and credibility, and enhance long-term enterprise value. The firm's highly-differentiated service model, which pairs capital markets veterans with senior communications professionals, brings deep sector knowledge and relationships to more than 650 clients in approximately 20 industries. ICR's healthcare practice operates under the Westwicke brand (www.westwicke.com). Today, ICR is one of the largest and most experienced independent communications and advisory firms in North America, maintaining offices in New York, Norwalk, Boston, Baltimore, San Francisco, San Diego and Beijing. ICR also advises on capital markets transactions through ICR Capital, LLC. Learn more at www.icrinc.com. Follow us on Twitter at @ICRPR.

INTERMARKET COMMUNICATIONS

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Martin Mosbacher, President

Intermarket Communications has long been a leading independent strategic communications consultancy with clients in the global financial services industry. In fact, we've been one of *O'Dwyer's* top 10 Financial and Investor Relations Consultancies for more than 20 years. We offer clients a combination of strategic expertise and highly targeted execution designed to generate the media coverage and social media amplification that builds and maintains reputation, and achieves sustained results.

Founded in 1986, Intermarket Communications works with clients throughout the global business community, including investment marketplaces and exchanges, leading buy-side and sell-side institutions, banks, alternative investment providers, financial technology and service providers, as well as government and industry organizations.

Service is the key factor that sets Intermarket apart. At Intermarket, all clients work directly with a team of experienced financial communications professionals who understand your business, help shape your story, and know how to make that story resonate with the audi-

ences you need to reach.

On February 22, 2019, Intermarket announced that it had been acquired by Lansons, a London-based reputation management consultancy.

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Joele Frank, Managing Partner
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Joele Frank provides effective and disciplined communications counsel and support to help our clients take control in advancing their business and strategic objectives.

Our clients range from large, global public corporations to smaller, private enterprises across many industries. Our professionals have been recognized by our peers, the financial community and journalists for their quality work, strategic acumen and creative approach to challenging issues. The firm's practice areas include investor relations, corporate communications, transaction communications, shareholder activism and corporate governance, crisis communications and special situations, litigation support, restructuring and bankruptcy, and private equity.

Joele Frank consistently ranks among the top PR firms in announced M&A transactions, defense against activist investors, and restructuring.

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Ann Barlow, Partner & President, West Coast
Jacqueline Kolek, Partner & General Manager, New York Office
Maggie O'Neill, Partner & Chief Client Officer
Tara Lilien, Chief Talent Officer

Peppercomm is an award-winning strategic, integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York City with offices in San Francisco and London. The firm combines 25

award-winning years of expertise serving blue chip and breakout clients with forward-thinking new service offerings and the freshness of a start-up. This unique mix of experience and energy attracts and empowers teams with a creative edge, drive and a passion for promoting, protecting and connecting clients in a fast-changing marketplace.

Corporate purpose has become the buzzword of the year with many brands taking a stand on societal issues to drive marketing programs. Peppercomm's StandSmart is a purpose stress test that evaluates brands' business practices to ensure credibility and authenticity to stand behind their corporate purpose. Peppercomm's Employee Engagement helps Chief Human Resource Officers develop insight-led communications programs to attract and retain talent, ensure employees are informed and engaged, and create workplaces with genuine two-way dialogue.

Visit www.peppercomm.com or find us @Peppercomm.

RFIBINDER

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Amy Binder, CEO
Joseph Fisher, Vice Chairman
David Schraeder, Executive Managing Director

The RF|Binder Corporate & Financial Services practice has worked with some of the most recognizable brands across retail banking, asset management, brokerage, mutual funds, financial technology, insurance, professional services, and private equity. Our fully integrated communications team works closely with the firm's digital and analytics practice to develop and execute measurable programs closely tied to business objectives. We help organizations with all layers of their communication programming, from narratives and messaging, media relations, executive positioning, thought leadership, and corporate social impact programming, to implementing B2B/B2C communications initiatives, including social and digital media programming, content campaigns, branding and design, influencer relations, and more. Our team brings a broad understanding of the regulatory and compliance issues that govern communications around financial service companies and products, and take a consultative approach with our clients.

SARD VERBINNEN & CO.

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George Sard, Chairman & CEO
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Sard Verbinen & Co (SVC) is a leading strategic corporate and financial communications firm recognized for its work in M&A, corporate positioning and profile raising, shareholder activism, restructurings, corporate governance, public affairs, executive changes, crisis communications, special situations, litigation support, IPOs and cybersecurity.

With more than 200 employees across its eight offices in New York, Chicago, Washington D.C., San Francisco, Los Angeles, London, Houston, and Hong Kong, SVC's highly experienced senior professionals are uniquely positioned to provide high quality, objective advice and execution support to clients across a broad range of industries. SVC professionals draw on deep experience in finance, law, media, public affairs, corporate governance, and investor relations.

Founded in 1992, SVC's services and capabilities include media relations, investor relations, market intelligence, perception studies, brand awareness, creative digital content production, video production, social media and online communications, customer and partner communications, employee communications and issue advocacy.

SITRICK AND COMPANY

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Michael S. Sitrick, Chairman and CEO

Sitrick and Company is not a traditional public relations firm. Our practice has a specialized focus. We concentrate in corporate, financial, transactional, litigation and crisis communication. Although best known for our work in sensitive situations, we have an extensive and successful practice in each of the following areas.

Since our firm's founding 30 years ago, we have been consistently ranked among the top crisis and strategic communications

firms in the nation. The *New York Times* called us "The City's Most Prominent Crisis Management Firm." Chambers & Partners this year initiated a ranking of litigation support firms. We were one of four chosen to be in the highest-ranked "Band 1" category.

The majority of the firm's senior executives are former editors and reporters from news organizations that include the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, Bloomberg, *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, CBS News, ABC News and NBC News. We also have former practicing attorneys and business executives.

Matter with which we have been involved include litigation support of all kinds; intellectual property matters, allegations of stock manipulation, wrongful termination, contract disputes, allegations of fraud and fraudulent inducement, wrongful death claims, allegations of illegal drug use, SEC matters, and a variety of other white-collar crimes. We have also handled criminal and civil cases against companies and their executives for such things as price fixing, insurance fraud, options backdating, antitrust violations, race and sex discrimination, sexual harassment, racism and #MeToo matters. We have a significant mergers and acquisitions and corporate governance practice and have done extensive work combatting short sellers and dealing with data breaches. Other issues include sensitive environmental matters, racketeering cases, family disputes, and high-profile divorces.

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Stanton works with a wide variety of firms in financial services and asset management helping raise their profiles, build their reputations, and grow their businesses. Our clients range from funds and brokerage firms to private equity, venture capital and private credit; and from risk management, insurance, and reinsurance to a variety of fintech and tech-enabled financial services companies. Our work

has earned us a place on the *Observer* Power List of financial PR firms two years in a row.

With offices in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, we are a full-service agency supporting our clients across a variety of communications disciplines including media relations, brand messaging, content development and marketing, executive visibility, thought leadership, digital and traditional marketing, reputation & crisis management, executive counsel, and social media. Our deep understanding of the financial services world and the media covering it allows us to position clients effectively in today's complex environment. Our senior professionals spend the majority of their time on client work, ask tough questions, challenge assumptions, and suggest bold solutions. Flexibility, collaboration, responsiveness, and bureaucracy-free service are the hallmarks of our client relationships. Clients find a home at our firm because we deliver a unique blend of smart strategy, strong relationships, innovative thinking, and first-class execution that produces business-changing results.

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Nationally ranked in financial services and technology industries, along with the #2 position in Georgia, Trevelino/Keller continues to see success in both its financial services as well as fintech markets. Working in collaboration with the Technology Association of Georgia, Trevelino/Keller represented the Fintech South Conference for the second year, leveraging last year's momentum. Based in one of the strongest financial services and fintech markets in the country, Trevelino/Keller has built a balanced practice, working in peer to peer lending, credit unions, payment processing, factoring, tokenization, merchant cash advances, cyber security software and data analytics to name a few. Representing emerging, middle market and national brands, the agency gravitates towards four distinct communities—disruptive forces, category pioneers, stealth leaders and wonder women. Its suite of services includes public relations, digital/ social marketing, demand

generation and creative services.

Having successfully solidified its position as one of the preeminent technology firms in the Southeast, its financial services practice integrates into the firm's existing base of business and consumer experience. Following one of its most successful years, ranked among the top 15 fastest growing firm in the US, the firm has moved from a service-focused to an outcome-driven philosophy, building customized programs around growth, value, leadership and engagement. Owning the industry's number one retention rate, having lost one staffer to an agency in 16 years, the firm is known for its progressive, culture-rich programs like Red with Ted, Cooleaf Pro, Read to Lead, Farm to T/K and YouthWorks. For more information, visit trevelinokeller.com.

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Andrew Healy, Partner
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Water & Wall Group is an award-winning integrated communications and marketing agency specializing in earned media, content strategy/development, branding, design, and crisis communications. Our team has helped countless financial and professional services entities build their brands, articulate investment intelligencia, ironclad their reputations, navigate crises and drive asset flows. We've worked with some of the best-known brands in the industry, and helped others grow from emerging businesses into household names. Our financial industry experience includes retail/institutional asset managers, hedge funds, private equity funds, VC firms, ETF providers, wealth managers, fintech companies, investment consultants and more. And our professional services experience extends to law and accounting firms, management and regulatory change consultants, executive compensation specialists and real estate companies. We're as careful at selecting our clients as they are at selecting us, and if we work together, you can be certain you'll have our undivided attention, out-of-the-box thinking and unwavering commitment to your success. ○

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

TOP FINANCIAL PR & INVESTOR RELATIONS FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2018)	Firm	Net Fees (2018)
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$79,857,000	26. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	\$759,000
2. ICR , New York, NY	47,469,335	27. Havas Formula , New York, NY	746,130
3. Prosek Partners , New York, NY	41,492,456	28. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	608,769
4. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	10,739,700	29. Citizen Relations , Los Angeles, CA	417,840
5. Vested , New York, NY	7,268,000	30. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	360,626
6. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	6,000,000	31. Bradford Group, The , Nashville, TN	358,489
7. Dukas Linden Public Relations , New York, NY	5,409,338	32. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	319,000
8. Lambert , Grand Rapids, MI	4,039,000	33. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	271,234
9. Bliss Integrated Communication , New York, NY	3,948,000	34. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	270,205
10. Intermarket Comms. (A Lansons Co.) , New York, NY	3,014,442	35. Butler Associates, LLC , New York, NY	267,017
11. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	2,995,865	36. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	254,420
12. BackBay Communications , Boston, MA	2,984,508	37. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	245,000
13. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	2,694,202	38. BoardroomPR , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	200,000
14. Finn Partners , New York, NY	2,500,000	39. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	193,297
15. Zeno Group , New York, NY	2,237,698	40. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	145,969
16. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	1,719,664	41. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	105,286
17. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	1,600,000	42. North 6th Agency, Inc. , New York, NY	100,075
18. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	1,362,728	43. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	92,400
19. Buttonwood Communications Group , New York, NY	1,311,200	44. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	65,000
20. Caliber Corporate Advisers , New York, NY	1,228,360	45. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	60,777
21. Akrete , Evanston, IL	1,153,662	46. Feintuch Communications , New York, NY	60,554
22. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	1,060,553	47. Weiss PR, Inc. , Baltimore, MD	58,782
23. KCD Public Relations, Inc. , San Diego, CA	1,057,583	48. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	11,970
24. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	973,895	49. Landis Communications , San Francisco, CA	5,000
25. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	781,100		

Using photography to promote summer programs

How promotional photography can raise the profile of any educational or destination travel program.

By Judah Harris

Summer educational programs go heavy on marketing during the fall, winter and spring months. Advertisements in newspapers and magazines, direct mail and open house events serve recruitment efforts and provide name recognition for a variety of experiences, including overnight summer camps and day camps, school-based and specialty learning programs—such as sports, arts, music and science—as well as destination travel programs for all ages.

With the arrival of summer comes the decline of broad marketing. During these summer programs, the next couple months are the right time—actually the only time—to observe and actively preserve the moments that can be shared when the recruitment efforts begin again in 2020.

Photography—and video, to an extent—is vital for portraying for others what they can expect from your experience. Most summer educational programs being run for youth or adults are aware that they need photography for marketing and general PR, but are these programs using photography effectively to promote themselves? Some yes and others, it seems, aren't, and a lot of this has to do with a misunderstanding regarding how we, the recipients of the messaging, respond to institutional promotional photography.

Proper use of photography can help any educational and activity-based program gain more attention, propel greater visibility and reach more audiences by presenting better visual documentation. Here are three suggestions that can help those who direct summer programs, as well as the communications professionals hired to promote them.

Happy faces alone don't tell a story

People typically like to see themselves in pictures, and so will their family and friends. This was true before the Selfie epidemic. But don't rely solely on the smiling-for-the-camera shots or photos of large groups to raise your program's profile. Keep these types of pictures separate from more serious photography that actually documents the programs you offer.

Lots of faces proves you have a crowd and implies everyone is having a great time. Yet, if that's what we see most frequently in your marketing photography, we lose the details regarding what these people are experiencing. Educational programs of all seasons offer an experience, and good photography is

able to share that experience with the viewer by having them partake in the activity they're looking at in a photo. We need to see what people are doing and there needs to be variety of activity, because most educational programs do offer variety and a good photographer can identify that, thereby lending credibility to the program in place.

Do show us the faces of your participants and the group you've got going. Keep in mind, however, that photography that gets close and involved is more gripping and emotional. Viewers pay more attention when they grasp a story they can relate to and want to know more about. They're less interested, for instance, in someone else's children smiling for the camera. They want to know which experiences you provide that will get their child to do the same.

Where are we, exactly?

Show your space, your campus, your physical environment. If you have a program that houses itself in a unique historic building, or a comfy or hi-tech classroom space, or a natural, rustic setting that belongs on a postcard—or you're located anywhere enticing and different from everyday for most people—show it to us. We might want to visit!



Photo by Judah S. Harris

Don't show your space only as a backdrop in photos where people are present. That's certainly important for photos about people, but a space needs to be seen on its own. The reason is because we (photographers) photograph spaces differently based on whether there are people or no people in the photo. We compose differently, use light differently, have time to clean up certain areas or prop if necessary. When physical spaces can be observed on their own, the

viewer is able to imagine themselves in the picture. They're free to move around without distraction, and important and enticing details emerge that the viewer can partake in to imagine their own experience. It's always smart to establish the setting.

Present photos as you want them seen

Have lots of photos to choose from? Edit what you have with care and think about how to present them. Don't give viewers everything. Edit your visual message by taking the best and most informative photographs and share those with your audience.

You can use individual shots—or a few photos—and attach a short story or explanation, or you can assemble 30-60 images that tell a fuller story of your programs or even just one of them. Sequence this collection of singular images and offer them



Judah Harris

as a photo essay, a visual presentation that can be viewed online to grab not seconds of attention, but full minutes of viewer immersion. That's gold in this day and age.

People reward good content with their time. Even those with no connection to your program will enjoy it if you share a visual story they find informative and entertaining. For them, it's about art (the art of photographic reportage), culture, the human experience and discovering a new place.

On your website, edit and categorize your photo galleries carefully and feature nicely-designed banners and graphics on the landing pages to promote your photo essays or videos. You can also post images selectively on Facebook as newly-created albums to provide a photo essay experience, or use a slideshow hosting program. I've used Slideshare and Adobe Spark for many of mine (see an example, the Education Photo Essay).

If your visual presentation is special—it needs to be—tout a photo essay to your email list, on social media, and as a press release to appropriate outlets. If you find a newsworthy angle and entice with photography, you might get media coverage during the summer months. You can use that mention going forward and feature it strategically in your marketing efforts in the months ahead.

Judah S. Harris is a photographer, filmmaker, speaker and writer. He has produced visual content for numerous educational programs and is also a noted photo educator. 718/380-7945 or bitly.com/jsh-photo-video. ○

The secret to being a top professional service brand

How to develop world-class executive visibility programs that help clients build awareness, establish credibility and stand out from the crowd.

By Elyse Blazey Gentile and Phil Denning

How do top law firms, accounting firms, management consulting firms and executive search firms differentiate themselves from the masses? Do they provide high quality work or become subject matter experts? Is solving client problems the key criteria or is it establishing strong relationships? The answer to all of the above is yes. Leaders find what they do that's special and unique that breaks them out of the crowd to stand alone as a leader.

However, being good at the work you do is table stakes. You also need your prospective clients to trust you and know who you are. Leading professional services firms develop world-class executive visibility programs that help their company build awareness, establish credibility and stand out from the crowd. Importantly, executive visibility programs draw out individual personalities within a leadership team, ensuring the company isn't perceived as a single robotic corporate voice. Each professional should hold a thought provoking perspective on an issue and should look to add to the conversation.

Professional services firms aren't selling widgets, they're selling intellectual firepower, and their ability to convey their knowledge into positive outcomes for clients is key to generating growth and long-term revenues. Professional services firms can rise and fall based on the reputation of their executives and the overall reputation of the firm.

But where does one begin? Here are some of the strategies and tactics that help executives and their firms identify their unique

value-add, establish credibility and create a leadership position in their field.

Find whitespace

While it's great to aim for media domination, you can't be all things to all people. Therefore, we often recommend to our clients that they start with an in-depth audit of their competitors. Identify what your competitors are doing right, what processes may be overdone or outdated and locate the lucrative whitespace ripe for the taking—and claim it!

Develop a clear point of view

If you don't have anything worth saying, will anyone listen? Reporters are overworked and short on time. Therefore, when an executive is granted time with a reporter, he or she must be poignant and concise. Offer an informed opinion on a nuanced topic or provide a contrarian viewpoint in order to ensure that the reporters return for your expert commentary. If you offer only a corporate line or repeat the same thesis that everyone else is saying, reporters will lose interest and the company will lose a third-party endorsed touchpoint with their client.

Develop relationships with key media

Getting prominently quoted by the media takes more than a few press releases and a single conversation. Leadership must enter the fray by working towards establishing themselves as go-to sources for reporters. This means putting in the time to meet with reporters on background, sharing opinions on news of the day—even when it isn't directly tied to your business—and being

responsive and timely with all members of the media, not just the top tier media. Developing relationships with all types of reporters—general news, trade publications, business press and industry blogs—is the foundation to a robust and well-rounded media campaign.

Amplify leadership voices

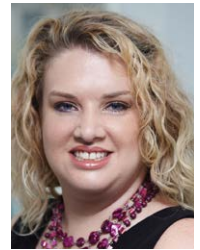
It's not enough to be quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* anymore; you have to shout your message from the rooftops. Once a professional services firm is generating media coverage, the coverage itself must be packaged and amplified in order to reach the company's various audiences, including clients, employees or investors. Conducting a study or formulating a unique perspective on a growing issue isn't enough if nobody can find the results or identify the leader in the space.

In order to achieve its aims, each quote in a publication, bylined article or study conducted must be promoted by a customized amplification strategy. Professional social networks like LinkedIn are great platforms for sharing and amplifying your message, creating a personality and establishing credibility in your broader field.

The last ingredient is hard work. Finding a unique space to own in a crowded marketplace, articulating a concise or unique point of view on an issue, cultivating media relationships and leveraging multiple channels to distribute your message simply requires hard work.

The secret to establishing a leading professional service brand is that there's no silver bullet for getting to the top. There's no one answer. The solution requires applying an amalgamation of various strategic initiatives that help build a strong executive visibility program, and investing the resources necessary for your firm to stand out from the crowd. Careful planning, thoughtful execution and hard work will achieve the most successful and measurable business outcomes.

Phil Denning is Partner and Elyse Gentile is Vice President at ICR Inc. ○



Elyse Blazey
Gentile



Phil Denning

Twitter is major source for journalists

Twitter rules the social media roost with most journalists, according to a survey from Muck Rack.

While online newspapers and magazines were still rated as the first place a majority of journalists (59 percent) go for news, Twitter came in second at 22 percent, far ahead of Facebook (two percent) or the four percent whose main source is "other social media platforms/feeds."

Print newspapers or news magazines were cited by just six percent, radio by four percent and broadcast/cable news by three percent.

When journalists were asked which social networks were highly valuable to them, the dominance of Twitter becomes even more apparent. Twitter was selected by 83

percent of respondents as a top choice, and Facebook came in a distant second with 40 percent. The only other platforms to top 20 percent were LinkedIn (26 percent) and Instagram (20 percent).

A sizeable portion of respondents (38 percent) also said they expect to spend more time on Twitter this year. The only other platform to come close to that number was Instagram, which 36 percent of respondents said they would use more.

Most respondents also said that a company's social media output was an important part of their reporting. More than a quarter (26 percent) said that they "always" consult a company's social media, while 35 percent said that they "usually" do so and 29 percent said that they "sometimes" do. ○

Doing PR for something nobody understands

Communicating for an industry that few know about begs some key questions: namely, how can you sell a concept to an audience that doesn't understand the topic at hand?

By Ghislain d'Andlau

Communicating around a topic that no one really understands begs some key questions: what exactly is public relations? When you build a communications strategy, what's the endgame? And, is the PR industry about products? I argue it isn't.

Four months after my arrival in Berlin, I was invited to attend Tech Open Air, one of the city's main tech events. The conference involved back-to-back sessions, but was also an occasion for many start-ups to showcase their innovations.

There was a talk on quantum physics, a topic that's understood by a small number of people, despite the fact that it affects virtually all of us. The interesting thing is that the speaker managed to talk for half an hour on the topic, without explaining the technical details, and still captivated an audience that didn't know what it was. Pretty good PR, no?

How can someone sell a concept without explaining it to an audience that doesn't understand what it is? And yet, that's what happened.

Had he tried to explain the topic, he might have taken a few hours, lost 99 percent of his audience, and the remaining one percent might still not have understood. The same holds true for a product—promoting a product doesn't always require explaining it. After all, everybody knows what a website is, but how many people really understand JavaScript?

A strategy on messaging, not products

Let's begin with a spoiler—PR and com-

munications aren't about products. Not just because sometimes they're too complicated to explain, so by the time you get to the end of your explanation, the briefing is over or you've lost your audience. It's also because PR isn't simply about selling products. So, what is it?

It's about messaging—brand messaging to be exact. You're working on an idea, not a product. If you contact journalists to update them on products—unless it's something ground-breaking—at best, the journalist will CC his marketing manager and send you a media pack.

However, although PR isn't about the product, you're not going to exclude it from your communications strategy. For example, if you work with data centers, your messaging may focus on the rise in data quantities; but, at some point, you're going to have to talk about the high reliability of the data centers themselves.

What you won't want to do, is take a B2C approach to things and assume people will mistake your latest microprocessor for the iPhone X. Because trust me, no one will. The product must support the messaging, not be the messaging.

So, products aren't out; they're just not at the center. Messages are. This brings us back to the question of how do you explain such a product?

Explain impact to drive media relations

A successful communications strategy will highlight the product's impact and wider implications, rather than just its fea-

tures. Going back to my earlier example—very few people understand HTML and JavaScript, but we all understand the impact of the internet economy, and we all pretty much understand how it has affected us. In the same way, we've all seen how the app market has developed in recent years and how it's impacted our lives, but don't ask me how an app actually works.

Explaining a product by its impact shouldn't be seen as a second gear messaging strategy, or an emergency solution when facing a difficult audience. In fact, it's sometimes much more efficient to proceed like this, as it blends much easier into a storytelling approach.

Telling a story is much easier when you use a product's use cases instead of an explanation of the product. And, it's also much more efficient, as the story will be easier to understand for your target audience.

This has been our approach when trying to make some noise around blockchain. When speaking to national press, no one wanted to know about the coding it implied and the different hashes. We managed to make it to the headlines by leveraging case studies and its business value.

Messaging isn't about products

So, when looking to explain something nobody understands, don't start by explaining the product. Don't even finish with the product.

Your communications strategy shouldn't solely revolve around products, especially when talking about something that people just can't grasp, like quantum physics. You should, instead, focus on the wider social and industry trends your business—and its products—have an impact on.

Concentrate on the value that your products add to a business sector or particular audience. This will help you stand out from the crowd, be understood and make a real impact.

Ghislain d'Andlau is a staffer in the Berlin and Paris offices of B2B tech PR and communications specialist agency Red Lorry Yellow Lorry.



Ghislain d'Andlau

Interpublic shuffles Hollywood PR cards

Rogers & Cowan and PMK*BNC, the two largest PR agencies in Hollywood, are merging, forming an agency that will have over 500 clients in areas including TV, film, sports, music and fashion.

PMK*BNC chairman and chief executive officer Cindi Berger will be chairman of the combined firm, and Roger & Cowan CEO Mark Owens will serve as its CEO. Alan Nierob, currently co-president at Rogers & Cowan, will be chairman of the new agency's entertainment division.

The agency will be part of Interpublic Group's Octagon sports and entertainment network, which has offices in Los Angeles,

New York, Nashville, Miami and London. Both PMK*BNC and Rogers & Cowan are currently Interpublic Group companies.

In addition to representing a talent roster that includes such entertainment and sports figures as the Rolling Stones, Denzel Washington, Kobe Bryant and Elton John, the merged firm will represent more than 30 brands, including McDonald's, Microsoft, YouTube and Mastercard.

"With our diverse roster of creative and brand clients, and seasoned management, this partnership provides a remarkable opportunity for us to take our clients and campaigns to a new level," said Berger. ○

Harold Burson heads home to Memphis

Harold Burson, 98-year-old founding Chairman of Burson-Marsteller, moved from New York to his native Memphis on July 23.

"I have been working in New York City—which had been my dream as a child—since 1946," said Burson in a statement. "Working and living here is, to my mind, one of the greatest experiences anyone can have. I worked hard, had a lot of luck and have benefitted from having many wonderful colleagues and mentors who contributed to my success."

Eighteen months shy of his 100th birthday, Burson expects to "even enjoy a pace that's just a little bit slower than that of Manhattan."

He plans to continue a three-days-a-week work schedule and support BCW's Memphis clients, such as FedEx and US Navy.

Donna Imperato, BCW CEO, praised Burson as "a master of influence and true icon." ○



Harold Burson

Lenzner to star in MPAA's PR role

Emily Lenzner has been named Executive VP-Global Communications at the Motion Picture Assn. of America.

Based in D.C., she reports to MPAA CEO Charles Rivkin.

At AM, she led communications for *Atlantic* magazine, which was sold to Laurene Powell Jobs' Emerson Collective in 2017; Quartz, which was unloaded to Japan's Uzabase financial publisher in 2018; National Journal Group and Government Media Group.

Earlier, she was Managing Director for PA at SKDKnickerbocker and Executive Director of Communications for ABC News in D.C., handling PR for "Nightline" and "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" and political coverage.

Lenzner succeeds Matt Bennett, who left the MPAA for the VP-chief communications officer job at American University. ○



Emily Lenzner

Ogilvy picks Guldin to lead APAC comms at Mastercard

Sarah Guldin, a ten-year Ogilvy veteran, is now Communications Chief for Mastercard's Asia-Pacific region.

Posted in Singapore since 2014, she counseled Ogilvy's *Fortune* 50 clients across the 10-country APAC sector and developed Coca-Cola's social media strategy.

Earlier, Guldin was based in Beijing, overseeing corporate initiatives there and for Ogilvy's Shanghai and Guangzhou offices. She worked on projects for the US Embassy, Special Olympics and WPP.

Prior to Ogilvy, Guldin was on the World Economic Forum's media team. She also did a four-year stint at Burson-Marsteller's Beijing office, handling global PR for 2008 Olympic sponsors including Samsung, as well as clients such as Accenture, Lexus and Nestle. ○



Sarah Guldin

Zucker named KWT Global president

KWT Global has announced the promotion of agency co-Founder Gabrielle Zucker to President, effective immediately. Zucker has been with agency since 2006, previously serving as Executive Vice President and Global Managing Director.

Formerly known as Kwittken, KWT Global has been a part of the MDC Partners network since 2010.

Before coming to the agency, Zucker was Vice President of the corporate & financial practice at Euro RSCG Magnet.

In her new role, Zucker will be responsible for agency staff leadership, business development and operational excellence of the agency's wholly-owned offices in New York, London and Toronto. She will continue to oversee a large portfolio of brands and cross-border client relationships. All regional managing directors will report to her. ○



Gabrielle Zucker

GE, NAM vet Hillman joins Edelman

Patrick Hillman, who handled public affairs and issue advocacy at the National Association of Manufacturers, General Electric and Levick, joined Edelman Chicago July 15 as Executive VP in its crisis and risk group.

Hillmann comes to Edelman from Washington, D.C. communications firm Sortie Group, where he was co-Founder and Managing Partner.

Since starting out in PR with Ketchum in Chicago in 2010, Hillmann has guided *Fortune* 500 companies in the technology, defense, health care, energy, finance and consumer packaged goods sectors through high-profile issues and led major public policy and crisis management initiatives.

In his new post, Hillmann serves as a Senior Advisor in such areas as crisis and risk management, reputation recovery, and issue advocacy. He will also provide risk-vulnerability analysis and audits. ○



Patrick Hillman

Shipley sails from Brunswick Group to Kekst CNC

Joe Shipley, a nine-year veteran of Brunswick Group, has joined Kekst CNC in London as Director in its public affairs offering.

He will support the firm's offices in Brussels, Berlin, Paris and Stockholm with a focus on private equity and alternative assets.

At Brunswick, Shipley worked on the IPO of Saga, restructuring of Dubai International's European portfolio and launch of the High Street Fund to back small businesses hurt by the 2011 riots.

Earlier, he did a three-year stint at Permira, venture capital/PE firm, and a two-year run at now defunct Bell Pottinger.

Richard Campbell, Kekst CNC Partner, praised Shipley's "strong relationships with Westminster."

Publicis Groupe owns Kekst CNC. ○



Joe Shipley

O'Dwyer's guide to PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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Since 2003, New York City-based 5W Public Relations (5WPR) has worked with widely known and emerging brands, corporations and high-profile individuals. Our practice areas include Consumer Products & Brands, Food & Beverage, Health & Wellness, Beauty, Apparel & Accessories, Home & Housewares, Travel & Hospitality, Entertainment & Sports, Corporate, Technology, Public Affairs & Government Relations, Nonprofit, Crisis Communications, Events and Digital & Social Media. We have a 360-degree approach to PR, social media, branding and digital marketing that delivers game-changing results to our clients.

Our 150 tenacious and creative communications practitioners develop and execute creative campaigns that connect our clients with their target audiences in memorable ways. Every aspect of our programs is designed to impact our clients' bottom line, bringing leading businesses a resourceful, bold and results-driven approach to communication.

5WPR's diverse roster of clients includes Sparkling ICE, All-Clad, It's a 10 Haircare, jane iredale, JetSmarter, The Trade Desk, Wendy Williams and Zeta Global. Our innovative programs have received recognition and we have won many awards including PR Agency of the Year, PR Executive of the Year, Product Launch of the Year and Business to Business Program of the Year.

Clients: Aerosoles, All-Clad Metalcrafters, Ashley Stewart, BornFree, Bowlmor AMF, Camp Bow Wow, CheapOAir.com, Crepe Erase, Decléor, Diono, Duane Reade, Ethique, Empire Government Strategies, FULLBEAUTY Brands, Gray Line New York, GoHealth, Hess Toy Trucks, IMUSA USA, Indie Beauty Expo, It's a 10

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Bill Haynes, President & CEO

BackBay Communications is an integrated public relations and content marketing firm focused on the financial and professional services sectors, with special expertise in private equity, asset management and fintech.

BackBay is known for helping companies develop strong brands and drive new business through

thought leadership, media relations, research and message development and integrated marketing campaigns. BackBay has very close relationships with the business and trade media. With nearly 20 employees and offices in Boston and London, BackBay serves companies across the United States, Europe and elsewhere, leveraging global partners.

BackBay takes a brand-centric, content-driven approach to developing and executing market positioning and integrated communications programs for financial services firms including marketing strategy, content development, creative design, and multi-channel distribution of company news and perspectives to build brand awareness, credibility and drive new business for our clients.

Our services include strategic public relations, content creation, branding, website development, marketing materials, videos, advertising and social media.

Our industry work and experience includes: Accounting, Advisory, Asset Management, Banks, Financial Technology, Hedge Funds, Impact Investing, Insurance, Legal, Private Equity, Venture Capital and Wealth Management.

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Bliss Integrated Communication's roots in professional services run 44 years deep. We count among our clients some of the nation's leading consulting, law and accounting firms, non-profits and associations, as well as innovative technology-enabled B2B solutions providers. Our clients operate

across industries including retail, manufacturing, healthcare, technology and more.

Because professional services companies go to market on intangibles (ideas, expertise, education, advocacy, services), we create messages that codify our clients' unique selling propositions to help them stay consistently visible in the media and relentlessly valuable to the markets they serve.

We're energized by complex ideas and translate them into differentiated marketing programs that are achievable, on-strategy and high-impact. We treat our clients' businesses as our own, diving deep to build a seamless understanding of your brand, goals and path to growth. We are channel-agnostic, focused foremost on helping you attract and retain the right audiences at the right time in the sales cycle.

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Jeff Bradford, CEO
Gina Gallup, EVP & COO

Because sharing knowledge is the core function of their business, professional services firms are particularly well-suited to benefit from a public relations campaign. The professionals in these firms are natural thought leaders with much to say—and PR practitioners experienced in working with professional services firms assure that their message is heard. The Bradford Group is such a PR firm, with decades of experience in this area, serving clients across the nation in the fields of law, accounting, insurance, real estate, business consulting and other professions. We provide a wide range of public relations and marketing services for professional services firms, including publicity, media training, thought leadership, blogging, case studies, white papers, SEO, social media, event management, speaking engagements and more. To get the attention your professional services organization deserves, get the Bradford Group.



Jeff Bradford, CEO of the Bradford Group.



Tom Butler (shown) & Butler Associates LLC were winners of the PRSA-New York's "Best of the Best" campaign award at its 2019 Big Apple awards gala. The campaign selected above hundreds of others was on behalf of a legal firm the agency represents.

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Thomas P. Butler, President

Winner of 2019's prestigious Best of the Best award from the Public Relations Society of America-N.Y., and a winner of *PR News*' Agency Elite Best Public Affairs Campaign. Butler Associates is ranked among top agencies in the New York media market for its financial, professional services, public affairs, environmental, legal and crisis management practices. Butler Associates is a research and communications strategy team with a proven track record of high-impact results.

Butler Associates campaigns range from victorious *Fortune* 50 shareholder proxy battles, legal, crisis management and public affairs campaigns, to brand building for CEO's and the companies they lead. The Butler group includes seasoned communications professionals, committed to our clients, and delivering consistent results. Its Litical Solutions digital division delivers quality online engagement.

Clients Include: Alma Realty, American Triple I Partners, Asso-

ciation of BellTel Retirees, Inc., Barasch McGarry P.C., City of Mount Vernon IDA, Core Theatre Company, Davidoff Hatcher Citron LLP, Electronic Systems & Software, Fleet Financial, Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association, Hooks for Heroes, Hunts Point Cooperative Market, LaGuardia Gateway Partners, Mechanical Contractors Assn. of New York, M-Fire Suppression, Inc., New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance, New York City Fire Pension Fund, Patriot Bank, NA, Plaza College, ProtectSeniors.Org, Securitas USA, Sharps Technology, Inc., Siebert Cisneros Shank & Co., L.L.C., Stamford Police Assn., Stamford Professional Fire Fighters Assn. and Steamfitters Local 638, New York, and Zara Realty Holdings Corp.

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Edelman is a global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations. Our 6,000 people in more than 60 offices deliver communications strategies that give our clients the confidence to lead and act with certainty, earning the trust of their stakeholders. Since

our founding in 1952, we have remained an independent, family-run business. Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle). For more information please visit: www.edelman.com

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Richard Anderson, Senior Managing Director

Seeking external support for your professional services organization?

Feintuch Communications, an award-winning PR firm, has extensive experience in working with professional services organizations. Market segments we've supported include law firms, accounting firms, real estate developers, market research, advertising, branding, digital media and media buying companies.

We collaborate with our clients to help differentiate and position them; and then package the core essence of their offerings and what makes them a standout in their field. Then, we develop a strategy and smart marketing/PR campaign to help build their brand, burnish their thought leadership and generate leads/revenue. Tactics typically include strategic media relations (business, financial, trade), speaking platforms, special events, social media, association marketing and awards/honors programs.

Need support overseas? Our firm is an active and founding member of PR World Alliance, an international alliance of premier independent communications consultancies. Clients can leverage our network to implement projects throughout Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. Our principal is CFO of PRWA and a past president of PRSA-NY.

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Hope-Beckham Inc. (HBI) is an independently owned public relations firm based in Atlanta, Georgia. Formed in 1994 by Paul Beckham and Bob Hope, the agency has positioned itself as one of the top independent public relations firms in the country. The firm has won many awards and honors, including top independent PR agency in nine categories; Professional Services, Environmental, Beauty & Fashion, Healthcare, Food & Beverage, Financial, Sports & Entertainment, and Technology.

HBI is an agency driven by a culture of insights, ideas and relationships. We help brands tell their stories on local, regional and national levels and make meaningful connections with customers, employees and industries.



Henry Feintuch, president, Feintuch Communications, presented with 2019 PRSA-NY President's Award by Leslie Gottlieb, chapter president

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ICR's professional and business services team brings several decades of experience working with large and midsized accounting firms, top business advisors and management consultancies, global law firms, talent and executive search firms and other critical services organizations. Our innovative campaigns for service organizations have earned the most prestigious industry awards. As one of the largest independent corporate communications agencies in North America, we can create teams with the exact experience and skills needed to achieve your business objectives, raise your profile and address the most challenging assignments.

We design thought leadership programs that engage top influencers, including top-tier media, and feature our clients' insights and solutions in traditional and digital channels. Starting with a proprietary immersion process, we create a road map with a best-in-class integrated program involving positioning, messaging, media relations, executive visibility, content, social media, marketing, digital communications, measurement and more.

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Jamie Diaferia, Founder & CEO
Zach Olsen, President

For nearly two decades, Infinite Global has been one of the world's largest public relations and communications agencies focusing on the professional services sector.

Our roots are in the legal industry, where our unrivaled depth of knowledge allows us to provide counsel to the world's largest, most profitable and most specialized law firms. Other professional services firms and corporations look to our

PR, branding and content teams for a nuanced understanding of their businesses and how a communications strategy can best support their goals.

Our unwavering client focus is what sets us apart. Our approach and success earns accolades from our clients and peers, including winning *The National Law Journal's* "Best PR Firm" award six years running. But the most flattering honor we receive is the vote of confidence from our clients who retain us year after year.

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Joel Frank, Managing Partner
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Joel Frank provides effective and disciplined communications counsel and support to help our clients take control in advancing their business and strategic objectives.

Our clients range from large, global public corporations to smaller, private enterprises across many industries. Our professionals have been recognized by our peers, the financial community and journalists for their quality work, strategic acumen and creative approach to challenging issues. The firm's practice areas include investor relations, corporate communications, transaction communications, shareholder activism and corporate governance, crisis communications and special situations,



Hope-Beckham Chairman & Co-Founder Paul Beckham (left) and President & Co-Founder Bob Hope.

litigation support, restructuring and bankruptcy, and private equity.

Joel Frank consistently ranks among the top PR firms in announced M&A transactions, defense against activist investors, and restructuring.

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Since 2009, Konnect Agency (www.konnnectagency.com) has been a leading provider of strategic communications solutions for clients in industries that include franchise; food & beverage innovation; pest control; lawn and pool care; children and senior services; as well as clients in need of funding and IPO announcement strategies, thought leadership, and crisis

communication. With a team of 40 professionals located throughout Konnect Agency's coast-to-coast presence in Los Angeles, Denver, Austin, and New York; Konnect's skilled communications and marketing professionals identify brand-right PR, social/digital, content, and marketing tactics to secure measurable results that positively impact brand growth. Clients include Fatburger, Dave & Buster's, Rentokil Steritech, The Goddard School, Lyft, KRAVE Jerky, Sky Zone, Mrs. Fields and ONE Brands. Ranked as the number 1 PR agency on the *Inc.* 5000 list as well as an Inc. "Best Places to Work" recipient, Konnect leads with transparency and lives by the results its teams produce.

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Peppercomm is an award-winning strategic, integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York City with offices in San Francisco and London. The firm combines 25 award-winning years of expertise serving blue chip and breakout clients with forward-thinking new service offerings and the freshness of a start-up. This unique mix of experience and energy attracts and empowers teams with a creative



Konnect Agency's Executive Leadership Team

... Continued on page 44

The logo features a stylized 'W' and 'R' intertwined within a circular design, set against a blue background with concentric circles.

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edge, drive and a passion for promoting, protecting and connecting clients in a fast-changing marketplace.

Corporate purpose has become the buzzword of year with many brands taking a stand on societal issues to drive marketing programs. Peppercomm's StandSmart is a purpose stress test that evaluates brands' business practices to ensure credibility and authenticity to stand behind their corporate purpose. Peppercomm's Employee Engagement helps Chief Human Resource Officers develop insight-led communications programs to attract and retain talent, ensure employees are informed and engaged, and create workplaces with genuine two-way dialogue.

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Amy Binder, CEO
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David Schraeder, Executive Managing Director

RF|Binder is a fully integrated communications agency that has worked with some of the most recognized brands across the spectrum of professional services organizations. We increase their brand awareness, support and protect their reputation and seek to firmly establish our clients as leaders in their respective industries. Our team works closely with the firm's digital and analytics practice to develop and execute measurable programs that achieve transformative results. We help organizations with all layers of their communication programming, from narratives and messaging, media relations, executive positioning, thought leadership, and corporate social impact programming, to implementing B2B/B2C communications initiatives, including social and digital media programming, content campaigns, branding and design, influencer relations, and more. Our team has deep expertise in designing programs that align compelling content and communications strategies to support our client's business objectives.



Left-to-right: James Bourne, Ivan Alexander, Allan Ripp, Roksana Slavinsky and John Garger of Ripp Media.

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Joshua Karlen, Senior Directors

In continuous practice since 1986, with a roster of marquee clients and high-profile assignments, Ripp Media is an editorial-driven boutique agency with a sophisticated practice. Having represented hedge funds, institutional investors, leading hospitality brands and real estate developers, we have a keen focus on legal affairs, working with many of the country's leading law firms.

For 2019, Ripp Media was named one of only three US firms to receive a Band 1 designation among litigation PR shops ranked by the prestigious Chambers Directory. Principal Allan Ripp was one of only four individual advisers nationally given Chambers' Band 1 standing. Allan was named to Lawdragon's list of the country's Top 100 legal consultants and strategists in 2018 and 2019.

We regularly handle big-ticket litigation and deal matters, along with crisis assignments and extensive thought leadership content, and have worked on numerous law firm mergers and lateral acquisitions. Our work spans major projects in M&A, privacy-cybersecurity, life sciences, government affairs, Supreme Court cases, criminal trials, intellectual property, real estate, labor-employment, white-collar, capital markets and other areas. We excel at maximizing press coverage for our clients' most important matters.

Our team includes former lawyers and journalists; our writing credits include bylines in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, *CNN*, *New*

York Times, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Law.com*, *MarketWatch*, *CNBC*, *Reuters*, *Street.com* and other key outlets. Ripp is a premier destination for top-flight content creation and media placement among law firms and other professional service providers.

SITRICK AND COMPANY

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Washington, D.C.: 443/977-7215
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Michael S. Sitrick, Chairman and CEO

Sitrick and Company is not a traditional public relations firm. Our practice has a specialized focus. We concentrate in corporate, financial, transactional, litigation and crisis communication. Although best known for our work in sensitive situations, we have an extensive and successful practice in each of the following areas.

Since our firm's founding 30 years ago, we have been consistently ranked among the top crisis and strategic communications firm in the nation. The *New York Times* called us "The City's Most Prominent Crisis Management Firm." Chambers & Partners this year initiated a ranking of litigation support firms. We were one of four chosen to be in the highest-ranked "Band 1" category.

The majority of the firm's senior executives are former editors and reporters from news organizations that include the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, *CBS News*, *ABC News* and *NBC News*. We also have former practicing attorneys and business executives.

Matter with which we have been

involved include litigation support of all kinds; intellectual property matters, allegations of stock manipulation, wrongful termination, contract disputes, allegations of fraud and fraudulent inducement, wrongful death claims, allegations of illegal drug use, SEC matters, and a variety of other white-collar crimes. We have also handled criminal and civil cases against companies and their executives for such things as price fixing, insurance fraud, options backdating, antitrust violations, race and sex discrimination, sexual harassment, racism and #MeToo matters. We have a significant mergers and acquisitions and corporate governance practice and have done extensive work combatting short sellers and dealing with data breaches. Other issues include sensitive environmental matters, racketeering cases, family disputes, and high-profile divorces.

WATER & WALL GROUP

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212/625-2363
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Andrew Healy, Partner
Matt Kirdahy, Partner
Scott Sunshine, Partner

Water & Wall Group is an award-winning integrated communications and marketing agency specializing in earned media, content strategy/development, branding, design, and crisis communications. Our team has helped countless financial and professional services entities build their brands, articulate investment intelligencia, ironclad their reputations, navigate crises and drive asset flows. We've worked with some of the best-known brands in the industry, and helped others grow from emerging businesses into household names. Our financial industry experience includes retail/institutional asset managers, hedge funds, private equity funds, VC firms, ETF providers, wealth managers, fintech companies, investment consultants and more. And our professional services experience extends to law and accounting firms, management and regulatory change consultants, executive compensation specialists and real estate companies. We're as careful at selecting our clients as they are at selecting us, and if we work together, you can be certain you'll have our undivided attention, out-of-the-box thinking and unwavering commitment to your success. ○

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

TOP PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2018)	Firm	Net Fees (2018)
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$81,394,000	29. Konnect Agency , Los Angeles, CA	\$848,999
2. MWWPR , New York, NY	8,909,509	30. Bradford Group, The , Nashville, TN	701,579
3. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	7,643,752	31. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	688,764
4. Finn Partners , New York, NY	6,900,000	32. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	562,482
5. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	6,745,000	33. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	525,000
6. Infinite Global , New York, NY	5,440,960	34. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	496,000
7. Prosek Partners , New York, NY	4,894,449	35. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	470,375
8. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	4,827,873	36. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	447,825
9. Bliss Integrated Communication , New York, NY	4,589,000	37. Marketing Maven Public Relations , Camarillo, CA	421,861
10. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	4,183,936	38. WordWrite Communications LLC , Pittsburgh, PA	401,900
11. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	4,100,000	39. Butler Associates, LLC , New York, NY	372,500
12. Schneider Associates , Boston, MA	3,009,710	40. Zapwater Communications , Chicago, IL	360,300
13. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	2,808,132	41. Citizen Relations , Los Angeles, CA	351,589
14. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	2,689,782	42. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	323,000
15. Zeno Group , New York, NY	2,303,655	43. Bellmont Partners , Minneapolis, MN	268,198
16. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc. , New York, NY	2,201,786	44. Akrete , Evanston, IL	257,231
17. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	2,012,466	45. Hollywood Agency , Hingham, MA	251,000
18. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	2,010,503	46. Maccabee , Minneapolis, MN	178,896
19. North 6th Agency, Inc. , New York, NY	2,001,025	47. Hunter PR , New York, NY	175,000
20. BoardroomPR , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	2,000,000	48. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	175,000
21. Havas Formula , New York, NY	1,963,648	49. Rosica Communications , Fair Lawn, NJ	170,289
22. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	1,825,411	50. Weiss PR, Inc. , Baltimore, MD	146,955
23. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	1,590,829	51. Kohnstamm Communications, Inc. , St. Paul, MN	144,000
24. Matter Communications , Newburyport, MA	1,179,121	52. SPI Group LLC, The , Fairfield, NJ	143,326
25. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,089,000	53. Bianchi Public Relations , Troy, MI	89,903
26. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	1,024,839	54. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	16,875
27. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	995,205	55. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	8,200
28. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	973,626		

History's most media-friendly President

By Fraser Seitel

Right before the scheduled Cabinet meeting, the press was, well, “pressing” the President.

“Mr. President, Mr. President, Mr. President,” they shrieked in unison. What they all wanted to know was when they could expect decisions on important national security issues.



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

“Actually, it’s getting close. So, I’ll have quite a bit to say about that very soon,” was the evasive answer from the most powerful man in the world. “And with that, I’m going to kick you all out.” Which he did to universal grousing.

At a subsequent meeting with the media, the President was asked when he would be making a long-awaited appointment. “If I appoint somebody, I’ll let you know,” he answered dismissively. To which one anti-Administration reporter took the confrontation up a notch, challenging the President on Russian sanctions in particular and criticizing his foreign policy in general.

“Well,” responded the obviously irked Commander in Chief, “I doubt that I’m going to have time to lay out my entire foreign policy doctrine. And there are actually some complimentary pieces as well about my foreign policy, but I’m not sure you ran them.”

Just a snapshot of the testy relationship between the White House press corps and President ... Barack Obama.

Now, compare these tentative, cat-and-mouse confrontations with this most recent scrum that typifies the current relationship between the media and the current White House occupant.

Reporter: “Are you concerned you could be called to answer on what Mr. Mueller said today about the connection between Wikileaks and your administration?”

Trump: “Wikileaks is a hoax, just like everything else ... It was a witch hunt, a total witch hunt. And you saw Robert Mueller’s statement correcting himself in the afternoon testimony. And you know what that correction was, and you still ask the ques-

tion. And ya’ know, why? Because you’re fake news.”

Reporter: “Are you saying his answers weren’t generally truthful?”

Trump: “I don’t know whose answers weren’t. If you look at the whole report, some of the things he didn’t even know about. The performance was obviously not very good. He had a lot of problems. But what he showed more than anything else was that this whole thing has been three years of embarrassment and waste of time for our country. What else?”

Reporter: “Did your son, Donald Trump, Jr., talk to Mueller?”

Trump: “I don’t know. Frankly, whether or not he did wouldn’t matter to me, because he did nothing wrong. Yeah, go ahead.”

Reporter: “But he said the meeting at Trump Plaza was questionable.”

Trump: “No, he didn’t say that. Again, you’re fake news, right at the top of the list also. Let me just tell you, read his correction. If you read his correction, you’ll find out. That’s why people don’t deal with you, ‘cuz you’re not an honest reporter. Next.”

Welcome to the most media-friendly President in the history of the Republic.

Oh sure, he despises the press and labels most of them “enemies of the people.” And, of course, most of the media, openly and defiantly, despise him right back.

But in terms of accessibility and candor and willingness to answer every question in any context that any reporter cares to ask, there’s never been a more accommodating President than Donald J. Trump.

In the more than half a century since John F. Kennedy was President—and best buddies with reporters like then *Newsweek*’s D.C. bureau chief Ben Bradlee—the relationship between the President and the press has become more distant. Democrats like Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter and Obama and Republicans like Richard Nixon and the two George Bushes were notoriously suspicious of the media. Even presumed press darlings like Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan studiously kept their distance from prying media eyes. Reagan—the so-called “Great Communicator”—was, in fact, a master of staged events, dealing with print and television reporters strictly on his own terms to his optimal benefit.

All of these Presidents used their press secretaries to serve as a buffer and do most of the daily heavy lifting with the media. That’s why the best press secretaries—Larry Speakes, Tony Snow, Ari Fleischer, Robert Gibbs and Josh Earnest, among them—en-

joyed great power and fame, becoming the most powerful public relations professionals of their time.

But all that has changed under President Trump. The press secretary in the Trump Administration has become a diminished functionary for one simple reason. Trump requires no “buffer” with the media; he’s his own chief spokesman.

Rather than daily press briefings or periodic press conferences, Trump makes himself “available” virtually every time he leaves the White House. His regular press scrums, with Marine One helicopter looming in the background, have become must-see TV, rollicking reportorial slug fests, with journalists screaming out impolitic questions and Trump answering all comers.

Meanwhile, the media’s daily agenda is set by early morning Presidential tweets, many of them callous, offensive and embarrassing in their lack of decorum. The media lap up the tweets like catnip. And thus, President Trump regularly manages the news cycle.

For their part, the media, consumed as most of them are with contempt for their White House adversary, have proven little match for the Tweeter-in-Chief. Respect for journalists continues to decline, with the most recent Pew Study reporting that more than half of all Americans expressing “little” or “no” confidence in the media and 61 percent believing “the news media ignore important stories.”

Accordingly, one wonders how the diminishing reputation of the U.S. media might be affected if the press focused more on the important policies and actions of the Trump Administration rather than on its own unrestrained contempt for the most media-accessible President in history. ○

PR news brief

PAN picks up UK’s Capella PR

Healthcare and B2B technology agency PAN Communications has acquired London’s Capella PR.

Financial terms of the deal weren’t made public.

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

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

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

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

Time has come for a PR writer's code of conduct

By Don Bates

Every profession needs codes of conduct to help ensure the credible performance of its members. The public relations profession has several codes aimed at building and sustaining positive behavior—the Arthur Page Society, International Association of Business Communicators, the PR Council and the Public Relations Society of America—but none of them address how practitioners must write for PR and related business purposes.



Don Bates, APR, Fellow PRSA, teaches public relations writing and management at New York University. He also teaches writing workshops worldwide. For over 40 years, he has handled PR for corporations, associations, and nonprofit organizations. He has taught at Columbia University and the New School University and is founding director of the graduate program in strategic public relations at The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM), Washington, D.C.

The accompanying voluntary “Public Relations Writer’s Code of Conduct” was created to fill this gap. It reflects the know-how of leading authorities on writing both within and outside the PR and marketing communication fields. These experts include writing teachers, trainers, managers, consultants, editors, and journalists who care most about writing well in business, government, and nonprofit endeavors. Writing is too important to the conduct of PR work not to have a set of rules summarizing how it should be applied.

More concretely, this code summarizes best principles and practices for writing strategically on behalf of clients and employers (hereinafter employer/s). It explains how writing must be done to communicate employer goals and actions. It provides concrete ideas to follow. Its goal is to improve PR writing’s quality, content, and value. Its advice is evergreen. Its time has come.

Make a difference, spread the word

To amplify this code’s usefulness, it should be shared among PR practitioners in all organizations and at all levels. No one is immune to the challenges that writing

presents regardless of their level of competence.

Actions that can be taken now

- Display the code on your PR office and cubicle walls as a reminder to all employees of their obligation to write well.
- Link the code from your PR agency or department website so those you serve understand the implications of what and how you write.
- Give the code to new and prospective PR employees, so they understand the critical importance of writing simply, clearly, and ethically as part of their employment.
- Use the code to train all PR employees on how to write better in general and more specifically for PR purposes.
- Refer to the code as context for helping to measure individual and group performance annually.

Practically and philosophically, how we write reflects our personal and professional ethics, knowledge, and experience. Also, our desire to communicate effectively with other people in pursuit of employer objectives is in keeping with the public interest.

This PR writer’s code provides a framework for achieving these ends, adding to and amplifying the professionally approved codes and standards of PRSA, IABC, the PR Council, and the Arthur Page Society. It should be part of this larger mix and part of every practitioner’s education and training. PR writing must be perfected, measured, and evaluated accordingly.

PR Writer’s Code of Conduct

As professional public relations writers, we commit to applying common-sense rules of PR writing, regardless of the forms used or the purposes for which they are written. These rules affect the successful conduct of corporate government, consulting and nonprofit organization (hereafter “employer/s”). They ensure PR writing remains a powerful tool for informing, educating and activating employers, stakeholders and target audiences. They embody the “Public Relations Writer’s Code of Conduct”

- Educate employers about what public relations writing is and can do for them.
- Know what employers want from what we write on their behalf.
- Understand the needs and desires of employers and their target audiences.
- Craft words accurately to build and sustain positive employer relations.
- Establish clear goals and objectives for all writing assignments.
- Build two-way communication between

employers, the media, their stakeholders.

- Research topics with trustworthy online and offline sources.
- Develop PR messages that support employer vision, mission, goals, actions, brands.
- Write simply, clearly, directly, logically, credibly, transparently.
- Emphasize “big news” (the big story) of interest to employer audiences; deemphasize self-referential text of interest only to the employer.
- Write accurate, accountable, credible, actionable narratives.
- Disdain jargon, hyperbole, euphemism, gobbledygook.
- Concentrate on essential, not peripheral, content.
- Focus on FYA (for your action) not FYI (for your information) in all we write.
- Never lie or mislead in what we write, regardless of circumstances.
- Stress benefits in describing employer products, services, programs, issues, ideas.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of how and what we write, both in draft and final form.
- Invite, accept and appropriately apply criticism of our writing.
- Improve our writing with continuing study in PR workshops, courses, books.
- Adhere to preferred American journalistic standards for writing style and usage, i.e., annual Associated Press Stylebook. ○

PR news brief

SKDKnick stands up for fur

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

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

Johnson has called the new fur ban the “moral thing to do.”

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

New York mayor Bill de Blasio worries about the measure’s impact on the city’s \$400 million annual fur business, which employs 1,100 people. NYC is the country’s No. 1 fur market.

Los Angeles and San Francisco have passed fur bans. California is considering a statewide measure.

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

Mark Penn’s Stagwell Group owns SKDKnick.

Political spending to top \$6B for 2020 election

The 2019-2020 election cycle will generate about \$6 billion in paid political ad placements, according to estimates released by market research and data analytics company Kantar Media.

Kantar's latest election spending figures, which excludes funds spent by PACs as well as local election spending, predicts paid media placements endorsing candidates for U.S. federal offices will increase 14 percent during the 2019-2020 election cycle from the \$5.25 billion spent on political ads during the 2018 midterm elections.

These figures actually reveal a slowdown in overall political ad spending growth, when compared to the 21 percent jump ad spending saw during the 2018 midterms from the 2016 presidential election and its 78 percent increase from the 2014 midterm cycle.

TV ads will reign supreme as the preferred format for political campaign spending, taking more than half—53.3 percent—of the total paid media placements in 2020, or about \$3.2 billion.

Kantar predicts that digital channels will see significant increases, accounting for about 20 percent—or \$1.2 billion—of total political ad spends, now rivaling cable, which is expected to receive about the same amount. Radio is expected to receive only 6.7 percent of paid media placements, or about \$400 million. ○

BGR takes rise with ousted Nissan chief

BGR Government Affairs is “providing guidance and assisting” Carlos Ghosn, the former head of Nissan, who was arrested in Tokyo in November for allegedly under-reporting millions of dollars of income at Nissan and using company funds for personal expenses.

Ghosn categorically denies those charges.

The 65-year-old auto-titan, who was arrested after getting off a private jet in Tokyo, served more than 100 days in the slammer and is currently out on bail.

He filed a breach of contract against Nissan and joint venture partner Mitsubishi Motors in the Netherlands on July 17, alleging that he was unjustly terminated and seeking \$13.4 million in damages.

Ghosn's contract was with the Holland-headquartered subsidiary of the Japanese companies.

BGR's Haley Barbour, former Mississippi Governor and Republican National Committee chairman, and Lanny Griffith, a key player in the Bush I White House, are helping Ghosn resolve his international legal issues. ○

NRA vet targets PA, crisis management

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

Cox says that the new firm “will provide long-range strategic public policy and public affairs consulting, crisis management



and brand positioning for companies and organizations with complex problems.”

The firm's name refers to the military term “watch your six,” which means to keep aware of what's going on outside your field of vision.

Cox resigned his post at the NRA after having been suspended by the organization because of charges that he participated in an attempt to oust the organization's chief executive, Wayne LaPierre. He has called those allegations “offensive and patently false.”

Jennifer Baker, part of Cox's “inner circle” and director of public affairs for the National Rifle Assn.'s Institute for Legislative Action lobbying wing and spokesperson for the gun group, left the troubled organization soon thereafter.

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

“I've built teams that could not be beaten in Washington,” Cox said in a Tweet announcing the launch. “Cap6 will be no different.” ○



Chris Cox

Fox adds ex-White House press aide Shah

Raj Shah, who served as Deputy Press Secretary to President Trump before exiting this January to lead the media group at Ballard Partners, has come on board at Fox Corp. as a Senior Vice President.

Shah will join former White House Communications Director Hope Hicks, who is Chief Communications Officer and Executive Vice President at Fox.

While working for Trump, Shah made appearances on Fox News in which he criticized Hillary Clinton and countered statements about the president, such as Stormy Daniels' claims that she had an affair with Trump.

Before his time at the White House, Shah was research director and deputy communications director at the Republican National Committee. He also served as managing director at America Rising, a political action committee that produces opposition research on Democratic Party members.

In his new post, Shah will report to Fox Chief Legal and Policy Officer Viet Dinh. ○



Raj Shah

Ballard takes Qatar trafficking

Ballard Partners is working with Qatar, which is under a blockade by Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies, to provide guidance and counsel on matters regarding human trafficking.

The State Dept.'s "2019 Trafficking in Persons Report" released June 20 concluded that Qatar "does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so."

Unskilled male and female workers from Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, who migrate to Qatar looking for work "comprise the largest group at risk of trafficking, while domestic workers remain the most vulnerable," according to the report.

The firm of Brian Ballard, who headed Donald Trump's fund-raising drive in Florida during the 2016 campaign, amended its \$50,000 contract signed a year ago to include the anti-trafficking agenda.

The monthly fee of the revamped pact was upped to \$115,000 per-month through June 20, 2020.

Ballard's Jamie Rubin, former Assistant Secretary of State for PA in Bill Clinton's White House, and Pam Bondi, who was Florida's Attorney General, are listed as the "designated key personnel" on the agreement with Qatar's DC embassy.

The pact prohibits Ballard from representing any other state in the Middle East/North Africa region for a year following the termination of the agreement with Qatar. ○

Teneo takes \$2.1M for Saudi city

Teneo Strategies has inked a \$2.1 million six-month pact to promote the narrative and messaging for construction of Neom, the \$500 billion mega-city, a pet project of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to diversify the Kingdom's economic base.

Steve Lipin's Gladstone Place Partners dropped Neom in October

FARA News



NEW FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT FILINGS

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

Daniel J. Edelman, Inc., Chicago, IL, **registered Jul. 12, 2019 for Minderoo Foundation**, Dalkeith WA, Australia, regarding launch of the organization's latest report on modern day slavery, detailing steps that governments can take to reduce slavery.

Clout Public Affairs, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Jul. 22, 2019 for Republic of Cameroon**, Yaounde, Cameroon, regarding professional PR services to promote the client's favorable image, including placement of targeted op-eds in conservative-oriented outlets.

APCO Worldwide LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Jul. 3, 2019 for Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit**, Bangkok, Thailand, regarding fostering better awareness in the US of the political and social landscape in Thailand. Mr. Juangroongruangkit is a Member of Parliament in the Thailand House of Representatives and the leader of the Future Forward Party.

Lobbying News



NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT FILINGS

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

Cornerstone Government Affairs, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered Jul. 15, 2019, for General Dynamics Information Technology**, Falls Church, VA, regarding IT program management and policy related issues.

Cypress Advocacy, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Jul. 15, 2019 Zero Abuse Project, St. Paul, MN**, regarding reauthorization of Child Abuse Prevention and Training Act.

Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies, Washington, D.C., **registered Jul. 15, 2019 for USA Rare Earth, LLC**, New York, NY, regarding domestic sourcing of rare earth minerals and dependence on foreign sources for rare earth minerals.

Navigators Global, Washington, D.C., **registered Jul. 15, 2019 for Nokia of America Corporation**, Washington, D.C., regarding issues relating to telecommunications, mobile communications, network solutions, intelligence, and security matters.

2018 following the murder and dismemberment of Saudi dissident and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi by a Saudi hit squad.

Doug Band, Teneo President and co-Founder, and Richard Powell, Vice Chairman, handle the account.

Band was a counselor to President Clinton and creator of the Clinton Global Initiative, while Powell was Chief Communications Officer at Bloomberg LP and COO of Burson-Marsteller.

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

Crossroads works China railroad

Crossroads Strategies represents China's CRRC North America, a unit of the world's largest maker of railroad cars, as it seeks to fend off moves to ban it from U.S. contracts.

U.S. lawmakers fear that CRRC, which has lucrative contracts to make subway cars for transit systems in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston, poses a security threat to America's infrastructure.

Crossroads handles issues for CRRC, a Chinese state-owned entity supervised by Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, regarding funding for capital grant programs and transportation.

The firm's consulting agreement calls for a \$15,000 monthly retainer through May 1, 2020.

Crossroads Senior Partner Wally Burnett (Aide to Republican Senators Ted Stevens and Richard Shelby as Staff Director of the Transportation & Related-Agencies subcommittee) and consultant John Cline (one-time director of Congressional affairs at the Dept. of Transportation and COO of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) handle the China Railway & Rolling Stock work. ○

List your firm in PR's No. 1 online database

O'Dwyer's has been linking clients and PR firms for 48 years. This will be the best money you'll ever spend for marketing.

Public Relations Firms Database



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j public relations
california • new york • london

J Public Relations

530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018
212/924-3600

letstalk@jpublicrelations.com

www.jpublicrelations.com

Employees: 65. Founded: 2005.

Agency Statement: J Public Relations (JPR) is an international luxury PR and social media agency specializing in hospitality, travel and luxury lifestyle brands with offices in New York City, London, Los Angeles and San Diego. JPR is a trusted leader in media relations and brand strategy, trend forecasting, brand partnerships, influencer relations, social media strategy and unparalleled media placements worldwide.

Established in 2005, the award-winning agency has consistently risen to become the country's fastest growing, bi-coastal agency in the travel and hospitality spaces. JPR's global roster includes more than 125 hotels in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai, Europe, New Zealand, Asia and more. JPR steadily garners and retains notable clients including Relais & Châteaux, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Vail Resorts Hospitality, Grace Hotels, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, Newport Beach & Company, Four Seasons Lanai and 15 Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts.

JPR is listed on the Observer's annual "PR Power 50" as one of the country's most powerful PR firms. The agency also garnered "Top Places to Work" by PR News and "Agency of the Year" by Bulldog Reporter in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success.

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

Locations:

New York

530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018
212/924-3600

San Diego

2341 Fifth Ave., San Diego, CA 92101
619/255-7069

Los Angeles

429 Santa Monica Blvd., #280, Santa Monica, CA 90401
310/722-7066

London

14 Gray's Inn Rd., 3063, London, WC1X 8HN, UK
(011) 44 (20) 38905838

Sampling of highlighted clients:

Adare Manor, Ireland
Adventures by Disney (project work)
Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort (project work)
Chateau du Grand-Luce, France
Chewton Glen, UK
Cliveden House, UK
Discover Baja California
Four Seasons Resort Lanai
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Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts
Newport Beach & Company
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