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TOM TARDIO
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(310) 854-8117

ttardio@rogersandcowan.com

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April: *Broadcast & Social Media*
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Awards are big business for PR, press groups

A November 21 black-tie crowd of 1,100 Wall Streeters, financial press and PR pros had a night of fun and elbow-rubbing at the New York Financial Writers Association's "Financial Follies." This is one of many award events that now dot the calendar.

NYFWA and other organizations hosting similar awards events are in a financial league of their own. Many of the biggest PR firms, both independent and conglomerate-owned, had one or more of the 100 tables at the Follies. NYFWA grossed \$364,635 from its 2013 Follies and netted \$100,761 after expenses of \$263,874. Dues income was \$7,635. Members pay \$50 and students, \$10. Net assets were \$588,642. Ten scholarships worth \$3,000 each were awarded in 2014.

There's also the Arthur W. Page Society's spring dinner, the Institute for PR's dinner at the Yale Club, the Foundation of PRSA's annual Paladin dinner, the New York Women in Communications' Hall of Fame banquet at the Waldorf each April, the Adrian Awards' Gala of Hospitality Sales & Marketing International, the *PR Week*/U.S. awards dinner in March and the *PR Week*/U.S. "Hall of Fame" dinner in December, and the *prnewsonline* awards luncheon, which will be held December 9 at the National Press Club honoring "rising stars" under 30 years of age and will also induct seven veterans into its "Hall of Fame." Tickets for that event are \$475.

One of the oldest awards programs is the Silver Anvil/Bronze Anvil contest, staged each spring by PR Society of America. For many years the Society gave 30 Silver Anvils and hosted a sit-down dinner. Award categories have proliferated in recent years, and this year 134 Silver Anvil winners and Awards of Excellence were distributed as well as 126 Bronze winners and Awards of Excellence. A cocktail reception has replaced the dinner.

Also a major program is *The Holmes Report's* SABRE Awards, which exists in five geographical areas — Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe/MiddleEast, North America and Southeast Asia. The May 6, 2014 North American banquet drew 1,000.

The Overseas Press Club of America celebrated its 75th anniversary dinner April 24 at the Mandarin Hotel in New York. Its Form 990 for 2012 showed total revenues of \$306,016, a gain from \$216,162 in the previous year, and net assets of \$108,249, up from \$68,193. Dues income was \$92,034.

Perhaps the biggest event of all took place November 25 in the grand ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria, where more than \$1 million was raised at a black-tie dinner for the Committee to Protect Journalists.

About 1,000 attendees, including many from PR and publishing, paid \$1,000 each to attend the program honoring journalists. It was hosted by Christiane Amanpour, anchor and Chief International Correspondent of CNN and a CPJ Director. Albert Ibarguen, President of the Knight Foundation and former Publisher of the *Miami Herald*, is Chair. CPJ, which is mostly focused on violence and interference with reporters in countries outside the U.S., boasted net assets of \$14.8 million as of Dec. 31, 2013. This included investments of \$12.8 million and pledges of \$2.3 million.

The biggest funders of CPJ include Knight Endowment, \$5 million; Ford Foundation, \$1.5 million and Annenberg Endowment, \$1 million. Almost all of the \$14.8 million in net assets is in "permanently restricted" funds.

Two dozen PR groups disappear

At least two dozen New York PR groups that used to meet in the 1970s and 80s have disappeared. One of the last to close was PR Society: New York, which ended meetings in the summer of 2013 after more than 50 years.

A highlight in the 1960s and '70s was the monthly lunch at the Waldorf-Astoria, staged by the PR Society's New York chapter. Top speakers were featured. The Society's national president addressed the last lunch in June. National Investor Relations Institute had a similar monthly lunch. Publicity Club of New York hosted a meeting every Thursday night.

An attempt to close the gap is being made by meetup.com which helps bring together people with similar occupations.

It claims to have 1,013 members in its "New York Journalism & Media" group; 150 in "Professional Journalists of New York," and 259 members of Investigative Reporters and Editors in New York.

Meetings are mostly in midtown restaurants. The Meetup website says there are 86,407 meetups happening this week throughout its system. ●

— Jack O'Dwyer



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Jack O'Dwyer
jack@odwyerpr.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

John O'Dwyer
john@odwyerpr.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Kevin McCauley
kevin@odwyerpr.com

EDITOR

Jon Gingerich
jon@odwyerpr.com

SENIOR EDITOR

Greg Hazley
greg@odwyerpr.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Fraser Seitel
Richard Goldstein

Chandler Klang Smith
Editorial Assistant & Research

ADVERTISING SALES

Sharlene Spingler
Associate Publisher & Editor
sharlene@odwyerpr.com

John O'Dwyer
Advertising Sales Manager
john@odwyerpr.com

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Americans distrust online reviews, still use them

A recent survey found that a majority of Americans don't trust the accuracy of online product and services reviews, yet admit to relying on them anyway when weighing purchasing decisions.

By Jon Gingerich

Consumers have adopted a noted cynicism toward the accuracy and credibility of online reviews. A YouGov Omnibus survey, conducted in October, found that a vast majority of consumers now find online reviews untrustworthy, as only 10% believe reviews of products and services are conducted in an open and honest manner. Almost half — 48% — of those polled said they believe reviewers occasionally rate products and services without actually trying them.

The survey, which was carried out online and sampled 1,145 U.S. adults, found that only 13% of those polled consider online reviews “trustworthy.” The study also found 36% believe businesses often pen positive reviews to bolster their own products and services, and 50% believe businesses sometimes pen negative reviews of competitors’ products and services.

Though Americans’ perceptions of online reviews appears to be characterized by widespread distrust, the study also found that most still see online reviews as an important step in the course of deciding whether to buy a product or service.

The survey showed 78% admitted to looking at online reviews before making purchases, with 41% of consumers referring to online reviews as “very important.” Of those polled who admitted reading online reviews, a little more than half — 52% — said they read four or more reviews before making a purchase. About three-quarters — 77% — said they try to read an equal number of positive and negative reviews.

According to the survey, 79% of those polled said they read online reviews to ensure that the product or service is of good quality, 61% said they read them to make sure the product or service does

its intended function, and 53% claimed they read online reviews to make sure that they “don’t get ripped off.”

When it comes to writing reviews, 44% of respondents said they consider themselves “active contributors,” occasionally penning online reviews of products or services. Of those who admit to writing reviews, a majority — 74% — claimed they generally submit positive reviews, while about a third — 32% — said they generally leave neutral reviews. Only 13% said they leave reviews to warn others about bad experiences. A majority of those who leave reviews — 62% — said they do so because they want to help others make sound purchasing decisions, while 35% said they feel compelled to leave feedback because they think it’s polite. More than a quarter — 27% — said they do so because they want to share positive information about their experiences.

Almost a quarter of respondents — 21% — admitted that they had left reviews for products or services they had never actually purchased or tried. The study found that “significantly fewer” reviewers who live in the U.S. Midwest admitted to posting spurious reviews than those who hail from the U.S. Northeast or South.

If most Americans ultimately believe online reviews aren’t reliable, however, why do so many continue to rely on them in the course of weighing purchasing decisions?

“Although people may have suspicions that there are some falsified reviews, they may feel that, on the whole, reviewers are trustworthy,” Anne Gammon, Associate Director YouGov Omnibus, told *O’Dwyer’s*. “People may also turn to reviews, as they are a quick and free resource, and they lack alternatives.”

The study also found that about a third of reviewers polled — 35% — said it takes them more than five minutes to write a review. The majority of reviewers polled — 45% — said it took them between one and five minutes to write a review.

According to the study, the most popular reviews online — 53% — pertain to electronics products. Other influential review categories include household appliances, automobiles, and hotels. ●



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TransCanada drops Edelman after strategy leak

Canadian energy giant TransCanada has ended its relationship with Edelman, after documents detailing the number-one independent PR firm's program for TransCanada's controversial Energy East Pipeline was leaked to the press.

By Kevin McCauley and Jon Gingerich

The media had a field day in November, reporting on Edelman's planned communications strategy for the Energy East Pipeline, which is under development to upgrade natural gas pipelines for the sake of transporting oil sands production to refineries in eastern Canada. Opposition to the plan from environmental groups has grown palpable.

Greenpeace in November obtained a cache of documents detailing Edelman's PR work for TransCanada and supplied them to media outlets such as Canada's CBC and *Toronto Star*, the country's largest newspaper.

The CBC on November 18 quoted a Greenpeace staffer who accused TransCanada of "dirty tricks," while *The Star* wrote of an effort to "browbeat detractors." The environmental organization claimed the documents were proof of TransCanada's efforts to "adopt the deceit-

ful tactics employed by the oil industry in the U.S. to attack environmental advocates."

Edelman, in its plan for TransCanada, drew up a comprehensive program "from the modern political playbook," stating the company needs a "perpetual campaign to protect and enhance the value of the Energy East pipeline."

The documents, written between May and August, show Edelman recommending a "three-track approach" that "strives to neutralize risk before it is leveled, respond directly to issues or attacks as they arise, and apply pressure — intelligently — on opponents, as appropriate." It also advocates the use of "supportive third parties who can put pressure on, especially when TransCanada can't."

The media slammed Edelman over the language of the documents, especially taking the firm to task for the "pressure" portion of its approach, playing up Edelman's

recommendations to obtain detailed background research on Energy East opponents.

In a November 26 statement posted on TransCanada's website, the company said it will not extend its contract with Edelman for the project.

"Regrettably, recent controversy around our communications strategy has created distraction," the statement read. "Media reports have incorrectly suggested that TransCanada's communications practices are unacceptable ... We need to get back to a conversation about the project itself and as a result we have agreed that it is in the best interests of the project that we do not extend our contract with Edelman."

The same day, Edelman released a statement saying the agency stands by its strategy.

"Unfortunately, the conversation about our efforts has become so loud in certain areas that it is impossible to have an open and honest conversation about the Pipeline project ... For that reason we feel that selection of a new partner for the project is necessary at this time so a new conversation on the merits of the project can begin." ♦

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Calculating the risks of athlete sponsorships

Athletes are generally regarded as market influencers, but in today's culture, they're also seen as heroes. As heroes exist, however, so do villains — a notion made painfully apparent by recent acts committed by several players in the NFL. No company wants to affiliate with someone who possesses questionable integrity or unfavorable morals. It's important, therefore, for companies to develop a strategic plan in determining the "right" athlete to link with a brand.

By Hayes Grooms IV

According to Plunkett Research Ltd., the sports industry's current value in the United States stands at an estimated \$485 billion. And that industry is guaranteed to grow, as media conglomerates continue driving content across an array of existing and new platforms.

The bond between sports and its fans is both inseparable and constantly evolving. Brands have always sought to partner with potential superstars, but with that decision comes risk. Following are a few key factors when considering athlete alliances.

Age

The decision to partner with an athlete is always a calculated risk, because there's no guarantee that someone will fully live up to his or her potential. Some do, and others transcend their expectations. Targeting young talent is enticing, as many companies hope to evolve new products alongside a player who will grow with them.

Recent history indicates that signing young athletes sometimes pays off incredibly, or fails horribly. For example, in 2004, Adidas signed 18-year-old basketball phenomenon Sebastian Telfair. Telfair was notorious for drawing celebrities and tastemakers to high school gyms to watch him play. Upon declaring for the 2004 NBA draft out of high school, Adidas agreed to an endorsement contract worth \$15 million.

Success in a young athlete is not guaranteed, and companies must accept the risk in order to avoid missing out on the next "big thing." Unfortunately, Telfair did not add much credibility, as he ultimately bounced around the NBA and even had a brief stint in China. Adidas took a risk on Telfair because a year earlier its main competitor, Nike, signed another 18-year-old wunderkind named LeBron James. In a transition period looking to replace Michael Jordan, the company signed James to a \$90 million, seven-year contract out of high school in 2003. The gamble paid off for Nike, who still backs James, although James has changed teams over the years. According to Sports One Source, Nike sold over \$300 million LeBron signature sneakers in 2012 alone.

Performance

The average career of an NFL player is 3.2 years. Moreover, society shuffles through athletes and trends quickly, so success can be even more short-lived. Brands must strike when the iron is hot in order to maximize marketing reach and effectiveness. High performance typically leads to winning, and consumers identify with winners. When brands are affiliated with a specific athlete, that athlete's winning reputation carries over. The marketability of a winner is usually synonymous among quarterbacks, especially those who lead their teams to Super Bowl championships.

Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson led his team to a Super Bowl championship in his second NFL season, becoming one of the league's most marketable and popular players. Wilson's success on the field has transformed this mid-round draft pick into a national icon, facilitating his partnerships with American Family Insurance, Bose, Braun, Duracell, Microsoft, Alaska Airlines and others. The Harrow Sports Ventures/ MVPindex Power 100 ranks him as the second most influential athlete in sports, behind only LeBron James. Winning a Super Bowl as a quarterback changes a player's career and legacy, rewarding the player with unparalleled credibility. There are only so many championships, and you never know who will win or lose in sports. If companies can identify champions, those athletes will catapult the brand to new heights.

Influence and social media presence

Technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. New media is vital to all athlete marketing, promotions and sponsorships. Social media provides fans a chance to connect with athletes on a direct, personable level, and grants companies access to their customers. According to Navigate Research Marketing and Public Relations Manager Julie Frank, "sports fans that see a brand message on social media are 78% more likely to have a positive perception of it."

When selecting an athlete to serve as an endorsee, it's imperative to select someone who's influential and actively engages his or her followers on social media. Athletes

have massive followings; some athletes' Twitter followings are twice the size of *Fortune* 500 companies. By partnering with athletes, brands have the opportunity to reach a new target market to promote and spread awareness of their campaigns and programs. In early 2014, former NFL Quarterback Tim Tebow partnered with telecommunications company T-Mobile. The partnership centered on the "No Contract, No Problem" Super Bowl commercial. During the game, T-Mobile launched a social media activation where Tebow took over the brand's Twitter account and promoted the T-Mobile commercials to his 2.75 million followers. This not only made the company a trending topic worldwide, but also increased T-Mobile's Twitter following by 110%.



Hayes Grooms IV

Character

Does the athlete fit the brand? Does the athlete use the products? Does the athlete connect with the target market? These questions are essential. When athletes or other celebrities represent brands that they stand behind, it underscores an organic message for the target market. One example is the partnership between Derek Jeter and Movado. Jeter — the decorated, recently retired New York Yankees shortstop — began working with the luxury watch brand in 2006 as spokesperson for its Series 800 line of high-end sports watches. Aside from complementing the qualities of the timepiece, Jeter appeals to a market that Movado aims to reach. Once athletes sign endorsement contracts, not only are their decisions and actions a reflection of themselves, they are also reflections of the brand. Since endorsement deals are a significant investment, a thorough assessment of the athlete's character and background is compulsory. Movado did its diligence during the selection process — they got it right.

Hayes Grooms IV is Vice President of the Sports & Entertainment Practice at French/West/Vaughan. ●

Brands have a field day with fantasy football

There's no denying that people love fantasy football. The pastime's popularity has exploded in recent years, and the cultural fixture is now even the backdrop for a sitcom. Here's what PR pros can do to connect with this growing market.

By Erika Kauffman

Over the past two decades, the rapid growth of interest in all things NFL has laid the groundwork for fantasy football's rise to prominence. Part of its newfound popularity comes from a greater understanding of football itself. Due to fantasy football, casual fans transform themselves into walking football encyclopedias or capable refs.

Fantasy play, however, was once seen as the exclusive domain of experts who had to be aware of every player in the league. It's not easy keeping up with injuries, statistics, and trades. And it's even harder to do all of the math required, but this changed with greater accessibility to player stats over the internet and on mobile devices. Like everything else, player info was now accessible anywhere by anyone. Fantasy football became democratic.

More importantly, it also became social. While there's no doubt web access helped, it's the people who powered the phenomenon. Fans don't just keep up with their favorite running back, they reconnect with old friends and make new ones. Fantasy football is becoming a popular diversion between spouses as well. The experience brings people together over networks built to facilitate interaction.

Everybody's getting drafted

According to the Fantasy Sports Trade Association, fans spend \$15 billion on fantasy football annually. Their estimate is based on 32 million players spending an average of \$468 per year. Although this information comes from an organization marketing the game, even half of those numbers should get the attention of marketers everywhere. More remarkably, the pastime is growing at an estimated rate of 10-15% a year. Finally, there's something special about the people fueling the fantasy football phenomenon. The main demographic spending the most money on fantasy football are college-educated (mostly male) professionals with average household incomes over \$90,000. This is the equivalent of marketing Nirvana. It's enough to make

a savvy marketing professional dance in the end zone.

Equally conspicuous is that growth among mobile users account for approximately one-quarter of the current number of fantasy players. This has caused the sources running the games to pick up the pace in developing fantasy-themed apps. Within this subset the use of data to develop predictive models is one of the most popular categories amongst players.

However, marketers eyeing sponsorship opportunities should distinguish between leagues where customers pay to join and those that are free. The \$468 that the FSTA mentioned is what 49% of players spend on joining fees, advisory information and apps that analyze football stats.

Who's on the field

Three-quarters of the fantasy market comes from four sources: Yahoo, CBS Sports, ESPN and the NFL itself, with ESPN and Yahoo reportedly having more than five million players each. When it comes to finding the best marketing opportunities, it's important to discover where the source's emphasis lies in relation to the game.

For example, ESPN's main concern is selling fantasy-related information through its many league analysts. Their media empire offers a wide array of marketing platforms, so it may take some digging to discover exactly where that emphasis can result in the best return on investment. Meanwhile, the NFL attempts to grab as many people as possible through the use of both free and pay versions, and CBS Sports requires leagues to pay close to \$200 in order to compete (they also offer a free version).

Making a smart play

Over the past few years, companies like Toyota, Unilever, Volkswagen, Snickers, Verizon, Intel and Dodge have all jumped on the Fantasy Football sponsorship bandwagon in one way or another. In doing so they've gained a foothold in a market. While many sponsors note that there are no problems getting fans to fantasy football sites, the challenge lies in getting them to pay attention to associated

marketing once they're there. One solution is for campaigns to have an interactive component of some sort.

Last year, for example, Volkswagen designed custom responses from CBS Sports broadcasters via video that was part of an ad. Depending on how the player did, that broadcaster would cheer for or trash talk that week's opponent.

Trying to connect to this market doesn't necessarily require going directly to the source, however. There are countless media outlets with weekly fantasy football shows that offer indirect opportunities for companies to explore their marketing effectiveness and to see what particular strategies work best.



Erika Kauffman

Engagement is key, and it will manifest itself through advertising or through effective use of a sponsor's product that furthers the knowledge of a fantasy player. In short, there need to be relevant connections in order to monetize opportunities. If this mantra is ignored, the target consumer will ignore what the sponsors have to offer.

The end zone

Sunday Night Football is the top-ranked show on television, and the annual deals NFL broadcasting bring in collective billions. In other words, there's not even a remote chance that interest in football is waning. The recent scandals that plagued it were messy, but there's no indication that they affected the targeted market that continues to fuel fantasy football.

Baseball may still cling to its dated designation as America's national pastime, but football forcefully asserts itself as America's passion. Given the level of devotion it already inspires and its potential, fantasy football is an untapped channel for marketers. A smart play now may mean a huge payoff in the future. Both the NFL and fantasy leagues are continuing to grow, the traffic is present on sites and apps, and the only remaining challenge lies in creating the kind of relevance that engages consumers.

Erika Kauffman is Executive Vice President and General Manager at 5W PR. ●

Provoking disruptions in consumer behavior

Today's media environment is characterized by product saturation, information overload, and 24/7 connectivity. More than ever, communications professionals need a progressive approach that incites change in consumer purchasing behavior.

By Tom Tardio

Today's consumer is immersed in a deluge of raw and processed content, their attention absorbed by a 24/7 Internet vortex where they communicate on social networks, watch their favorite television shows via streaming media, research products through websites, tune into breaking news and follow their favorite brands and celebrities.

What does this mean for marketing and communications professionals seeking to influence purchase behavior? It means that today's connected world challenges marketing communications professionals to actively seek a new and progressive approach in influencing purchase behavior.

The historical consumer purchase path was linear, moving through awareness, consideration, preference, purchase and loyalty. Print and broadcast media relations served that linear path well, but media has evolved, and the consumer purchase path has been disrupted by a proliferation of digital and social media.

This constant connectivity is influencing behavior among consumers, especially among the millennial populations that grew up with technology. It breeds a continuous search for and consumption of content to educate, entertain and engage. This opens up opportunities for communications professionals to engage with consumers who are constantly in the consideration phase. As a result, brands are now required to play a more aggressive role in managing and facilitating disruptions to the purchase path to ensure that they are building constant awareness among consumers through earned, shared and paid media. These disruptions could come in the form of reviews, curated content, blogger outreach, social media postings and peer-to-peer conversations.

Passion drivers that provoke change

For today's marketing communications professional, disrupting the customer's path to purchase means identifying a set of passion change drivers, or accelerators, that influence and motivate people to switch to a competing brand or service. Those passion change drivers and acceler-

ators are more about associated emotions than simply the attributes a product delivers to an audience. Understanding these personal and emotive factors, what we call the "stickiness" that drives a consumer's affinity for a brand, allows marketing professionals to design campaigns and messaging that pinpoint with laser accuracy the intersections with traditional and social media channels. Defining these passion change drivers can be a challenge for many brands, but it's an opportunity to provoke the consumer to change their purchase decision.

While there are a variety of passion change drivers to consider, three that cover a multitude of categories include "trailblazer status," "rating / reviews focused" and a "sense of belonging."

Trailblazer status: The rapid pace of innovation and product launches, ranging from mobile and gaming devices to content distribution platforms, is overwhelming to most consumers. This isn't so for the trailblazer, who wants to be the first among his friends to purchase. They are constantly on the lookout for the next big thing but may still hold allegiances to a particular brand. Therefore, communications professionals need to devise campaigns that intercept these trailblazers during the awareness and consideration process by leveraging voices of authority that influence their decisions. The objective is to move them to abandon their trusted allegiance, and not only to communicate the key product attribution differentiators but also the emotional innovation drivers.

Ratings/reviews focused: We all understand that historical "ratings" for film and TV shows have impacted our viewing habits for many years. The credibility of the review was based on an authority who we respected, which is still a viable strategy to reach the mass consumer audience. Then a digital disruption occurred and viewing habits changed. Now ratings and reviews by random voices drive the entertainment, travel, hospitality and retail purchase decisions. They even impact decisions on doctors we visit or power tools we purchase. Random voices that have personal and emotional opinions based on their experi-

ences are the new influencers to buyers' considerations. Communications professionals must strategize the right approach to leverage those curated voices to provoke change.

Sense of belonging: Another change driver is the personal and emotive sense of "belonging." Attend a Comic-Con convention and you'll understand the sense of community that dimensionalizes and drives millennials' decisions to engage with a brand. This strong emotional connection and sense of community is what must be leveraged to engage the consumer and get them to swap the programs they watch, the technology they utilize, or the subscription services they use to consume content. Communications campaigns with this group need to tap into that idea of community, to ensure sure they're not left out of the conversation.

Push strategies versus pull strategies

Consumers are increasingly taking more control to "pull" information from media reports, websites, blogs, reviews and brands' social network sites. The communications professional understands they must constantly seek to build awareness as part of the foundation of a campaign, so their clients brand appears on the consideration list. Yet, awareness is not enough to provoke change.

The social media shift complemented by the era of big data, where brands track activity on social pages and search engines monitor consumer preference, has led to the growth of "push" strategies that are customized to the individual. This allows communications professionals to leverage passion change drivers that can easily identify those consumers with a particular interest and "push" information out to them directly.

The communications landscape will continue to evolve, but provoking consumer consideration through passion change drivers and disruptive "push" strategies allows for today's competing ideas to be entertained and potentially engaged.

Tom Tardio is CEO of Rogers & Cowan. ●



Tom Tardio

A golden age for sports public relations

It's been a banner year for sports PR. The expanding reach of social media and its impact on fan engagement, as well as an increased focus on measurement, has redefined the industry and widened its potential reach. In order to take advantage of this new landscape, however, PR firms must radically transform themselves as well, and embrace several key roles that have not traditionally been part of the sports public relations process.

By Christian Alfonsi

February witnessed the first Super Bowl in the New York City area, the same month saw the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, and summer brought the FIFA World Cup, which not only shattered television broadcast records in dozens of countries, but broke new ground in fan engagement via social media. With the year in sports winding down, the top teams in college football head toward a true championship playoff format for the first time, the NFL continues remarkable growth, and NASCAR crowned a new champion through an innovative Chase for the Sprint Cup format that has ignited fan conversation about the sport.

Never have so many brands sought to tap into the consumer passion for sports through public relations activations. Never have public relations practitioners had so many new communications channels at their disposal. And never have the financial stakes for public relations firms with sports practices been greater.

Yet not all sports public relations firms, and not all of the brands they represent, will capitalize equally. The once predictable discipline of sports PR is being turned on its head by sweeping changes. Some, such as the explosive growth of social media and its impact on fan engagement, are readily obvious. Others, such as an increased focus on measuring the business impact and ROI of sponsorship activations, are most evident only to professionals. Taken together, these trends portend a dramatic transformation that is redefining sports public relations. So how can we predict which firms, and which of the brands with whom they work, will be the 'winners' in this new Golden Age?

Most traditional public relations firms may not be built to help client partners compete and win at this unprecedented time of change. To capitalize on the changes that are transforming the sports public relations landscape, we believe that firms must radically transform their offering, talent mix and delivery model.

In particular, they must embrace three new roles that have not traditionally been part of the remit for sports public relations firms: strategic counselors; consumer trendspotters; and digital sherpas.

Strategic counselors

Sports properties and sponsor brands should be turning to their public relations partners for strategic counsel across the full range of their business challenges, not just those related to communications. One example was Taylor's strategic initiative with NASCAR. Spurred by declining attendance at races during the economic downturn and intense media scrutiny about the future relevance of the sport to fans and sponsors, NASCAR commissioned Taylor and its Brand Counsel Group — a fully integrated team of brand planners, business analysts, digital strategists and consumer insights professionals — to conduct a landmark strategic assessment of its entire industry. It's symbolic of the new client opportunities in this Golden Age that, at a critical moment in its history, a major sports enterprise turned to its public relations firm for this level of strategic counsel, rather than a global management consulting firm.

Consumer trendspotters

Fan and consumer engagement in today's fragmented media landscape demands that sports public relations firms serve the role of "trendspotters," with a deep, current understanding of societal trends impacting consumer behavior.

One example is our exploration into how fans consume social media during the Olympic Games, which uncovered trends like the emergence of "social media butterflies" (young, social-media savvy mothers highly engaged by Olympics-related content). Another is our multi-year survey of NASCAR Avid Fans, which has tracked the shifting media consumption habits and increasingly pervasive use of social media among these fans, as well as their enduring loyalty to sponsors in the sport.

A defining attribute of successful

sports public relations firms in the Golden Age will be the ability to deliver this level of insight into fan behavior to their client partners. And even more importantly, to identify emerging trends in how consumers engage with brands through sports, allowing brands to remain constantly relevant in a constantly changing sports landscape.



Christian Alfonsi

Digital sherpas

Sports media consumption patterns and business models that had gone largely unchanged for decades are being swept away every day. Social media, especially on mobile devices, provides sports fans with their own global network, and they have been using this power in unprecedented ways to express and share their passion for their favorite sports. Digital, social media and mobile technology are also driving innovation in brand sponsorship activations around major sports properties, offering marketers a vast array of channels for engaging with consumers.

In this environment, sports properties and brand marketers are looking for true digital "sherpas" to be their strategic partners and guides, to help them leverage the full power of digital to tap into the sports passions of consumers.

This is the most exciting time in history for sports public relations for firms which have the ability to recognize it as such, and transform themselves accordingly. The power of sports to entertain and inspire us will continue to make it the most powerful vehicle for driving consumer engagement with brands. When future generations of practitioners look back at this time, they will consider us truly fortunate to have been part of this Golden Age.

Christian Alfonsi is Executive Vice President, Strategic Planning at Taylor. ●

Study: PR pros are smart but unethical

PR professionals are intelligent, creative and dishonest, according to a decade-long series of surveys that gauged the public's perceptions of the industry.

By Jon Gingerich

Study reflects evolving opinion of PR

Liar.” “Outgoing.” “Smart.” These are the terms people mentioned most when asked to describe public relations professionals.

A study conducted by Texas Tech University’s College of Media and Communication, whose findings will be published in an upcoming edition of *Public Relations Review*, may shed some light on what the public really thinks of the PR industry.

In a series of surveys, respondents were asked to supply three key words that they felt described public relations. Those words were then evaluated to determine connotation: responses were analyzed as reflecting positive, neutral, or negative sentiments; whether they pertained to the general practice of public relations or practitioners themselves; and whether the phrases described a characteristic of the practice (“long working hours”), a tangible product (“press releases”), or reflected a perceived industry activity (“advertising,” “marketing”). Words were also collated for intellectual, personality and ethical associations. In coding the responses with so many variables, the study sought to determine what traits are most salient among the public when they think of the profession.

According to the study, the most commonly used terms for PR characterized practitioners’ intellectual, ethical, and personality traits. The good news: the study revealed that most terms used to describe PR pros were positive, in that respondents overwhelmingly saw PR pros favorably in terms of personality and intellectual traits. Terms like “smart” and “informed” were prominent.

When those terms involved ethical traits, however, the results were predominantly negative. “Liar” and “spin doctor” were some of the terms commonly bandied about by respondents when asked to characterize public relations.

Overall, “liar,” “outgoing,” and “smart” were the terms respondents used most when characterizing PR pros. “Intelligent,” “friendly,” and “spin doctor” were other popular terms.

The study, titled “Smart Friendly Liars: Public Perception of Public Relations Practitioners Over Time,” was actually the result of two national surveys conducted over the last decade. The original PR survey, conducted in 2003, was just one part of a series of surveys overseen by Dr. Coy Callison, Professor and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies at Texas Tech University’s College of Media and Communication. The 2003 survey analyzed the public credibility of many different professional organizations, among them PR. In 2012, Texas Tech doctoral candidate Patrick Merle — now an Assistant Professor at Florida State — revisited the PR portion of the survey as part of his dissertation project, to see if those perceptions had changed.

The 2012 survey was conducted via email. The 2003 survey was conducted via telephone. The 2012 survey reported 48% female respondents and 52% male respondents. The 2003 survey consisted of 57% female respondents and 43% male respondents. In both surveys, approximately 79% of respondents reported having at least some college education.

Perhaps the most salient take-away from the two surveys is the evidence of how perceptions of the industry have evolved in recent years. In the 2012 survey, “liar” was the most common term used to describe PR. In 2003, “outgoing” was the most popular term. The second most popular term in 2012 was “spin doctor,” while in 2003 it was “friendly.” Fewer respondents from the 2003 survey found PR pros unethical and more found them to be intelligent. In other words, perception of the industry seems to be growing worse.

“They generally see PR practitioners as gregarious, outgoing people, but one of the most common terms that comes up are terms of ethical nature, and often the term is ‘liar’ or ‘spin doctor.’ That’s troubling,” said Dr. Trent Seltzer, Chair of the Public Relations Department at Texas Tech’s College of Media and Communication.

Respondents in the 2012 survey also seemed to possess a more nuanced

understanding of what PR is than they did a decade ago. More respondents in 2012 offered phrases that characterized the practice of PR over its professionals, and twice as many respondents identified specific industry practices, like crisis management.

The conclusion? The public may know more about PR than it did a decade ago, and may think worse of it as a result.

The study posits that the media may have at least something to do with these newfound views of PR pros, as it comes at a time when headlines are increasingly rife with public relations follies, and PR’s prominence has risen recently in film and TV shows, where terms like “hype” and “spin doctors” abound.

“There could be cultural factors clouding the waters. It’s possible that, from a pop-culture perspective and a 24-hour news cycle, some people think they’re now seeing behind the curtain and getting a look at how things work, even if what they’re seeing pales to how things really are,” Seltzer said. “It’s especially unfortunate because, when PR transgresses and does something wrong, it becomes newsworthy, but there are thousands upon thousands of professionals toiling away and doing very good things, and their work gets no mention.”

Arguably, it’s ironic: a study that analyzed the public’s perception of public relations practitioners is led to the conclusion that public relations is in a public relations quandary of its own. Given that there have been efforts in the industry for several years to define PR, and given recent strides within both academic and professional circles to enhance the profession’s ethos and clarify what it is that PR does, Seltzer noted that perhaps more attention should be focused instead on how the industry is seen by those for whom it ultimately serves — the public.

“I think maybe it’s time that PR does some work for PR, and targets that general public and educates them on what we do,” said Seltzer. “There are thousands upon thousands of PR people doing really great work for really great clients. Maybe it’s time the industry focuses on the general public, the people who are the target for most our efforts, and say ‘this is who we are and this is some of the great work we’re doing.’” ●

Tough times ahead for sports PR

Realists know what some sports fanatics refuse to accept: ever since the media — or at least a large percentage of it — stopped self-censoring bad news regarding athletes, teams and sports organizations, the news from the sports world has grown increasingly darker. If the headlines are any indication, public relations professionals with sports clients have their work cut out for them.

By Arthur Solomon

Reporters and editors of hard news sections used to regularly joke that sports writers were like employees of a Toy Department. As we approach 2015, a more appropriate name today should be The Teflon Department.

Why Teflon? Because despite whatever dirty tricks happen on the sports scene — whether it's athlete misbehavior, the hypocrisy of leagues, holier than thou sports organizations facing doping and concussions scandals (and most recently spousal and child abuse) — nothing seems to stick. Much of the media, and especially game announcers, still treat the athletes, commissioners and team owners as icons, and sponsors reward the sports cabals with record-setting fees.

Consider everything that's happened in the world of sports this year alone:

- A high school football season was cancelled in Sayreville, New Jersey, because of abhorrent incidents of locker room hazing. Some of the players now face criminal charges.

- An NFL Commissioner has been reeling from attacks because of his "stand-in-the corner" dealings with spousal and child abuse cases.

- The 2014 pre-Olympic coverage was dominated by Russia's repressive human rights laws, as well as the dangers of terrorist attacks at Sochi and other Russian cities, and unflattering articles about Putin's anti-gay measures. The International Olympic Committee said the U.S. hockey goalie Jesse Vetter could not wear a face mask inscribed with words from the U.S. Constitution in Sochi because it is a form of propaganda.

- A federal court judge wanted additional proof that the National Football League set aside enough money in its concussions settlement regarding injuries to players. The settlement was reached after the NFL, for decades, said there was no evidence to support that concussions cause permanent injuries.

- Instead of receiving the feel good publicity it usually receives, much of the pre-game Super Bowl media coverage centered on holding the game in an out

door stadium in a cold weather environment.

- The University of North Carolina was accused of providing easier than normal classes for its athletes.

- College football players want to unionize.

- A-Rod challenged in court his suspension handed down by an arbitrator and, to add an exclamation point, also sued his union. The arbitrator made his decision based largely on testimony of a person who admitted providing illegal substances to baseball players.

Profits over people

The MLB and the NFL have a long history of not being the good corporate citizens that their public relations people promote them to be, and try hard not to have fans think of them as they really are: big business entities interested in increasing profits at all costs.

And, as shameful as the NFL and MLB conduct is, it pales in comparison to the grand daddy of the most egotistical, uncaring and hypocritical sports organization — the International Olympic Committee. Despite its ludicrous PR offensive that sports can help achieve a better world, the IOC seemingly doesn't care about anything but finding a home for its games.

History is proof of the absurdity and hypocrisy of the IOC's "no politics in the Olympics" fantasy. There have been frequent boycotts because of political disagreements with the host country (the two most mentioned are the U.S.'s boycott of the 1980 games in Moscow and Russia's boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles games).

The Sochi Olympics was just the latest example of the IOC awarding its games to totalitarian countries. In addition to Russia, the IOC saw nothing wrong about awarding its games to other repressive governments, including Yugoslavia, China and Hitler's Germany.

One of the most callous political Olympic decisions occurred when a Palestinian terrorist group massacred Israeli athletes in 1962 at the Munich Olympics, and the IOC changed its memorial plans because of Arab protests

against lowering its flags.

In what might be a blatantly anti-Israel action, the IOC elected as its current president Thomas Bach, a German who was chairman of the Arab-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which Jewish publications reported was set up in the 1970s by Arab countries to boycott trade with Israel.



Arthur Solomon

Given my involvement with high school and international sports as a journalist and PR practitioner, I've held a theory of sports: "The higher the level of the leagues, the lower the level of caring about right and wrong." The reality is that the sports cabals, sponsors, TV networks, PR and advertising agencies care little about the good, the bad and the ugly when they are involved in sports marketing. They would rather have gold in their banks than in their trophy cases.

The Major League Baseball smugly congratulates itself for "cleaning up" the steroid problem that it helped create by decades of lax actions. The National Football League continues to wrap itself around the flag and give lip service to its Breast Cancer Awareness program, while trying to get the public to forget the NFL's awful disciplinary record regarding spousal abuse and its long denial of brain injuries to players while celebrating the "big hits."

There is nothing but continuing lip service from the entities that can force change, the sponsors, whose money fuels the growth of all things sports, including the evils it sprouts.

The unending sponsorships despite the appalling news about sports that never ceases is good news for our business, ad agencies, networks and the media but bad news for humanity.

Arthur Solomon, is a former journalist and senior VP/senior counselor at Burson-Marsteller. ♦

Seeing sports communications for the whole field

Any baseball player will tell you that what happens on one corner of the diamond has the potential to impact the outcome of a play at the other end. Similarly, in the world of branding, sports PR is about more than the action on the field.

By Bryan Harris

In order to reach the fan, there's been an increasing gravitation toward integrated marketing approaches. Clients, particularly in the sports world, are seeing the benefits of connecting with audiences across all types of media. They're seeing their brand as more than simply as a mascot or a logo.

Today, sports brands transcend the playing fields that dominate our screens day-in and day-out. They transcend the court or gridiron or diamond into the boardroom, the Realtor's office, the neighborhood and, as we're all aware, our social media feeds.

This move toward integration has been fueled by what I deem the "Three Es":

Efficiency. Integration leads to efficiency for the client. Rather than devote considerable time and resources to basic project coordination, the communication

process is streamlined through the utilization of one fully integrated firm.

Expertise. Clients are increasingly seeking diverse expertise from their firms. The business of sports is increasingly business-oriented, and that means possessing expertise in multiple industries, ranging from real estate, legal affairs, public policy, etc. Possessing individuals with those types of industry experiences is appealing to traditional sports clients as they deal with issues related to internal communications, construction projects and consumer-oriented campaigns.

Effectivity. Clients need their firms to be effective. At the end of the day, results matter, and the right results matter. A summary report showing 487 media hits doesn't cut it; what's the impact on the business? Each client has a series of goals they wish to accomplish, and integration —

through enhanced collaboration, a streamlined approach and deep reserve of resources — enables firms to meet them.

How have we seen these trends play out? Consider these two examples:

For the College Football Hall of Fame and Chick-fil-A Fan Experience, our firm's mission was to be with its team every step of the way. The College Football Hall of Fame's story was largely focused on the construction of a new facility, and the opening of a new world-class attraction, in downtown Atlanta. This required our firm to tap into the pool of our skill sets, from event planning to media relations to digital media strategy.



Bryan Harris

For the Atlanta Braves, it was to shepherd its message and counsel its executive team throughout the process of building a new ballpark in the heart of Braves Country. While the future successes of the franchise will be realized on the new diamond at SunTrust Park, the client's ongoing needs revolve around the construction of a significant real estate project and massive economic development opportunity for the metro Atlanta area.

In both instances, clients needed expertise that went beyond a simple public relations campaign designed to boost fan attendance or promote an accomplishment on the field. They needed integrated, strategic counsel that provided guidance and direction in industries where they weren't as well versed.


That's where the sports business industry is moving, and that's where real opportunity for growth exists: helping those teams, franchises and organizations navigate unfamiliar waters.

Jackson Spalding has positioned itself in the world of athletics, sponsorships and activations, yet I am proud to say that we are not, and never will be, a sports public relations firm, just as the Pittsburgh Steelers is not a social club of steel mill workers getting some exercise. The business of sports has evolved, and the way in which public relations and marketing professionals serve these clients has evolved as well.

Bryan Harris is Sports Practice Leader at Jackson | Spalding. ●

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Mack takes Percepture President post

Rene Mack, the 18-year veteran of Weber Shandwick's Global Travel & Lifestyle practice, recently left the Interpublic unit to take the President post at Percepture, the New York based PR/digital marketing shop.

Thor Harris, a former BSMG (now Weber Shandwick) colleague of Mack, is CEO/Founder of Percepture.

He said professionals at Mack's level "rarely have the courage to leave the big agencies at the top of their game to boldly try something new."

Harris believes Mack brings a "refreshing perspective to our current clients and opens up a new world of opportunities for our staff to grow and learn."

Mack has represented Canadian Tourism Committee, Michigan, Singapore Airlines, Post-Katrina New Orleans, Royal Caribbean International, Fontainebleau Miami Beach, Marriott, and the World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resorts.

He earned HSMIA's lifetime achievement award.

Besides Weber Shandwick, Mack was at Lou Hammond Assocs. and Porter Novelli.

Percepture has worked for Disney, AT&T, Chevron, Sprint, Foot Locker, Hewlett-Packard and JPMorgan Chase. •



Mack

Edelman's Bodner to lead Grayling Consumer push in US

Jennifer Babbit Bodner, Deputy General Manager for Edelman's southeast region, has moved to Grayling US in a new role as the established tech firm looks to grow a consumer PR business.

The Atlanta-based Bodner leads consumer efforts for the firm's nine US offices. She reports to U.S. CEO Peter



Babbit Bodner

Harris, who said the PR pro "has a phenomenal reputation for moving the needle with consumer audiences."

Bodner started out at Carins & Associates before moving through the ranks at Edelman to senior VP of consumer brands and deputy GM with account leadership experience on Starbucks, eBay and Microsoft, among others. •

Revamping Sprint shakes up corporate comms

Doug Michelman, the former Visa Communications Chief working to build a San Francisco presence for Finsbury, has dialed up revamping telecom Sprint, where he will take the VP of Corporate Communications and CSR slot in December.

Michelman takes over for SVP Bill White, who is leaving the Overland Park, Kan.-based company after 32 years.

The PR change at Sprint comes as three-month CEO Marcelo Claure shakes up the struggling company. "I'm excited about Doug joining my leadership team and believe his background is a tremendous fit for Sprint's journey to reshape the wireless industry," Claure said in a statement.

Michelman's move aborts a short tenure at Finsbury, which he joined full-time after a consulting stint in September to lead its charge into the Bay Area and Silicon Valley.

He is a former Chief Communications Officer for Visa and partner/West Coast Manager for FleishmanHillard. He earned telecom experience with FH client AT&T.

Michelman started Dec. 1 at Sprint.

The departing White was a PR exec for Centel Corp., which merged with Sprint in 1993.

Sprint Chief Marketing Officer Jeff Hallock is also out. •

Detroit PR maven Bailey re-enters the ring

Detroit PR maven John Bailey, who retired in 2012 after selling his firm, has re-entered the arena with Truscott Rossman in the motor city.

Bailey sold John Bailey & Associates to



Michelman

Lambert Edwards & Associates in 2009 and retired three years later. He takes a business strategist title at Truscott Rossman, a Detroit-based PR firm with offices in Lansing and Grand Rapids and clients like PhrMA, US Chamber of Commerce and the Regional Air Alliance of West Michigan.

Bailey, who founded JB&A in 1996 and grew it to more than 30 staffers focused on automotive PR and public affairs work, said he spent the past two years speaking about career and business development around Michigan. Bailey said he will help TR build its Detroit PR business.

"John worked for every major PR firm in Detroit before starting his own highly successful firm," added TR CEO Kelly-Rossman-McKinney. "We are truly honored that he chose to help us build [TR] in the same way: through good, hard, honest work."

Bailey held senior posts with Casey Communications and Anthony M Franco Inc., where he started in PR in the late 1970s. •



Bailey

Land O'Lakes PR exec dies at 39

Michele Sullivan, Director of Corporate Communications for Land O'Lakes, died November 13 after suffering from a stroke. She was 39.

The Stillwater, Minn., resident passed away with her husband, Rick, and family by her side, according to an obituary from Bradshaw Funeral Home.

Sullivan, nee Davis, moved to Land O'Lakes last year after communications stints at HTC in the US and Taiwan, Microsoft and Interland. She grew up in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"Loving wife and daughter, friend and mentor to many, world traveler and self-described 'third-culture kid,' Michele touched many lives around the world with her quick wit, positive attitude, infectious beautiful smile and a laugh that could light up any room," read the obituary.

Services were held November 17. •



Sullivan

O'Dwyer's Guide to: ENTERTAINMENT & SPORTS PR



The finish line of the IRONMAN World Championship is one of the most vibrant and moving atmospheres in sports, which in 2014 featured more than 2,000 athletes from 68 countries and 49 U.S. states competing in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

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225 Santa Monica Blvd., 3rd flr.
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Matt Kovacs, President

BLAZE is the trusted partner of choice for lifestyle contender brands hungry for a real piece of the marketshare. BLAZE has been retained by a growing number of savvy clients who want integrated PR, influencer and social media strategies — and flawless execution. BLAZE senior level professionals play a hands-on, day-to-day role with clients. With more than two decades of relationships and a solid team founded in strategic approaches, BLAZE is adroit in advancing client objectives and nimble to the quick-changing pace of media technologies.

Clients include: Adventure City, Citadel Outlets, ESPN, KeVita Drinks, Nawgan, Performance Bike, Powered ON, and youththeory.

The January issue of *O'Dwyer's* will feature a company profiles section on crisis communications. If you would like your firm to be listed, contact Editor Jon Gingerich at 646/843-2080 or jon@odwyerpr.com

COYNE PUBLIC RELATIONS

5 Wood Hollow Road
Parsippany, NJ 07054
973/588-2000
www.coynepr.com

5 Bryant Park, 28th Floor
New York, NY 10018
212/938-0166

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Suite 535
Los Angeles, CA 90025
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Coyne PR's knowledge and creativity has made it one of the country's fastest-growing agencies and top award winners. Our specialized practice areas of Entertainment and Sports & Media Properties represent an impressive collection of top national brands, high-profile events and first-class organizations. The Entertainment team works with Hard Rock International, making the brand synonymous with music by gen-

erating national and international buzz through events with top artists ranging from Karmin to Yoko Ono. The team also works with Epiphone Guitars and AEG. In addition, they've managed events with top celebrities including Eminem for Casio, KISS, Rihanna and Bret Michaels for Hard Rock, Jason Derulo for David's Bridal, Hugh Masekela for South African Tourism and Tony Danza for Wyndham Worldwide. The Sports and Media team's playbook includes winning game plans for industry-leading brands that include Daytona International Speedway, the United States Golf Association, IRONMAN, the Harlem Globetrotters, NFL Players Inc. and the *USA Today* Sports Media Group, among several others. The key to Coyne's success — and yours — is that we combine creativity and enthusiasm with a smart strategic approach and impeccable client service, resulting in outstanding coverage in both expected and aspirational places.

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261 Fifth Ave., 2nd Flr.
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Fax: 212/685-9024

9171 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 315
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Scott Miranda, Managing Director (Sports)
Scott_miranda@dkcnews.com
212/685-4300

Joe Quenqua, Director of Entertainment
Joe_Quenqua@dkcnews.com
310/579-6360

Based in New York City with offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago and Washington DC, DKC is among the largest independently owned public relations firms in the country, offering a full range of communications services including strategic counsel and planning, media relations, digital and social media, integrated marketing, event production and marketing, executive positioning, crisis management and public affairs. With experience that cuts across nearly every industry and geographic region, sports

and entertainment have always been cornerstones of the firm's diverse client mix.

DKC's Sports division is a trusted, longtime partner for a multitude of *Fortune* 100 companies, leagues, franchises, venues, sponsors, owners and athletes. With a seasoned staff that is deeply rooted in all aspects of the sports business, from high-level front office posts to sports journalism, DKC's Sports team knows how to build coverage for clients well beyond the traditional sports media landscape. Clients include the U.S. Tennis Association/U.S. Open, New York Road Runners/TCI New York City Marathon, New Balance, Citi, New Era, Pro Football Hall of Fame, The Players' Tribune and Fanatics.

DKC specializes in working with entertainment at the intersection of corporate enterprise and creative pursuits. The Entertainment team takes a 360 degree approach to building clients' brands — from personalities to entertainment executives to corporate clients who use entertainment sponsorships to help bring their products and services to life. Led by Joe Quenqua and a team with diverse television, film, theater and music experience, entertainment clients include Nickelodeon, Disney Theatrical Group, Sean "Diddy" Combs/Bad Boy Entertainment, Capitol Records, Bill Maher, Michael Eisner, Clive Davis, Sesame Street, Marvel Entertainment, Feld Entertainment, theAudience, National Board of Review, Stage17 Productions, VH1 Morning Buzz and Martin Guitars.

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212/593-6488
philippa@finnpartners.com
David Hahn, Partner
david.hahn@finnpartners.com
212/593-5847

Voted Best New Agency, Firm of the Year (Midsize) and Best Place to Work in 2012/13, Finn Partners is one of the fastest-growing independent communications agencies in the industry, with offices in New York,



The Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris. The museum and cultural center is a client of Finn Partners division Polskin Arts & Communications Counselors.

Photo: Iwan Baan

Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, DC, Chicago, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, London, Paris, Munich and Jerusalem. The firm's Entertainment and Arts & Culture work falls under two major groups at the Agency: Polskin Arts & Communications Counselors and Media Connect.

With its division Polskin Arts & Communications Counselors, Finn Partners is home to the oldest and largest group specializing in cultural public relations. PA&CC is known for strategic planning of comprehensive campaigns focused on major institutional initiatives, for representing corporations and other funders engaged in cultural collaborations and for providing expert ongoing counsel and crisis communications. Clients include The Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, Whitney Museum of American Art, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the J. Paul Getty Trust, the Menil Collection, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris.

Media Connect is a specialty division of Finn Partners that focuses on the promotion of authors, entertainers, and artists. It regularly promotes bestselling authors for major book publishers including Mitch Albom, John Grisham, Janet Evanovich and Dean Koontz. Media Connect helps media companies such as Condé Nast, HBO, PBS, National Geographic and The Discovery Channel by providing Satellite TV and Radio Tours and online social media campaigns. The division promoted comedian

George Wallace's book *Laff It Off* this past year and is currently promoting *The Storm and The Tide: Tragedy, Hope & Triumph in Tuscaloosa*, a *New York Times* Sports Bestseller from *Sports Illustrated*. The book captures the unforgettable story of a team and town rising together after a tornado caused devastating damage and took 53 lives in April 2011.

FRENCH/WEST/ VAUGHAN

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

Rick French, Chairman & CEO
David Gwyn, President / Principal
Natalie Best, Executive Vice President / Director of Client Services / Principal

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs and brand communications agency, independent or otherwise. Founded in April 1997 by Agency Chairman & CEO Rick French, FWV now employs 89 research, public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital marketing experts among its Raleigh, N.C. headquarters and New York City, Dallas, Los Angeles and Tampa offices.

Ranked as the #2 firm for sports PR and #18 for entertainment PR by *O'Dwyer's*, FWV is an industry leader in sports and entertainment marketing, and specializes in creating maximum brand exposure for its clients through strategic part-



Hilary Duff announces that each pack of Trident gum purchased the week of September 15 spurs a donation to Smiles Across America through a partnership facilitated by Hunter PR's Entertainment Department.

nerships, paid endorsements, sponsor relations, event management, social media, mobile and experiential marketing and traditional earned media outreach programs.

In November, FWV Chairman & CEO Rick French joined Moves Media Ventures, LLC, as partner and editorial board chairman. Known as the iconic *Moves* magazine, the outlet announced its expansion and reintroduction as a dynamic digital content platform focused on the lifestyles of professional athletes and entertainers. In addition to serving as a trustee of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, French is currently executive producing the upcoming Relativity Studios feature, "Not Without Hope," starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

FWV's sports and entertainment clients include Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Michael Vick, New York Giants running back Rashad Jennings, Chicago Bears starting free safety Ryan Mundy, All-Pro Cincinnati Bengals defensive tackle Geno Atkins, Baltimore Ravens starting defensive lineman Chris Canty, Detroit Lions safety James Ihedigbo, Orlando Magic forward Tobias Harris, former NFL safety Terrence Holt, former NFL wide receiver Torry Holt, NFL legend-turned-filmmaker Simeon Rice, Flywheel Sports, O2 Fitness, Polar Ice House, Steinberg Sports, NATHAN, best-selling author Nick Schuyler and the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC).

The agency has also done work on behalf of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA), United States

Polo Association, Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, United States Speedskating, leading international swimwear brand Arena, Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson, All-Pro NFL running back Arian Foster, Detroit Lions safety Glover Quin, platinum-selling musician T.I., actor Brandon Mychal Smith, AstroTurf, Speedo, MoGo Mouthguards, TVG (America's Horseracing Network), the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), and Urban Sports and Entertainment Group.

HUNTER PUBLIC RELATIONS

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

Grace Leong, Managing Partner
Jonathan Lyon, Jason Winocour, Mark Newman, Donetta Allen, Gigi Russo, and Erin Hanson, Partners

Hunter Public Relations recognizes that in today's society, entertainment marketing can help brands stand out from the competition and cut through the clutter. With the right celebrity association, television and film integration, or event sponsorship opportunity, the entertainment world offers products with added star power and sizzle, and provides one of the fastest ways to drive mainstream brand awareness and build brand identity.

— Continued on page 20



Cast of Universal Studios Home Entertainment's "The Little Rascals Save the Day" celebrates premiere at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood with media coordination by Marketing Maven.

HUNTER PR

— Continued from page 19

Celebrating our 25th anniversary in 2014, Hunter PR's long-term clients include some of the most respected and beloved consumer packaged goods companies in America including Tabasco (our first client 25 years ago, and still a client today), Kraft Foods (23 years), and 3M (17 years). Specialized research, social media, Hispanic, entertainment, cause marketing, digital and graphic design services round out the agency's insight based, 360-degree approach.

Hunter PR's Entertainment Department is immersed in the worlds of pop culture, lifestyle, fashion and entertainment. We help develop and strengthen relationships with entertainment properties, whether that is aligning with a celebrity spokesperson or high profile event, to create unique and compelling stories. The team also interfaces with entertainment media on a daily basis to deliver tangible results.

JACKSON SPALDING

1100 Peachtree St. NE, #900
Atlanta, GA 30309
404/724-2500
Fax: 404/874-6545
info@jacksonspalding.com
www.jacksonspalding.com

125 Washington St., Suite 775
Athens, GA 30601
706/354-0470

750 N. Saint Paul St., Ste. 1700
Dallas, TX 75201
214/269-4400

Bo Spalding, Glen Jackson, Brian Brodrick, Randall Kirsch, Eric O'Brien and Trudy Kremer, Co-Owners and Principals
Colin Owens, Marketing Director
Brett Player, Creative Director

Jackson Spalding was founded in 1995 with a team of eight people who felt there was a better way to structure a communications firm, advance clients and serve the community. Our vision is to be the most trusted and respected integrated marketing communications firm. That's it. We don't aim to be

the biggest or flashiest. We are independent and are beholden only to our clients, ourselves and the community organizations in which we invest our time. As we have listened to our clients and anticipated their challenges, we have added services and expertise to further their relationships with target audiences to become a full-service integrated marketing communications firm. We help our clients to tell their stories and connect with audiences in compelling ways through:

Discovery: helping organizations understand why they (or their products or services) matter and what makes them meaningfully different. **Development:** embracing meaningful differences so that we may uncover essential stories and develop messages that resonate and 'stick.' **Delivery:** balancing the message, messenger, place, tone, timing and tools to effectively connect with target audiences and evoke expressions.

Some of the JS client family members include Orkin, Delta Air Lines, Toyota, the College Football Hall of Fame, Chick-fil-A, Primrose Schools, Mattress Firm, the University System of Georgia, the Atlanta Braves and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. We work across all types of industries and commit to understanding our clients' business as if it were our own. Our commitment to learning, along with the integrity, experience and intelligence of our people, is reflected in the 40+ awards we have garnered over the past five years, including placing 4th in the 2014 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* "Top Workplaces" study.

KEITH SHERMAN & ASSOCIATES

234 West 44th Street
New York, NY 10036
212/764-7900
Fax: 212/764-0344
www.ksa-pr.com

Keith Sherman, President
Brett Oberman, VP
Scott Klein, VP

Keith Sherman & Associates provides strategic public relations counseling and marketing communications services to a diverse roster of entertainment, lifestyles, sports and corporate clients.

KSA has publicized hundreds of films, network and cable television broadcasts, Broadway

shows, national touring productions and high profile events nationally and internationally. Clients include: Universal Pictures, Focus Features, Adrian Grenier, Olympic Medalists Brian Boitano, Paul Hamm and Michelle Kwan, Tony Awards on CBS for 18 years, Colin Quinn, Lang Lang, Mike Birbiglia, Bolshoi Ballet, Kimpton Hotels, Portuguese Gourmet Food Festival, 54 BELOW and 300 Broadway, Off-Broadway and touring shows.

KSA's clients include: The *New York Times*, Visiting Nurse Service of New York, Hertz, Sony, The Onion, Architectural Digest, Columbia University, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York Marriott Marquis, The Broadway League, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Abu Dhabi Festival and the Montreal Jazz Festival, among others.

Excellence. Results. A fresh point-of-view. **Proactive effort.** Intelligent strategic thinking. **Experience.** High standards. **Integrity.** Creativity. **Passion.** These are some of the elements that distinguish KSA's work.

MARKETING MAVEN

135 East 57th Street, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10022
212/967-5510
www.MarketingMavenPR.com

Los Angeles Headquarters
310/994-7380
info@marketingmavenpr.com

Lindsey Carnett, CEO & President
Phil Rarick, Chief Operating Officer
Natalie Rucker, VP of Business Development

Award-winning agency, Marketing Maven, led by former NCAA women's soccer captain, Lindsey Carnett, combines traditional media relations and cutting-edge digital strategies for sports and entertainment clients. This fusion of online and offline marketing helps our team develop campaigns that are results-driven and measurable. By aligning with our clients' goals, identifying and engaging with key influencers, brands and adapting to emerging trends, we consistently deliver ROI for clients.

— Continued on page 22

BUSINESS TRAVEL



MEETINGS & EVENTS



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Gloria Bohan
President, Founder & CEO



Nick Lananna
Client Services Manager

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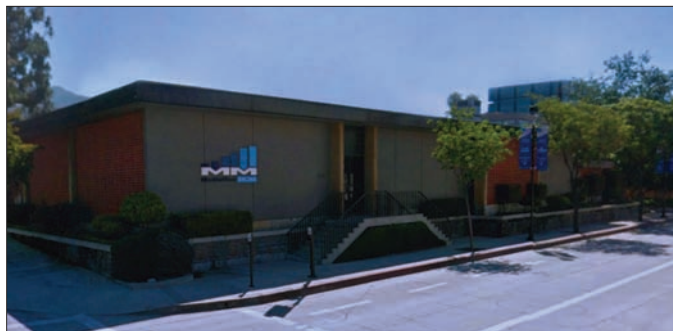


Omega World Travel brings 42 years of travel industry knowledge and expertise to you, combining personalized service and advanced travel technology solutions.

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- MICE Support & Management
- Leisure Travel - Cruise.com



1271 Avenue of the Americas
Suite 4300 - New York, NY 10020
646-693-7404 - nlananna@owt.net



The Burbank headquarters of MediaMax Online (MMO).

MARKETING MAVEN

— Continued from page 20

With offices in both LA and NY, this bicoastal team is tapped into media at the two largest entertainment capitals of the U.S. From movie premieres, gifting suites, red carpet events, product launches to national media tours, Marketing Maven executes worldwide PR stunts, Viner engagement and viral social media competitions to generate buzz for our clients. In addition to content marketing, our digital team also executes social media advertising campaigns with analytics and insights geared toward driving consumer awareness, engagement and conversions.

MEDIAMAX ONLINE

550 N 3rd Street
Burbank, CA 91502
818/260-8160
info@mediamaxonline.com
www.mediamaxonline.com

John Libby, *President*
Greg Martin, *Vice President, Sales*
Anthony Ruggiero, *Vice President, Sales*

MediaMax Online (MMO) provides everything the PR Professional needs for a successful online press room, with unique distribution services for electronic press kits, promos and PSA's, as well as unsurpassed traditional and social media monitoring for the Entertainment, Sports, Automotive and Retail industries.

With more than one million broadcast-quality downloads annually, EPK.TV is the preferred distribution service of entertainment studios, networks, agencies and media outlets. EPK.TV hosts and distrib-

utes electronic press kits to over 30,000 media outlets and press — making EPK.TV the most effective method of EPK distribution in the industry.

Daily Buzz leads the industry in media monitoring for T.V. and motion picture studios, PR agencies, and professional sports organizations. Daily Buzz has built a reputation of exceeding the high standards required to measure, organize and share content with publicists, management, talent and filmmakers. Daily Buzz employs professional media coordinators and incorporates layers of technology to deliver accurate, edited and analyzed breaks that meet the quality and timely needs of our clients.

MMD.TV Managed Media Distribution provides end-to-end post production services, along with Dedicated Workflow Specialists to manage clients' digital media assets. With MMD.TV, clients can host short and long form videos, images and documents in customized, branded portals.

MWW

Sunset Media Center
6255 W. Sunset Boulevard
18th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90028
213/486-6560
jschuerman@mww.com
www.mww.com

JP Schuerman, *Executive Vice President, General Manager, Western Region*

When it comes to entertainment PR, it's not enough to matter — we help our clients Matter More™, building and maintaining relationships for brands with the influencers who matter most. We are the experts when it comes to forming connections with the top talent in the music, sports and entertainment industries to inspire action and increase aware-

ness, brand image and sales. Clients turn to us to tap into our relationship networks and connect with celebrity endorsers that move the needle to establish cachet, credibility and relevance, enhancing the overall brand story. We craft multi-dimensional campaigns for artists, entertainers, and sports/entertainment properties, and create lifelong fans for your brand.

MWW services clients in the areas of celebrity acquisition and branding, entertainment publicity, full service celebrity brand integration, positioning and messaging, product placement, talent management, digital and social media, and consumer lifestyle marketing and public relations. Just like celebrities know how to make a name for themselves, MWW knows how to make a name for its clients — let us help you Matter More.

PMK • BNC

Pacific Design Center
8687 Melrose Ave, 8th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90069
310/854 4800
www.pmkbnc.com
Twitter: @pmk_bnc
Facebook: pmk*bnc

622 Third Ave., 20th Floor
New York, NY 10017
212/582-1111

7-11 Herbrand Street
London WC1N 1EX
United Kingdom
+44 (0) 207 961 2377

Michael Nyman, *Chairman & CEO*
Cindi Berger, *Chairman & CEO*
Chris Robichaud, *CEO*

PMK•BNC is the leading authority in Popular Culture and Entertainment. We specialize in creating ideas that move the consumer, applying our unique insights to help clients build audiences, engage consumers and become culturally relevant.

We are experts who speak a global language of popular culture driven by consumer passion points: film, television, sports, music, art, fashion and technology. We represent clients ranging from preeminent celebrities, producers, directors, cable and network TV properties, production companies, award-winning films, musicians, authors, sports figures, leading consumer brands and premier special events. With a staff of more than 250 professionals in New York, Los

Angeles and London, PMK•BNC delivers inspired communications and marketing strategies including public relations, event production, experiential marketing, celebrity and influencer outreach, sponsorship, promotions, product placement and integration, digital content creation and brand consultation.

RBB PUBLIC RELATIONS

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

Christine Barney, *CEO*
Lisa Ross, *President*
Tina Elmowitz, *Executive Vice President*
John Quinn, *Executive Vice President*

rbb is a nationally recognized marketing communications firm and four-time Agency of the Year with a reputation for delivering business results to its clients through award-winning integrated campaigns. The agency works with national and regional entertainment and sports organizations, including Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Disney On Ice, Monster Jam, Marvel Universe Live!, and Offshore Fishing League, among others. A few of rbb's high-profile and award-winning programs resulted from work with the Miami Marlins, AmericanAirlines Arena, Miami Beckham United and the Orange Bowl Committee.

A taste of our creativity ... rbb created a customized campaign for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus that inspired emotional attachments from consumers that could be measured at the ticket window. Reaching across key Hispanic and family audiences, rbb's holistic approach used creative storytelling, targeted events and behind-the-scenes experiences to foster loyalty that shaped purchase decisions and delivered sales.

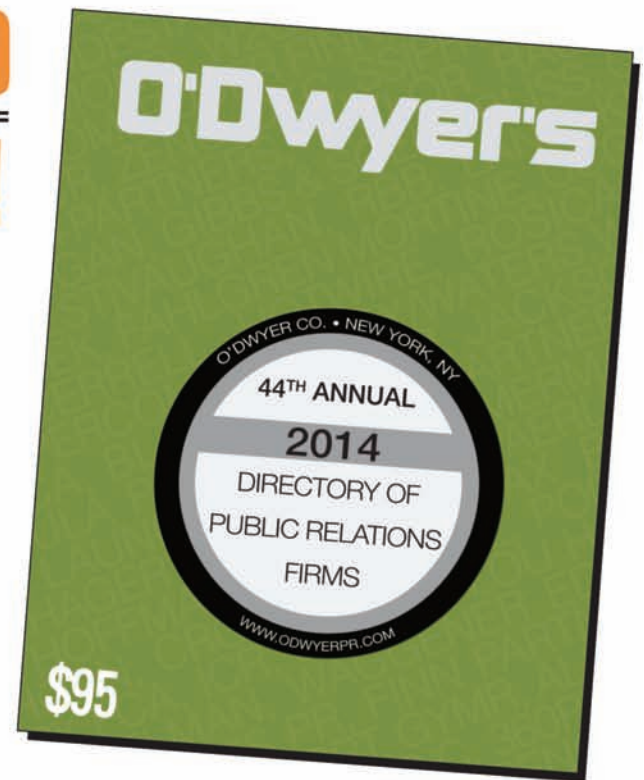
The agency also knows how to leverage the big stage for big stars. To announce David Beckham's intention to bring a MLS soccer club to Miami, rbb orchestrated several VIP, community and press events that resulted in worldwide media coverage and the formation

— Continued on page 24

ORDER THE ONLY PRINTED DIRECTORY OF PR FIRMS!

O'Dwyer's is the #1 source for researching public relations firms and outside PR counsel. We've been connecting clients and PR firms for 44 years through our directory of PR firms.

You get quick access to large, medium-sized, and small PR firms and even experienced freelancers who work out of their homes. Whether you seek a long-term, worldwide relationship or need extra help on a project, **O'Dwyer's Directory is the place to shop.**



Why O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms is so popular:

- ✓ *Has brought billions of dollars in business to PR firms.*
- ✓ *Authoritative industry rankings, based on CPA statements, tax returns.*
- ✓ *Firms ranked by 14 geographical regions in the U.S.*
- ✓ *Leaders ranked in 12 specialized categories: agriculture, beauty & fashion, entertainment, environmental/PA, financial, food & beverage, healthcare, home furnishings, professional svcs., sports/leisure, technology and travel.*
- ✓ *Easy-to-use, PR firms sorted geographically and by 22 types of PR specialties. Firms listed alphabetically.*
- ✓ *Articles on how to hire and use a PR firm by industry experts Jack O'Dwyer and Fraser Seitel.*
- ✓ *Cross-Client Index: O'Dwyer's Directory of PR firms is the only place you can look up a company and determine its outside counsel.*

"O'Dwyer's Directory of PR firms is the finest source of information on PR firms."

- Howard Rubenstein, President
Rubenstein Associates

"The O'Dwyer Directory is an excellent tool when searching for outside PR counsel."

- Art Stevens, Managing Partner
StevensGouldPincus LLC

"Up-to-date, indispensable resource. Saves time and money. Every PR pro should have one."

- Robert L. Dilenschneider
The Dilenschneider Group

"A phenomenal job-seeking aid."

- Marie Raperto
Cantor Integrated Marketing Search

"Single most important source of information on PR firms."

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



Four-time agency of the year, rbb Public Relations delivers results-driven, integrated campaigns for leading entertainment and sports clients, such as David Beckham's Miami MLS team announcement.

RBB PUBLIC RELATIONS

— Continued from page 22

of new, key business and community relationships.

As a Champion of Breakout Brands, rbb's multicultural staff delivers award-winning creativity, media relations, strategic counsel, launch campaigns, digital media, content creation, reputation management and results/analytics. In addition to entertainment and sports expertise, other specialty practices include consumer products/services, food & beverage, health, professional services, travel & hospitality, B2B and higher education. Find out how rbb can help your brand break out by visiting www.rbbpr.com or call rbb president Lisa Ross at 305/448-7457.

ROGERS & COWAN

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

Tom Tardio, CEO

Rogers & Cowan is the leading, full-service entertainment marketing and PR agency working with a diverse roster of clients ranging from A-list celebrities to content creators and consumer technology companies to social entertainment brands. The agency offers brands an entertainment insider's "POV" on evolving lifestyle, consumer, technology and social entertainment trends as well as deep relationships with media and influencers within the entertainment community.

Our core entertainment and

sports expertise is in working with celebrities, athletes, recording artists, cable and network TV, film production and distribution, record labels, video game producers, sports leagues and live events as well as the evolving social entertainment ecosystem including emerging entertainment technology brands and creators of content for multiple screens.

Rogers & Cowan utilizes our proprietary EMBRACE methodology to create customized entertainment strategies for brands, including celebrity spokespeople and partnerships, branded storytelling / integration, celebrity and influencer outreach, music and culture events, social media activation, celebrity brand ambassadors, lifestyle media relations and relationship building with entertainment industry influencers. Based on the campaign, we develop an integrated media campaign to activate and amplify the message and to engage media, consumers and online communities through owned, earned, and shared media channels.

We embrace the power of traditional and social media to build brands, drive viewership for broadcast and mobile entertainment programming, increase attendance for live events, activate brand sponsorships, grow online fan communities, increase downloads of mobile apps and provoke changes in consumer purchase behavior.

Recent clients/projects have included Rdio, Kabam, Target, 505 Games, Gibson Brands, Amazon Studios, Sonos, Dubs, 3BlackDot, HGTV & DIY Networks, Great American Country, Univision, GRAMMY and Latin GRAMMY Awards, Univision Uforia Music Festival, Billboard Music Awards, USA

Pro Cycling Challenge, PGA Tour, Haunting Melissa, Hooked Digital Media, Fox Consumer Products, Sprite Refreshing Films, AEG / Katy Perry Prismatic Tour, The Coca-Cola Company, Cinemacore, Miramax, Rock in Rio USA and Sands' China 7th Anniversary Event.

TAYLOR

The Empire State Building
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3800
New York, NY 10118
212/714-1280
www.taylorstrategy.com

Tony Signore, CEO & Managing Partner

Named "Consumer Agency of the Decade" by the Holmes Group, Taylor has forged a reputation of excellence in public relations and brand marketing over the past 30 years by partnering with the world's leading corporate marketers utilizing their sports, lifestyle, and entertainment assets to engage consumers and foster brand relationships that drive business growth. The agency's roots are firmly planted in the world of sports and its legacy of developing and activating hundreds of award-winning campaigns for leading brands in support of sports sponsorships is unparalleled. From global properties like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, to the crown jewels of U.S. sports — the World Series, Super Bowl, NBA Finals, and Daytona 500, among others — Taylor has long been a trusted counselor for many of the world's most influential sports marketers.

The agency has also successfully aligned its client partners' business goals with the most recognizable properties in the entertainment industry, including the

Academy Awards, Grammy Awards, Latin Grammy Awards, Sundance Film Festival, and MTV Music Video Awards.

Taylor's client partners include Allstate, Capital One, Diageo, General Mills, Lenovo, NASCAR, Nestle, Nike, 3M, P&G, RJ Reynolds, Taco Bell, and Tempur-Sealy.

WEBER SHANDWICK

909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
212/445-8000
www.webershandwick.com

Jerry Gleason, Executive Vice President; Director, Sports Marketing North America

Weber Shandwick's Sports Marketing practice combines the agency's industry-leading consumer marketing practice with an expansive global network of sports marketing experts focused on creating award-winning programs for many of the world's best known brands in cooperation with the major sports franchises, leagues and athletes.

We bring together athletes, products and campaigns to tell engaging stories across multiple platforms that help connect with consumers and fans alike to give our clients competitive advantages enabling them to elevate their brands, enhance consumer loyalty and increase sales.

We build visibility and preference for our clients and their products and services through consumer outreach, media relations, event marketing, fan engagement, sponsorship activation and social media.

In addition, we work closely with our Interpublic Group sports marketing partner Octagon to offer our clients a full range of counsel and support surrounding sponsorships, athlete representation, on-site physical activation and hospitality, negotiation and benchmarking.

Our sports marketing professionals have created and leveraged sports sponsorships for some of the most recognized and respected brands in the world in cooperation with the major sports franchises, leagues and athletes. Our programs give our clients competitive advantages enabling them to elevate their brands, enhance consumer loyalty and increase sales. ●

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

TOP ENTERTAINMENT PR FIRMS

1. Edelman	New York	\$13,790,029	19. LaunchSquad	San Francisco	322,550
2. Finn Partners	New York	5,986,293	20. IW Group	W. Hollywood	306,000
3. MWW	New York	5,502,000	21. rbb Public Relations	Miami	279,055
4. Taylor	New York	3,677,000	22. Hope-Beckham	Atlanta	194,686
5. Jackson Spalding	Atlanta	2,314,838	23. Seigenthaler Public Relations	Nashville	174,142
6. Coyne PR	Parsippany, NJ	1,773,000	24. McNeely Pigott & Fox PR	Nashville	133,461
7. PadillaCRT	Minneapolis	1,450,100	25. Zeno Group	New York	133,233
8. Regan Comms. Group	Boston	1,239,300	26. LEVICK	Wash., D.C.	101,675
9. W2O Group	San Francisco	1,079,000	27. Linhart Public Relations	Denver	100,783
10. Hunter PR	New York	1,063,087	28. TransMedia Group	Boca Raton, FL	100,000
11. Allison+Partners	San Francisco	\$989,000	29. VPE Public Relations	S. Pasadena	83,000
12. CooperKatz & Co.	New York	722,698	30. Landis Communications	San Francisco	75,000
13. OCG PR	Ft. Worth, TX	611,389	31. Maccabee	Minneapolis	70,435
14. Formula PR	New York	585,387	32. The Buzz Agency	Delray Beach, FL	65,952
15. Kaplow	New York	520,000	33. Schneider Associates	Boston	51,750
16. Public Communications Inc.	Chicago	446,013	34. Rosica	Paramus, NJ	46,500
17. French West Vaughan	Raleigh	419,060	35. Marketing Maven PR	Camarillo, CA	43,525
18. Peppercomm	New York	406,367	36. Stuntman PR	New York	34,500

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

TOP SPORTS PR FIRMS

1. Taylor	New York	\$10,775,000	14. Trevelino/Keller	Atlanta	300,000
2. French West Vaughan	Raleigh	5,500,114	15. Allison+Partners	San Francisco	200,000
3. Ruder Finn	New York	3,830,000	16. Peppercomm	New York	159,803
4. Edelman	New York	2,818,093	17. LaunchSquad	San Francisco	153,000
5. Coyne PR	Parsippany, NJ	1,459,000	18. BLAZE	Santa Monica	142,218
6. SS PR	Northfield, IL	1,350,000	19. Hope-Beckham	Atlanta	136,060
7. Regan Comms. Group	Boston	1,292,000	20. VPE Public Relations	S. Pasadena	107,956
8. PadillaCRT	Minneapolis	993,000	21. Rasky Baerlein Strat. Comms.	Boston	92,920
9. Jackson Spalding	Atlanta	680,426	22. Rosica	Paramus, NJ	87,100
10. Formula PR	New York	495,237	23. Gregory FCA	Ardmore, PA	75,000
11. Sachs Media Group	Tallahassee	436,037	24. LEVICK	Wash., D.C.	37,463
12. CooperKatz & Co.	New York	342,119	25. McNeely Pigott & Fox PR	Nashville	28,523
13. Finn Partners	New York	315,731	26. The Buzz Agency	Delray Beach, FL	24,127

Embracing the blog

By Fraser Seitel

“**B**efore anyone ever cared where I would play basketball, I was a kid from Northeast Ohio. It’s where I walked. It’s where I ran. It’s where I cried. It’s where I bled. It holds a special place in my heart. People there have seen me grow up. I sometimes feel like I’m their son. Their passion can be overwhelming. But it drives me. I want to give them hope when I can. I want to inspire them when I can. My relationship with Northeast Ohio is bigger than basketball. I didn’t realize that four years ago. I do now.”



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

Thus began perhaps the most famous

blog post in history, when LeBron James — the “King” — announced to the world that he was returning to play for his home state Cleveland Cavaliers.

PR writers interact with blogs as much as — or more than — any other social media instrument. Many organizations and some CEOs “author” blogs that are ghosted by PR people. Additionally, blogs have increased exponentially as important journalism outlets in many fields. Media relations professionals must consider particular blogs and bloggers every bit as important as their more traditional editorial contacts in print and broadcast media.

Now clearly, there are waaaaay too many blogs — upwards of 172 million at last count — and the vast majority are rarely read by anybody, which, in most cases, they heartily deserve.

Nonetheless, blogging can prove an integral weapon in a PR initiative. Creating a successful blog can provide an excellent way to engage with an organization’s key publics.

The problem, of course, is creating one with a following. As with any writing assignment, a public relations writer must follow a disciplined strategy in building a blog that acquires a regular audience. Components of that strategy should include the following:

- **Authority.** The challenge for any blogger is to build trust in blog content by establishing a voice of authority. To do this, a blogger must have autonomy to weigh in on current events that concern industry and society, candidly stating organizational positions and beliefs.

- **Voice.** The best “voice” for any blogger is one that is not only authoritative, but also inviting and human. Corporate speak — using the jargon and platitudes that plague most companies — won’t appeal to most bloggers. A blogger must offer something different if he or she wishes to command an audience.

- **Look.** The appearance of a blog is important. Oh sure, content is king, but ... an attractive and eye-appealing blog will help readership. Design help (for a modest price) is readily available and may well be worth the investment.

- **Passion.** “Passion” is a word rarely associated with bureaucratic organizations. They are much more often safe and conservative in their language, rarely sharing emotion. But the best blogs are those that offer sincerity that, if not brimming with raw emotion, at least gives readers a strong indication of the writer’s true feelings. Passion breeds readership and followers. The key is to marry passion with the standards of your organization.

- **Consistency.** Just as a blog’s voice and tone should be consistent, so too should be its publication schedule. For a blog to be respected (not to mention, expected) it must be published on a regular schedule at least once every week. A blog is a living organism and it therefore must be fed consistently with new content. A blog without fresh content that appears sporadically will easily be ignored and wind up being counterproductive.

- **Marketing.** Remember that in the vast majority of cases, organizational blogs are elements of, and complements to, the marketing mix. The blog should be used as another marketing tool to help introduce, explain, and ultimately sell quality goods or services. Like any other commodity in public relations, if the products aren’t worth it, the best blogging strategy in the world won’t help. ●



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Would PR by any other name mean the same?

By Lucy Siegel

In November, Jack O'Dwyer wrote about the negative association of the word "spin" in public relations, and brought up the long-running industry debate about whether to use the name



Lucy Siegel is the Founder, President and CEO of Bridge Global Strategies.

public relations to describe what PR people do. As he mentioned, the majority of top PR agencies don't call themselves that anymore. But this isn't just due to the negative perception of PR as spin. It's because many potential clients don't know that PR

firms provide services that weren't previously defined as PR.

Since the profession began, there's been a big gap in understanding between what PR people do and what the business world thinks they do. Most business people equate PR with media relations, which is only part of what we do. In recent years, the understanding gap has widened as agencies have added new digital services. As a result, many agencies have shied away from using public relations in their names to avoid the narrow definition of PR in most people's minds.

When it became apparent that traditional advertising was losing effectiveness, several things happened at once that caused the boundaries between PR and other communications disciplines to blur:

Dedicated digital and social media agencies sprang up, and ad agencies either built or acquired the same services to replace lost ad revenue.

PR agencies started using social media as a natural new PR channel. While PR traditionally meant "earned" media, some popular bloggers with huge audiences started charging to mention products on their blogs, and the media began selling "paid content." Both of these are advertising and have nothing to do with earned media, but many PR agencies arrange these services.

In the last few years, new (or re-labeled) agencies have used "inbound marketing" and "content marketing" in

their names. Both of these services are also offered by ad, digital and PR agencies.

We now have a situation where agencies are labelled with different category names, but vie with each other to sell the same services. What a mess, huh? So what should we PR agency owners call our businesses in the midst of this confusion?

Another important image concern about the term public relations is its history. It was previously synonymous with "publicity" and "publicist," labels used in bygone days when media schmoozing (long expensive lunches, invitations to sporting events, etc.) sought to influence media coverage for clients. We PR professionals don't consider ourselves publicists and hate those terms. Media schmoozing in PR pretty much died years ago. But we've all been in social situations where we explain what we do and people respond, "Oh, so you're a publicist." In many overseas countries, PR is still a narrow discipline that continues to include at least some schmoozing. When businesses in those countries first think about hiring a PR agency in the U.S., they're unaware of the strategic services we offer. Their view of PR is old-fashioned publicity. By using the PR label, we create a false impression to people overseas about what we do. This misunderstanding about American PR is a problem for PR practitioners and agencies.

Some PR firms now call themselves integrated marketing agencies. But excising the term PR is throwing out the baby with the bathwater. PR often has nothing to do with marketing. For example, I don't consider reputation management, internal communications, crisis management or issues management as marketing disciplines, and I doubt many O'Dwyer's readers do, either.

Part of the confusion about what to call PR is exacerbated by where it's situated in a company. In many organizations, the communications department incorporates both marketing PR and corporate communications. Because marketing PR is included, the whole communications department often reports to marketing, although corporate and internal communications manage the company's overall reputation and should report to the CEO. In other companies the PR staff is split by func-

tion, with some under the marketing banner and some reporting to the CEO. However, in smaller companies, the same few staff members (or just one in really small companies) handle all communications. So who should they report to and what should they be called?

I've observed that PR practitioners are not only labeled differently according to where in the company they work, they're also treated differently. The corporate communications label has a higher status than PR situated in marketing departments.

Ten years ago when I founded Bridge Global Strategies, I deliberately avoided using PR in the name. Yet on our website, we describe ourselves as a PR and marketing communications company because our potential clients use those labels to search for our services. If I were starting the company now, I might use "integrated communications" in the name. It's more accurate than "integrated marketing" and avoids the tainted PR label.

As Jack O'Dwyer pointed out, the Public Relations Society of America clings to its name and continues to emphasize its "Accreditation in Public Relations," or "APR" designation. The APR, because of the limited perception of what public relations is, arguably narrows the perception of the capabilities of those who have it. (Few PR professionals care enough to spend time pursuing an APR, anyway, since most clients and employers are not familiar with it and it isn't an industry-wide standard.) The Council of Public Relations Firms just changed its name to The Public Relations Council, embracing the use of "public relations." The PR industry doesn't seem close to dumping the PR moniker, but maybe it should. The name of an industry organization should reflect the image the industry wants in the business world, and the image of PR is definitely problematical.

As Shakespeare put it in *Romeo and Juliet*, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," meaning the name used to describe something doesn't really change what it is. While that's true, the name describing our industry is perceived by many to smell foul, not sweet, so it does matter, because it has the power either to enhance or detract from the image of the profession. ●

Army recruits agencies

The U.S. Army has issued an open call for mid-sized and large agencies capable of contributing to its nine-figure recruitment and retention advertising and marketing account ahead of a possible review.

Interpublic's McCann Worldgroup and IPG firms like Weber Shandwick currently handle the \$200 million-a-year account after defending the business in a lengthy review that was wrapped up in March 2011. It won the account in 2005.

The Army's Marketing and Research Group on November 4 published an open "sources sought synopsis," asking agencies interested in the work to fill out a questionnaire about the large account, noting subcontracting opportunities may exist for firms in the realm of \$15 million in billings per year.

McCann's contract includes a base year with four option years, meaning it will likely have the main account locked up through spring of 2016 if the Army triggers those clauses. The Army said McCann's pact is valued at \$960 million with all options and current obligations stand at \$624 million.

The recruiting AOR assignment covers the gamut of integrated marketing from ad strategy to direct marketing and social media.

The Army is planning an Industry Day Forum for the marketing pact on December 3 at the Fort Sam Houston Golf Course in San Antonio, an event billed as a "market research tool" for assessing industry capabilities and to allow interest agencies to network. ♦

Fed mortgage refinance push takes Porter Novelli for PR

The five-year-old federal program to aid homeowners who owe more than their homes are worth will continue with Porter Novelli at the helm of its ongoing PR push, as a key deadline was extended through the end of 2015.

The Home Affordable Refinance Program, administered by the Federal Housing Finance Agency, gave PN a \$305,000 extension through its office of congressional affairs and communications this week after the deadline for homeowners to apply was extended from December 31, 2014 to the end of 2015.

PN picked up the initial \$329,000 assignment after a competitive review in May 2013 and its most recent extension ran through late October. The new award keeps the Omnicom unit on the account through the end of 2015.

The firm is charged with educating the public about the HARP program and encourage eligible homeowners to apply for relief through earned media, opinion leader outreach, social media and other tactics. It has also held events in several cities and supported creation of harp.gov. The work is broken down into three phases and PN is current in phase two.

The FHFA estimates an additional 300,000 homeowners are still eligible for the HARP program. ♦

White House Comms. pro moves to MSNBC PR post

White House Associate Communications Director Rachel Racusen has moved to MSNBC as VP of Communications.

Racusen takes over the reins left by Lauren Skowronski,



who was elevated to VP of Corporate Comms. for parent NBCUniversal earlier this year.

The 18-year-old network is in a ratings slump and reorganizing its operations to combine broadcast and digital under network president Phil Griffin.

Racusen, who started out at Dittus Communications, was a House Communications Aide before joining the Obama administration as Director of PA for the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 2010. She did a brief private sector stint at SKDKnickerbocker before joining the Obama re-elect in Chicago as Deputy National Communications Director in 2012. She moved to the White House in May 2013. ♦



Racusen

Labor Dept. vet goes to Edelman

Ofelía Casillas, who was Public Engagement Director at the Labor Dept., joined Edelman in Chicago on December 1. She reports to Jennifer Thompson, Executive VP at the shop's Crisis & Risk Management practice. Casillas handled outreach to veterans, Latinos, Black Americans, women and youth.

Prior to Labor, Casillas worked at U.S. Media Relations and was Crisis Management Manager for McDonald's, handling issues for its 14,000 restaurants. She was also Regional Press Secretary at Obama for America and Deputy Director of Communications at the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois.

Casillas is a former public policy writer at the *Chicago Tribune* and reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*. ♦

Ritsch to exit Education Dept. for Teach for American

Massie Ritsch, who leads communications for the U.S. Department of Education, is leaving for a senior PR post with Teach for America in January.

Ritsch is Acting Assistant Secretary for the Dept. of Ed's office of communications and outreach — he has not yet been confirmed by the Senate — and joined the department in April 2009, handling external affairs and outreach. He is a former Education Reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and moved into PR with the Center for Responsive Politics.

The 24-year-old TFA places college grads in teaching posts in urban and rural jobs under a two-year commitment. The program was expanded significantly under the Obama administration. ♦

Iraq's sheiks target D.C.

The Iraq Stability and Security Program, a group composed of Iraqi Sheiks and Sunni tribesmen, is working to raise awareness in official D.C. think tanks and media about the severe challenges faced by Iraq.

The tribes, according to IS&SP President Mark Alsali, represent an untapped intelligence source for the international military coalition that is bombing ISIS.

They could provide information about the location of ISIS forces and where the organization gets funding, Alsali recently told AI-Monitor.

ISSP stands ready to provide policymakers with the strategic ideas and options that are desperately needed to bring peace and stability to Iraq.

The effort will "portray a very liberal and moderate approach to what is needed for national unity and to eliminate all forms of extremism — religious and political," said ISSP's federal lobbying filing.

ISSP, which has offices in Baghdad, Irbil and Amman, said there will be a PR and lobbying team to carry out its work here. ●

Glover bags \$160k in Kazakhstan business

Glover Park Group has picked up a three-month, \$160,000 representation contract from energy-rich and human rights-poor Kazakhstan.

The firm handles legal matters for the central Asian country that is wooed by the U.S. and Vladimir Putin's Russia.

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.

Squire Patton Boggs, LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered Nov. 14, 2014 for The Palestinian Authority**, Ramallah, Palestine, to assist in assessing US funding promises to Palestinians to date and help ensure that such US commitments of financial assistance are fulfilled and received by the PA.

Orion Strategies LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Nov. 10, 2014 for Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan**, Washington, D.C., to assist the embassy in highlighting the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance to the public and policy maker.

CD Global Strategies Group, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Nov. 11, 2014 for Government of Burkina Faso**, Burkina Faso, to organize meetings and events with US Congressional offices, think tanks, NGOs and media to promote political and economic development in Burkina Faso and the West Africa region.

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.

American Continental Group, Washington, D.C., **registered Nov. 20, 2014 for Converse**, North Andover, MA, for intellectual property protection and related trade issues.

District Economics Group LLC, Washington D.C., **registered Nov. 19, 2014 for ViTel Net**, Reston, VA, regarding private debt collection of federal tax debts.

Kelley Drye & Warren LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered Nov. 14, 2014 for Complete Parachute Solutions, Inc.**, DeLand, FL, regarding federal procurement of military parachute systems.

The WPP unit reports to Kazakhstan's Ministry of Justice.

It has assigned Managing Directors Jason Miner and Alex Mistri on the account.

Mistri was special assistant to President George W. Bush. He served in the US Embassy in Baghdad and helped plan the Joint Campaign Plan, the blueprint for US military and civilian cooperation in Iraq. Miner is former research director of the Democratic National Committee. ●

Palestinians ink \$600K pact with Squire Patton Boggs

The Palestinian Authority has signed a \$55,000 monthly retainer representation contract with Squire Patton Boggs.

The firm will assist the PA in assessing U.S. funding promises to date and help ensure that further commitments of financial assistance are fulfilled and received by the Palestinians.

Squire Patton Boggs also will help manage the PA/US bilateral diplomatic and political relationship.

The firm also will review the 1994 Paris Protocol that established the economic relationship between the PA and Israel.

The one-year contract went into effect November 15. It will automatically renew for an additional year, unless the PA notifies Squire Patton Boggs of its intent to cancel.

If the scope of the project increases significantly or unforeseen events necessitate additional work, the retainer will increase, according to the agreement.

Squire Patton Boggs partner Gassan Baloul handles the contract. He reports to H.E. Shukry Bishara, Minister of Finance & Planning at the PA. ●

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NEWS CORP CALLS IN EDELMAN
Edelman's News Corp. has called in Edelman to handle fallout from its phone hacking scandal that has engulfed its British operation.

F-H SHUFFLES MANAGEMENT DECK
Fitchman-Hillman named Jack Modzelewski to the newly created position of the American post to coordinate activity of the unit chief of regions in the U.S., Canada and Latin America.

CHIME RINGS UP HEALTHCARE DEAL
Chime Communications has acquired healthcare specialist Reynolds-MacKenzie for an initial payment \$4M, a package of \$2.5M cash and stock.

DISCOVERY BAY DISCOVERS MWW
Discovery Bay Games, the Seattle-based company that produces games, apps and accessories for Apple's iPad, has selected MWW Group as agency of record.

You'll get the news first in the eight-page weekly O'Dwyer letter, the "bible" of PR according to the *New York Times*--tips and stories that can lead to jobs, new accounts, media placements--sent as a PDF to your inbox every Monday afternoon.

Plus, you'll have access to all the news and commentary posted daily on PR's #1 website, odwyerpr.com, which has over 10 years of searchable content and O'Dwyer's exclusive database of RFPs for PR services.

O'Dwyer's magazine, now in its 28th year, examines a different area of PR each month. Issues include practice-area specific feature stories as well as profiles of PR firms with strengths in the focus area. The agency profiles constitute the ideal starting point for companies beginning their search for PR counsel.

2014 Editorial Calendar:

January, *PR Buyer's Guide/Crisis Comms.*
February, *Environ. PR & Public Affairs*
March, *Food & Beverage*
April, *Broadcast Media Services*
May, *PR Firm Rankings*
June, *Multicultural/Diversity*
July, *Travel & Tourism*
August, *Prof. Svcs. & Financial/*
September, *Beauty/Fashion & Lifestyle*
October, *Healthcare & Medical*
November, *Technology*
December, *Sports & Entertainment*



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