ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS ISSUE

THE POLITICS BEHIND AMERICA'S LATEST OIL BOOM • STRENGTHENING CLEANTECH BRANDS
NON-PROFIT BRANDING TIPS • WHY POLITICIANS REMAIN OUT OF TOUCH ON CLIMATE CHANGE
THE DISAPPEARING STIGMA OF THE "DESPOP" CLIENT • CITIZENS UNITED: FIVE YEARS LATER
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EDITORIAL
Citizen’s United, five years later.

FACEBOOK TOPS PORTUGAL IN ECONOMIC IMPACT
Facebook stimulated $227 billion in economic activity for 2014, putting it on par with the GDP of Portugal.

RUSSIA PR WORK SHOWS VANISHING STIGMA
According to a Politico feature, Ketchum’s work for Russia highlights a PR culture no longer afraid of taking controversial accounts.

PRIVATE EQUITY GIANT SUES OVER LEAK CLAIMS
TPG Global has sued a former Bush White House Spokesman, alleging that he threatened to disclose confidential documents.

WATCHDOG RIPS REGIME “WHITEWASHING”
A report says countries are increasingly turning to PR and lobbyists to conduct spying.

CONDÉ NAST TO WRITE ADVERTISER COPY
Condé Nast has announced it will begin developing content for its roster of advertising partners.

BRANDING STRENGTHENS CLEANTECH INVESTMENT
Companies need funds, yet many investors are hesitant to commit capital until that service has demonstrated market potential.

MAKING PUBLIC AFFAIRS, PR WORK IN LITIGATION
Communicators’ desire to deploy strategic responses is often hindered in a lawsuit.

PR’S EVOLVING ROLE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS CRISIS
Recent headlines prove that PR’s role in public affairs crises has elevated drastically.

WHY THE U.S. REMAINS OIL DEPENDENT
For all his presumed environmental cred, President Obama has presided over the largest oil boom in recent history.

B2Bs CAN TAKE CUES FROM NONPROFITS
Taking a look at how nonprofits conduct outreach can help for-profit businesses increase their bottom line.

ON CLIMATE, POLITICOS REMAIN OUT OF TOUCH
2015 could be the year policymakers’ tactics of ignoring climate science comes to an end.

PROFILES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PR & PUBLIC AFFAIRS FIRMS

RANKINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PR & PUBLIC AFFAIRS FIRMS

WASHINGTON REPORT

COLUMNS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Fraser Seitel

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
Richard Goldstein

BOOK REVIEW
Jack O’Dwyer

PEOPLE IN PR

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January: Crisis Commrs. / Buyer’s Guide
February: Environmental & P.A.
March: Food & Beverage
April: Broadcast & Social Media
May: PR Firm Rankings
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Citizens United, five years later

January marked the fifth anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark Citizens United ruling that deregulated corporate campaign spending, and five years later, a shockingly tight-knit cadre of wealthy industrialists now plays a markedly pronounced role in shaping our elections and selecting our future leaders. Who knew?

Case in point: The New York Times in January reported that conservative activists Charles and David Koch now plan to spend nearly $900 million during the 2016 election cycle vis-à-vis the exceedingly deep pockets of their numerous political networks. This astounding figure is on par with spending projections for our upcoming Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, an amount one political advisor likened to Reuters in January an "electoral arms race.

The Koch siblings, and the vast network of donors and advocacy groups affiliated with their $115 billion Wichita-based empire, come with financial coffers so prodigious, so undeniably influential, that Politico in January said they now rival the Republican Party in their "ability to shape policy debates and elections." The Kochs' affiliated networks spent nearly $400 million during the 2012 election cycle and $300 million during the 2014 Midterms. Its juggernaut $900 million proposal for 2016 — to be bankrolled, in part, through Koch-related advocacy groups like Americans for Prosperity — inspired The New York Times in January to refer to the Koch network as "an almost shadow version of the Republican Party." Koch Industries, the second-largest privately held company in the U.S., is now the life force of the modern conservative movement.

In January, U.S. Senators and Presidential-hopefuls Marco Rubio, Rand Paul and Ted Cruz traveled to the Kochs' annual, invitation-only winter seminar at a resort near Palm Springs, California to audition for the brothers and hopefully tap into their pools of power-donors. Five years ago it may have seemed premature to campaign for an election 18 months away, but in a post-Citizens United world there's a new political rite of passage, a pre-primary primary, if you will (the Palm Springs event, organized by Koch-affiliated nonprofit Freedom Partners, was christened by The New York Times on January 20 "The Koch Primary."). With this kind of money at stake, getting on the Kochs' good side is a must for the 2016 Republican Party nominee.

This is the political landscape in 2016. A small, monolithic network of mega-rich have unprecedented influence in making or breaking a political candidate's future. Citizens United's disastrous effects on elections can especially be illustrated in recent Congressional elections: according to a January study published by the Brennan Center, titled "Election Spending 2014: Outside Spending in Senate Races Since Citizens United," spending in Senate races has more than doubled by outside groups since 2010. In the five years since Citizens United's passage, Senate races have seen more than $1 billion in super PAC funding, and about 60% of those funds came from only 195 people.

Of course, super PACs are obligated by law to disclose their donors, and a key provision behind Citizens United's passage was that outside fundraising groups would be prohibited from coordinating their work with the candidates they support. As we've seen, however, many outside fundraising entities — like the Kochs' beloved Freedom Partners, for example — fall under the nonprofit umbrella of Section 501(c) of the U.S. tax code (among them are social welfare organizations and business trade associations), and as such, don't have to divulge their roster of donors or how much they give. The prevalence of "dark money," or funding from undisclosed donors, has exploded in elections. An October 2014 report released by Public Citizen found that many of these outside spending groups are led by candidates' former staff or funded entirely by a candidate's family, and that 42% of these groups that have spent more than $100,000 have devoted all their spending to a single candidate. According to the Public Citizen report, "...many of the groups that Citizens United has spawned are essentially extensions of the candidates and parties that they serve … the existence of outside unregulated groups that serve individual candidates and parties has provided an easy end-around for those seeking to avoid the laws limiting contributions to candidates." So much for transparency.

The proliferation of corporate influence in America's election process has become an issue of the times. Several hundred plutocrats now set the agenda, pick the leaders, then attack the issues in their way (environmental regulations, climate change legislation, and of course, campaign disclosure laws are among them). A select few benefit from the laws passed for all. According to an ABC poll published shortly after Citizens United's passage, 80% of Americans opposed the SCOTUS ruling. Five years later, however, we've learned that even if money can't buy love, it can buy a friend.

— Jon Gingerich
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Facebook claims larger economic impact than Portugal

Facebook claimed it’s responsible for stimulating $227 billion in economic activity and creating 4.5 million jobs in 2014, according to an analysis produced by Deloitte. That figure puts the $12 billion social network on par with the gross national product of Portugal.

The report, titled “Facebook’s Global Economic Impact,” gauges the company’s marketing, platform, and connectivity and then measures how they facilitated growth and jobs worldwide.

Giving Facebook an $8 billion cost base, Deloitte looked at the impact of providing tools for marketers, platforms for app developers and demand for data usage and mobile devices.

The study, according to Jolyon Barker, Deloitte’s Managing Director for Technology, Media & Telecommunications, finds Facebook unlocking new opportunities through connecting people and businesses, lowering barriers to marketing and stimulating innovation.

COO Sheryl Sandberg, who talked up the Deloitte study at the World Economic Forum in Davos, says the analysis shows that Facebook isn’t just disrupting traditional media but is creating new employment opportunities and creating wealth.

“The good news is that the tech industry is powering the economy and creating jobs within and beyond its own campuses,” the COO said in a statement. “Every day, businesses of all sizes, sectors, and skill sets are using the Facebook platform to grow and expand.”

Sandberg said Facebook hired Deloitte for its work to be able to “understand the economic impact that we are having.”

Russia PR work shows vanishing despot client stigma

Ketchum’s nine-year campaign for Russia is emblematic of a D.C. PR and lobbying scene that no longer feels the stigma of “unsavory” foreign accounts, according to a 5,600-word January feature on the relationship in Politico Magazine.

Ketchum had access to the highest levels of the Russian government as it worked to burnish Russia’s image with mixed results, Politico reporter Luke O’Brien writes. O’Brien sees the Ketchum-Russia relationship as evidence that the ignominy US lobbyists and PR pros used to fear in representing shady overseas accounts has lifted.

“...Washington lobbying has turned into a multibillion-dollar enterprise in which much of the stigma attached to shilling for the unsavory has dwindled or been anonymized by big firms of lawyers and spin doctors; they are selling services these days, not salvation. The thinking goes something like this: It’s just business, and besides, lobbying performs a useful function, as it’s important to communicate with — and comprehend — rivals and adversaries.”

O’Brien outlines the Omnicom firm’s lucrative campaign for Vladimir Putin's petro state, including difficulties presented amid military flare-ups, rancor between Ketchum and its Washington Group lobbying operation, and Ketchum frustration that Russian officials often failed to heed advice about opening up to Western media.

In one example, Ketchum is seemingly caught off guard as war breaks out between Russia and Georgia in 2008.

“...Ketchum publicists suddenly found themselves trying to line up media interviews with Russian officials and to credential reporters for a war zone. It didn’t go well. The conflict generated angst in the firm’s New York office, where employees are more accustomed to selling Crystal Light than spinning a war. Georgian officials, meanwhile, were on the air nonstop railing against Russian aggression. Their PR operation ran circles around Ketchum, which copped to its ‘communications failure’ in an internal document obtained by Politico Magazine.”

Read O’Brien’s report at politico.com.
Private equity giant sues PR exec over alleged leaks

Private equity firm TPG Global has sued its former global head of public affairs, Adam Levine, alleging in federal court the former Bush White House Spokesman took confidential documents and threatened to disclose information to the press to harm the firm.

By Greg Hazley

Levine, who joined TPG in 2008, made a "series of ominous threats against [TPG] and its employees and began secretly accessing [TPG] proprietary and confidential information" after he was told he would not be elevated to partner, according to the complaint filed in US District Court in Texas, where TPG is based. The company says Levine on several occasions threatened to leak information to the media to plant damaging stories about the firm.

Levine was managing director of global public affairs before leaving TPG at the end of the year. He told Reuters in early January that he decided to go back into politics. Levine spokesman Barbara Rohn said Levine is a whistleblower: “Mr. Levine was dismissed because he had alerted TPG senior management to serious issues of non-compliance and defrauding its investors of millions of dollars in fees and expenses.”

TPG, which says Levine has contacted other media outlets, said it fired Levine on Dec. 31 in response to “continued threats and taking of TPG’s confidential information,” according to the complaint.

At one point, the complaint alleges, Levine "commented that he would ‘take down’ TPG the same way that he took down Scooter Libby," the former aide to Vice President Dick Cheney who did jail time for lying about his role in the CIA-Valerie Plame leak scandal. Levine testified before a grand jury in that case.

Levine was previously VP of corporate communications for Goldman Sachs after his White House stint as assistant WH press secretary and director of TV news. He was a senior producer for “Hardball with Chris Matthews.”

TPG wants a court to order Levine to return any documents or files and disclose who he gave any info to. The firm also seeks damages.

The private equity firm said in its complaint that it learned of one instance of Levine’s access to confidential materials when a reporter for the New York Times who had internal TPG emails contacted TPG in late December. TPG said a forensic investigation showed Levine forwarded (and apparently doctored) one such email to his own email address 10 days earlier.

Watchdog rips “whitewashing” of repressive regimes

Countries that once relied on their intelligence services to monitor foreign governments are increasingly turning to PR and lobbyists to do their spying and information-gathering, according to a report.

By Kevin McCauley

Released by Brussels-based Corporate Europe Observatory, the 64-page study is titled “Spin Doctors to the Autocrats: How European PR Firms Whitewash Repressive Regimes.” It also covers the diplomatic/intelligence outsourcing that goes on in Washington.

Prominent American firms such as Qorvis (Equatorial Guinea, Saudi Arabia, China), Patton Boggs (Georgia), APCO Worldwide (Azerbaijan), Levick (Nigeria), Racepoint Group (Rwanda), BGR (Kazakhstan, Bangladesh), Mercury PA (Uganda), Glover Park Group (Egyptian strongman General Sisi) and Ketchum (Russia) are fingered in the CEO report.

The Observatory believes “representing authoritarian regimes, and governments that are responsible for war crimes or serious human rights abuses as clients sits at complete odds with the various codes of conduct and corporate social responsibility discourse that many PR firms and lobbyists have signed up to.”

Such representation, in the Observatory’s view, is “ethical tunnel vision.”

The report, which the Observatory believes covers only the “tip of a larger iceberg,” can be found at corporateeurope.org.

Condé Nast to write stories for advertisers

Condé Nast has unveiled 23 Stories by Condé Nast, copy shot, to develop content for its advertising partners.

By Kevin McCauley

The upscale magazine publisher believes its creative talent can write compelling copy for distribution via Condé Nast’s multiple platforms to increase consumer engagement. The advertising content will be designed to blend in with editorial copy, rather than being tagged as paid advertising.

Pat Connolly, VP of Marketing Solutions for Condé Nast Media Group, heads the operation, reporting to Marketing Chief Edward Menicheschi.

“We are changing the branded content game with 23 Stories by Condé Nast by offering marketers, for the first time, access to our unparalleled editorial assets,” said Menicheschi in a statement.

The new operation is named after the number of floors that Condé Nast occupies in its new World Trade Center headquarters.

Condé Nast reaches 77 million people each month via its digital, mobile and video platforms. The company owns Vanity Fair, New Yorker, GQ, Allure, Glamour, Vogue, Wired and Bon Appetit.
How branding strengthens cleantech investment

Today, many cleantech companies are caught in a Catch-22. To commercialize innovative products and services, companies need funds, yet many lenders and investors are hesitant to commit capital until that technology or service has demonstrated market potential.

By Andy Beck

It’s a frustrating situation for many entrepreneurs, but fortunately, a solution lies within themselves.

According to a recent report from PriceWaterhouseCoopers, venture investment into the cleantech sector totaled $1.5 billion in the first three quarters of 2014, with an average deal size of $11.4 million. Potential investment sources for cleantech companies are legion, including corporate strategic partnerships, traditional bank loans, angel investors, crowdsourcing, venture capital, accelerator programs or government resources.

Yet most of these investors are seeking companies with not just technological distinction — they also need proof that companies can succeed and flourish in a highly competitive marketplace. This is why branding is crucial, and why cleantech entrepreneurs must invest accordingly.

This can be challenging. The cleantech industry is deep in scientific and engineering expertise, but light in the kinds of marketing and communications skills needed to build strong brands.

The power of brand

Fundamentally, a brand is what your organization means to the customer. That includes, of course, what you make or do. But a brand goes beyond this to encompass, at best, a set of intangibles that powerfully connect the organization with its customers. The names Apple, Coca Cola or Disney mean more than simply computers, soft drinks and entertainment. They each have an emotional meaning that provides the basis for a loyal customer relationship built on trust, respect and confidence.

Take, for example, iconic American car manufacturer General Motors. The company was on the brink of bankruptcy until the US government invested billions of dollars in the company. This was done largely because of the government’s confidence in the GM brand and its ability to transform itself once again into a profitable automotive leader. The results speak for themselves.

Research has shown that strong brands have a 31% better total return to shareholders than the MSCI World average. In fact, according to one consultant, “people’s willingness to buy, recommend, work for and invest in a company is driven 60% by their perceptions of the company, and only 40% by their perceptions of their products.” McKinsey has reported that B2B companies with strong brands outperform weak ones by 20%.

Take for example Nest and Tesla, both cleantech companies have been very successful at attracting investors and customers, why? They built strong brands.

“Positioning” in the marketplace

How are brands built? Clearly, this doesn’t happen overnight. But a useful first step is the creation of a brand positioning statement.

A positioning statement is a compelling description of how you want your customer to perceive your organization. This is really an internal guidepost. Every product, service and marketing decision you make regarding your brand has to align with and support your positioning statement.

What makes a good positioning statement? Here are six keys to keep in mind:

• It’s memorable, simple and tailored to the target market.
• It provides an unmistakable and easily understood picture of your brand that differentiates it from your competitors.
• It is credible, and your brand can deliver on its promise.
• Your brand can be the sole occupier of this particular position in the market. You can “own” it.
• It helps you evaluate whether or not marketing decisions are consistent with and supportive of your brand.
• It leaves room for growth.

Telling your story

Once you have established your positioning statement, it’s time to tackle your corporate narrative. As a cleantech startup, or even a well-established company, one of your most valuable assets is your story.

“I’m hard-pressed to think of a company that doesn’t have an interesting foundational story,” said Paul Smith, an executive coach, former Director of Market Research at Procter & Gamble, and author of Lead With A Story. “But I suspect there are many that haven’t crafted and told theirs. And they’re important. People want to be part of something bigger than themselves. A nameless, faceless corporation with no real purpose, no story, is not an inspiring place to be.”

Investors have lots of choices in the market today, but your story can be the deciding factor.

Like your brand position, your corporate narrative will serve as a roadmap for future decisions. Start by asking: Who are you? Where did you come from? Why are you doing this?

Every company needs a vision of why it is in business, what it aims to achieve and its objectives for the future. Your narrative must be more than a tall tale with little relation to reality; it needs to be honest, relevant and meaningful. And crucially, you must make sure that everyone in the business brings this story to life in his or her daily work.

Visual presence on the web

Once you have a brand positioning statement and corporate narrative, you have the foundational content to develop a visual presence — and that is a good website. It’s the first place people go when trying to learn more about a company and for investors, and customers, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Your website allows visitors to quickly gather information about a company’s products, markets, history, team, and vision. All of the content needs to tie seamlessly back to the fiber of the brand; and if messages and appearance are sloppy or scattered, that may be the last visit from a potential investor.

Branding cleantech companies is no easy task. It can be challenging to shift focus from product specs or service details to insights about how innovations translate into value for consumers. However, branding can be the key to securing the funding necessary to deliver technologies to commercialization, and ultimately, profitability. If companies take the time to build a strong brand, they can effectively position themselves to prospective investors and propel their technologies and services to commercial success.

Andy Beck is Executive Vice President of Makovsky’s Energy and Sustainability Practice and the General Manager of Makovsky’s Washington, D.C. office.
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Making public affairs, PR work during litigation

No matter what industry you’re in, chances are at some point you’re going to be involved in litigation. Unfortunately, communicators’ proclivity to deploy a strategic response is often hindered in a lawsuit. Here’s how counsel and communicators can work together during this process.

For those of us who aren’t lawyers, there’s little fun about a lawsuit. It generally involves costly legal fees, time away from work and potential damage to the brand equity we’ve painstakingly built. Compounding all of this is counsel’s common initial reaction to say and do nothing. It’s enough to drive communicators up a wall. Fortunately, that first “no” doesn’t have to be the last word.

Let’s face it, when you’re the one filing the lawsuit, it’s much easier to show counsel the benefits of deploying a cohesive public affairs and public relations program. When you’re the plaintiff, you’re essentially in the driver’s seat; you know your story, you know your end goal and you know what you’re willing to settle for. Going through court might not be the quickest way of achieving your goals, but if you deploy a targeted campaign to put pressure on your key audience you might be able to advance your agenda more quickly. Avoid looking petty or overly aggressive when you’re suing.

As communicators, we all know the last thing we want to be is on defense. However, when you’re in court, at least one party is defending itself. The key is avoiding the perception that you’re on the defensive. When you’re trying to communicate during a defense case, it’s all about looking for the opportunities to be proactive and strategic in working with the media and employing advocacy that bolsters your case.

Despite differences in approach, the baseline reality is that strategic communications and public affairs can have a major impact on the outcome of litigation and can be a positive complement to a lawsuit. So, how to make it look effortless and convince counsel that it’s the right thing to do?

Avoiding plaintiff perceptions

Owen’s Lake is located in the Sierra Mountains in California; it’s a small community that once was home to a robust lake. One hundred years ago, the City of Los Angeles claimed rights to that lake and began to divert it through an aqueduct to quench the thirst of Angelenos some 400 miles away. The result is that the lake was drained and a fine dust particulate was consistently whipped into the air — causing a variety of health and environmental problems.

While there have been attempts by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) to mitigate the problem over the past three decades, the real solution only came through a cohesive strategy that involved litigation and public education. Under the leadership of the local air regulator, Ted Schade, the region proactively launched a series of ongoing lawsuits against the LADWP.

While the lawsuits were important, their greatest value was in providing a platform to regularly engage media and start a conversation that reached the target audience in L.A. Schade used every legal milestone to work with the media and educate LADWP ratepayers in L.A. and to reach local elected leaders. For example, in December of 2012, after winning legal fees in the case from LADWP, Schade did a round of media interviews with L.A.-based media about the decision and outlined opportunities for LADWP to move past the issues.

While LADWP launched legal counterattacks over the years, Schade stayed consistent in his approach and message. His message framed the litigation in a context that was easily understood. He didn’t come off as a bitter plaintiff, but rather an underdog fighting to correct a historical environmental injustice. Ultimately, his message resonated with Mayor Eric Garcetti and a landmark agreement was reached in 2014. However, had Schade failed to integrate a proactive public relations and public affairs strategy, this highly complex and lengthy litigation would have been largely ignored.

Making defense a positive position

A few years ago, my firm was tasked with finding a way to help a small water district develop a public relations and public affairs strategy that would bolster its defense. In this case, it was important not only to tell the story strategically in the media, but also to advocate with elected leaders who could effectuate a settlement.

In evaluating the case, a few things stood out. First, the facts were extremely complicated: the fight was over who had the rights to a small amount of water that was by the local water district for a community of 4,000 people. Secondly, the plaintiff had a poor reputation and lacked credibility. Finally, these were two public entities — one was massive and the other one of the smallest in California. We had a frame — a goliath public agency taking on a small community that depended on this water for its very existence. Our strategy took out the complex legal maneuvering and presented it as an age-old underdog story.

Framing the issue

For lawyers, there’s usually one question: does engaging in a public relations and public affairs effort have the potential to derail our case? It’s a pretty obvious and correct question for counsel to be raising, and, as communicators, it’s our job to demonstrate the value of a smart communication effort.

So, what are the steps to getting there?

Outline the facts. Create a clear and consistent set of facts, both as reported and as discussed with counsel. Place them in a narrative framework that shows how you’d tell the story.

Identify the audience. Sometimes, it’s as basic as protecting a brand from damage in the media; other times it might be about reaching regulators who can help strike a deal. Make sure you know the right audiences and detail how/why they need to be communicated with.

Detail the pitfalls. Present an honest inventory of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of deploying a proactive public affairs and communications strategy, both from a communications and legal perspective.

Develop a consensus strategy. Successful organizations know that legal and communications can’t work independently — rather they need to have a healthy give and take and build consensus. Communicators need to bring the lawyers to the table — they need to develop and agree to strategies together to work.

Lawyers, like communicators, know the value of facts and telling a story with them. For communicators, it’s about working with counsel and laying out the facts regarding how a particular strategy will not only support them in court, but is in the best interest of their client. Granted, it’s a task easier said than done. However, when counsel and communicators work together, clients ultimately win.

Sean Rossall is Vice President of Cerrell Associates.
PR’s evolving role in public affairs crises

As illustrated by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie’s “Bridgegate” scandal and the ongoing strife between New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and the NYPD, it’s clear that PR’s role in public affairs crises has elevated drastically.

By Ronn Torossian

When it comes to handling public affairs crises, PR firms must now navigate a very different terrain. As the news cycle runs 24-hours a day and television news has become a supplement to digital content, PR agencies have to be on high alert at all times, especially when dealing with major national stories that can be damaging to political clients. Some recent PR challenges that have dominated the news cycle partly as a result of our “always on” news content creation and “trial by Twitter” include Governor Chris Christie’s “Bridgegate” scandal and the strife that exists between New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and the NYPD. In the recent past, these are things that would have worked themselves out in backrooms, but today are playing out in a public forum — making the value of public affairs communications higher than ever in framing a dialogue.

Challenges faced by PR firms

PR firms working on both sides of these issues have had big challenges and opportunities presenting their side to the public, and those following these stories have benefited from the new ground on which PR firms now tread. Many new techniques exist that can be used to bring a human element to clients’ stories and provide transparency to complex issues, and when the issue at hand involves an opposing viewpoint, the same techniques can be used to protect clients from negative information coming from the other side.

The public is getting more sophisticated and better able to discern sleight of hand from genuine information, and the challenge for PR firms is to stay one step ahead of a public that is growing ever savvier. As with any conflict, there’s always a winner and a loser, so by anticipating what can alter the public’s view of your client, you gain the opportunity to set the narrative from day one while also being able to course correct when needed.

PR agencies representing political figures and organizations must carefully balance their side of the story against their opponents’ as well be nimble in adjusting messaging points as necessary to accommodate the public’s reaction as the story unfolds. It’s no longer enough to issue a flattering report to the news media and hope that a problem goes away before the nightly news is broadcast. Communications strategists have to anticipate what people will think when a story is presented to the public, and they must act preemptively to prevent public opinion from sinking before the entire story can be presented. Once the public begins to reject an explanation, it becomes very difficult to ask people to believe new information coming from the same source, and the result is that a client looks worse than without the PR treatment.

As the PR counsel for the New York Sergeants Benevolent Association (SBA), our firm has had a unique view of how this course of events can play out over the last few months. With a constant string of buzzwords circling the New York and national media leading to public unrest and concern about the city’s police force, our job has been to educate and separate fact from fiction. We’ve done this by putting the President of the SBA, Ed Mullins, on major media and positioning him as the voice of logic. Having represented the SBA since 2011, we know that the organization keeps the image of “the shield” intact.

Like with any client, understanding the goals of these political affairs entities ultimately enables a successful execution.

Benefits of the new media landscape

Today, if a PR agency does its job correctly, the client has a virtually endless supply of positive news stories helping him or her professional endeavors. Even if there’s no way to save a client from negative press coverage, they benefit from reduced damage to his or her public persona.

Unlike other industries, with public affairs you aren’t “hoping” for coverage — you’re shaping coverage that will happen regardless. For example, politicians who have been caught behaving badly or engaging in taboo behavior may never get elected to public office again, but with effective PR treatment, the client will most likely have no trouble beginning a new career. Eventually, the client’s reputation will benefit from hindsight and the passage of time, and he or she can potentially run for office again.

The public benefits from the enhanced availability of information. With news available 24 hours a day, people have the flexibility to take as much time as needed to make up their minds. A person no longer has to conform their thought process to the schedules of TV stations and news media. While this benefit to the public puts additional pressure on PR firms to provide self-preserving content, it also gives these firms the freedom to update the public on an ongoing basis and introduce constituents to the public officials in charge in a more direct and engaging manner.

Leveraging the opportunities

Specific types of non-voting issues require efficient PR management to reduce distractions from the day-to-day operations of clients seeking image rehabilitation. Crisis management is a high-stress job that requires sharp instincts and excellent critical thinking abilities. These challenges are amplified as public figures react to sniping from opposing sides and long-buried frustrations coming from the public.

A PR firm has to be able to work with baggage that comes along with a client while presenting the client’s side of the story in a way that not only explains his or her point of view but also the reasoning behind controversial past decisions. Negativity is never pleasant, but sometimes it can’t be avoided. A successful PR campaign makes the client look better than it did before the crisis occurred, by leveraging all the available media resources at the firm’s disposal.

Ronn Torossian is CEO and Founder of 5W Public Relations.
U.S. energy debate reveals modern identity crisis

America has a bizarre relationship with energy: statistics show we’re environmentally conscious yet proudly pro-fossil fuel at the same time; we want cheap energy but are growing increasingly wary about its consequences; we have a President lauded by environmentalists, yet he’s presided over the largest oil boom in U.S. history. Taken together, America’s energy debate has highlighted an all-too-human propensity to follow short-term rewards even after we’re aware of long-term side effects.

Oil now sells for about $50 a barrel, a 50% price drop from only seven months before. As a result, we’re enjoying the lowest gasoline prices we’ve seen in six years, savings so significant that a February Time front-page feature on the subject claimed current pump prices are the equivalent of a $125 billion tax cut.

The precipitous drop in consumer fuel prices can be attributed to everything from increased Middle Eastern oil production to a recent easing of stock market speculation. More than anything, our current market conditions exist by dint of the fact that we’re experiencing an oil renaissance in the U.S., brought on, in part, by a surge in domestic hydraulic fracking and oil-shale production. The U.S. produced about nine million barrels per day by the end of 2014, almost double what we produced just seven years ago.

Some states have witnessed a massive uptick in revenues as a result, but like every other commodity, oil is influenced by the ebbs and tides of supply and demand; excess product eventually provokes manufacturers to cut labor and development, which eventually impacts local, then national, economies. Yet, while our stores of fossil fuels grow, America’s thirst for it remains incommensurately insatiable. Our oil keeps fuels grow, America’s thirst for it remains incommensurately insatiable. Our oil keeps
dwindle to about 50 permanent jobs once the project is completed, in two years. And it can’t be for the fuel prices. The State Department concluded that the project would have “little impact” on the prices consumers pay for gas. Finally, it can’t be for the oil. TransCanada tar sands is already getting into the U.S., via rail, and it’s going to be refined with or without this pipeline. Taken together, the only clear winner is TransCanada, which will now be able to deploy tar sands into the U.S. cheaper and more efficiently with the completion of this project. This isn’t the financial geyser Republicans envisioned, especially when mass-transit bills that would actually hire skilled workers were slashed at the state level to make way for the Keystone bill’s passage.

Economic pipe dreams

With Republicans now controlling both chambers of Congress, it’s clear they’re interested in sending the message that, after six years of an ineffective Washington machine, a new era of efficiency has arrived on the Hill. And what better way to send this message than through a series of aggressive policy initiatives aimed at forcing the President’s hand?

In January, the Senate defiantly passed its veto-bound bill to clear construction for the Keystone XL pipeline. The controversial project would transport bitumen, a viscous soup of oil, sand, water, and clay, from a preexisting TransCanada pipeline system in Hardisty, Alberta, about 1,200 miles south to Steele City, Nebraska. From there it would continue by another network of pipes, to be refined in the Gulf of Mexico.

Given the bill is basically guaranteed D.O.A. on Obama’s desk, its passage was clearly a symbolic gesture, but it’s also one that underscores a bizarre proclivity in the U.S. to indiscriminately equate fossil fuel production as analogous with economic prosperity. We continue to see oil as a panacea, even when the facts tell us that in some cases, it’s anything but.

The proposed Keystone project can’t be lauded for the jobs it would produce — at least not realistically. Employment figures have been banded around for years, depending wildly on which side is propagating the message. The U.S. State Department’s January 2014 study on the pipeline estimated there would be at least some jobs — about 2,000 a year for the duration of the pipeline’s construction — but they would dwindle to about 50 permanent jobs once the project is completed, in two years. And it can’t be for the fuel prices. The State Department concluded that the project would have “little impact” on the prices consumers pay for gas. Finally, it can’t be for the oil. TransCanada tar sands is already getting into the U.S., via rail, and it’s going to be refined with or without this pipeline. Taken together, the only clear winner is TransCanada, which will now be able to deploy tar sands into the U.S. cheaper and more efficiently with the completion of this project. This isn’t the financial geyser Republicans envisioned, especially when mass-transit bills that would actually hire skilled workers were slashed at the state level to make way for the Keystone bill’s passage.

Obama’s environmental record dubious

Despite rhetoric that has indicated otherwise, Obama has always been capricious on the environment. Election campaigns and states of the union have been rife with global warming talking points, but his record has, thus far, been mostly unimpressive.

Sure, the 2009 stimulus allocated $90 billion to green energy, he forced the Department of Transportation to implement higher vehicle fuel-efficiency standards, and he’s currently working on a bold coal pollution reduction policy with the EPA. But he’s never done anything to regulate fracking, and he failed to codify long-term regulations on offshore drilling in the wake of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster.

The Obama administration really enraged environmentalists in January, when it was announced new portions of the Gulf and large swaths of the Atlantic Seaboard — the coasts of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia — would be opened for oil and gas drilling contracts. It’s curious timing, given not only his sworn veto of the Keystone project, but considering this news came a week after the release of a study suggesting global warming now has marine life on the cusp of extinction. Coral reefs have declined by 40% worldwide, according to the report. The New York Times on January 15 claimed that contracts for seabed mining now blanket 460,000 square miles underwater.

Americans want climate change action

The public seem just as mercurial on the issues of fossil fuels and the environment as our leaders. Polls show Americans overwhelmingly approve development of the Keystone XL Pipeline — by as much as 80% — but they also show, by almost the same margins, that we want action on climate change. A poll conducted by The New York Times and Stanford University, published by The New York Times on January 30, shows a majority of Americans — 81% — now believe climate change is at least partially man-made. Moreover, 77% of those polled believe the government should be doing something about it. The real shocker: among those polled who identified as Republican, nearly half — 48% — said they are now more likely to vote for a candidate who will fight climate change.

These figures support the notion that climate change could be a major narrative in the 2016 elections, but it also underscores the idea that more people are becoming aware of how climate science impacts them. In January, two separate scientific entities — NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration — reported that 2014 was the hottest year on record.

Arguably, given our track record, America’s recent fuel savings could be terrible for the environment, because air economic conditions traditionally have a habit of reinforcing wasteful choices. Maybe we’re becoming a culture no longer willfully blind to the facts of climate change, but it remains to be seen if we’re willing to do much about it.
B2Bs can take communications cues from nonprofits

Just as for-profits angle for market share, nonprofits battle to get a piece of a finite amount of philanthropy available. Whether the currency is donations or sales, taking an objective look across the aisle at our nonprofit counterparts can help all businesses increase their bottom line.

By Mark Thabit

Hundreds of Facebook likes per post. Tens of thousands of Twitter followers. A blog publication schedule that rivals media outlets. Not only has The Nature Conservancy invested in content marketing, it’s following and creating best practices.

Many nonprofits, like TNC, do amazing work that the for-profit businesses can use as a communications blueprint. And given the primary B2B content goals are to drive Web traffic and improve sales lead quality, should that come as a surprise? Nonprofits undoubtedly want the same things.

Some challenges are universal

Considering that content and social media help brands win attention and drive revenue, it makes sense that these goals transcend brands and industries. Content, though, has proven particularly difficult to master.

Only 24% of nonprofits believe their messaging connects with target audiences. Only slightly better, 38% of B2Bs consider their content marketing effective. Similarly, only a quarter of nonprofits have a documented content strategy, 10 percentage points lower than the number for B2Bs.

The for-profits in these examples have a leg up, but both could stand improvement.

As an example, let’s take a look at The Nature Conservancy and analyze the motivations behind its strategies.

Why TNC? The organization has saved 120 million acres and thousands of miles of river across 35 countries. The results date back to their inception 60 years ago, but have been buoyed by their relatively recent content and social strategies. They produce content across platforms, mixing multimedia and feeding content geared to scientists and everyday environmentalists. TNC’s efforts aren’t just applicable to environmentally focused marketing and PR. Its best practices will drive results in any industry from manufacturing to professional services and anything in between.

Developing a strategy

The old saying “Failing to plan is planning to fail” holds true in communications. But as discussed above, planning and developing a content strategy is a bugaboo for a significant number of brands.

“Having a promotions plan is key,” said TNC Digital Marketing Strategist Katherine Sather. “Set benchmarks and lean on analytics to inform future strategies. It’s easy to skip this step if you’re short on time and resources, but it’s so valuable.”

Having an overarching plan is a step in the right direction, but to really drive results you need to identify the strengths and limitations of each platform you use and tailor your plans and goals to them.

“We set goals for each platform based upon what growth we saw last year on those platforms and where we see the platform growing next year,” said TNC Social Media Marketing Manager Trevor Martin.

One goal, multiple messages

No one will ever say outright that you shouldn’t save the whales or coral reefs. However, people have different agendas for supporting certain causes, just as they have different reasons for wanting a product.

To nurture target audiences to conversion, communicators need the right social and blog content. TNC uses a wide variety of contributors and content aimed at its audiences. They develop monthly content themes and tackle issues related to those themes from a scientific standpoint and through emotional appeals.

“TNC’s content shows balance by conveying personality through nature, while showing situational gravitas on trending topics or discussing environmental topics through a scientific lens,” Martin said.

Taking different angles on topics helps TNC reach different audiences while nurturing them to the same end goal: to learn more, donate or volunteer. This same tactic also drives customers toward conversions.

It’s not just angles that matter — it’s also platforms. TNC has an impressive multimedia library across its owned platforms that entertain, educate and discuss trends and industry news.

These days the best way to reach audiences often is multimedia, but the how and where ultimately depend on the audience. Even the most engaging content might not resonate with your audience if it’s not on their preferred platform. Don’t assume that they’ll come to you, make sure you bring your content to where your audience is ready. Content competition means that if you don’t provide what they want, they’ll find it elsewhere.

Having a content strategy that covers narrow and broad topics helps TNC reach different audiences and set them on a more customized engagement path.

The more content connects with target audiences on an individual level, as TNC’s often does, the better it will perform. The content has to go deeper than focusing just on the cause; it needs to match the mission of the organization it represents. In TNC’s case, its mission is “protecting nature, for people today and future generations.”

As VanguardDirect noted, “A strong mission can unite your team, instill loyalty, and engender endless advocacy.” Why not try to convey that through content?

Broadening audiences

The average TNC member is 67.5 years old. TNC wants to appeal to a younger audience. The target? Millennials.

TNC understands that pushing out the same content on typically younger platforms like Snapchat or Instagram won’t engage younger targets. It needs to customize content, right down to the language it uses.

For example, TNC Digital Editorial Manager Megan Sheehan said they have found that millennials don’t like terms like “our earth” or “our planet” because it makes them feel separate from the world they live. This influences how they construct the content they produce, but understanding the millennial viewpoint gives insights into how they will search for environmental information on search engines, potentially vaulting TNC near the top of results.

It’s critical to monitor performance after deploying insights. Communicators always have room for improvement.

“The launch isn’t the success,” Sheehan said. “You need to be a parent to your content, not a babysitter. You have to want it to grow and thrive.”

Yes, nonprofits call successful conversions “donations” or “volunteers” while for-profits use “sales,” “customers” or “subscribers,” but when it comes to communications many of the differences end there.

Mark Thabit is CMO of Cision.
Policymakers remain out of touch on climate change

For years, politicians and members of the science community have been at odds on the divisive issue of climate change. Today, however, the public has joined that fight, and have taken sides with the latter by wide margins, rejecting the fossil fuel industry’s profit goals in favor of federal limitations on pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. For this reason, 2015 may be the year policymakers’ tactics of turning a blind eye to science could finally come to an end.

Pericles, the Greek statesman, declared that people who take “no interest in public affairs not as apathetic, but as completely useless.” It’s a lesson we should take to heart today.

The United States Election Project estimated only 36.4% of eligible voters turned out for the recent midterms, which was the lowest overall in the past 70 years. Clearly, Americans hold politicians in extremely low favor. Could it be that most legislators are not seen to be following a code of ethics? The Gallop organization’s Honesty/Ethics in Professions poll for 2014 validated that view, and found lobbyists standing at an appalling 6%, members of Congress at 8% and state officeholders at 14%. In contrast, trust among nurses ranked 82%, teachers 70%, and medical doctors and military officers, 69%.

Misinformation isn’t a public service

Among lawmakers, it would seem that doing “the People’s business” carries a hefty price tag, which essentially is the cost of their own reelection. Consequently, too many candidates nowadays check their integrity at the ballot box and auction their loyalties to the highest bidders. The landmark 2010 Citizens United ruling that dismantled bans on corporate and outside campaign spending and recent Supreme Court affirmations haven’t exactly discouraged their behavior.

The Sunlight Foundation, whose goal is to make government more transparent and accountable, found in a 2014 investigation titled “Follow the Unlimited Money” that campaign resources awash with secret corporate cash — aka “dark money” — “enabled outside groups to run shadow campaigns for or against candidates of their choice.” Their searchable database tracks groups paying for ads and other forms of political communication. Ironically, many of those contenders are the same charlatans who basically resent most public sector employees, despite their own candidacy for highly coveted, bureaucratic positions.

Fortunately our democracy is resilient, and it withstands numerous contradictions amid deep partisan divides where the quid pro quo too often undermines the public interest and our trust on behalf of industry special interests. In January, the 114th Congress swore to “faithfully discharge the duties of the office,” per the Constitution. But, many political figures neglect what George Washington called an obligation to Civic Virtue more than 239 years ago, which was seen as central to the success of the “community.”

Today, imagine how the Founding Fathers would view Civic Knowledge and access to the political process that they promoted to encourage ordinary citizens to actively make a difference. To make matters worse, many politicians swap opinions for the facts and deputize their own ideologies for radical social policy, which contradicts their so-called small government facade.

Public, politicians divided on regulations

It’s time that we call out those who politicize the truth and reject science as long as legislative solutions can be condemned as “too liberal.” It’s no wonder Americans are repelled by intransigence in Congress and within many state legislatures.

Taken together, what are government’s obligations? In 2014, Americans polled found clear majorities that supported protection from the fossil fuel industry polluters as proposed by EPA’s Clean Power Plan. If enacted, we would breathe cleaner air, create more jobs and avert the damages from climate change. A Quinnipiac University poll from June 2014 found 58% of voters supported federal government limitations on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. A June NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll saw that 67% of Americans supported President Obama’s EPA carbon pollution regulations. A Bloomberg News poll from that same month observed 62% of Americans would pay more for energy if it meant reducing air pollution from carbon emissions. And a May Washington Post-ABC Poll showed that 70% of respondents support regulating carbon from power plants.

Climate change denial gets desperate

In January, EPA administrator Gina McCarthy told the American Meteorological Society at a town hall at the Phoenix Convention Center, “We need to move in a way that’s not based on fear, but opportunity … If you think (climate hasn’t) changed, you’re kind of nuts.”

Will 2015 be the year to end partisan bickering and respect science? Last fall, Florida’s Senator Marco Rubio defiantly told ABC’s “This Week,” “I do not believe that human activity is causing these dramatic changes to our climate the way these scientists portray. And, I do not believe that the laws that they propose we pass will do anything about it. Except it will destroy our economy.” Brazenly, Senator Rubio also rejects what 97% of scientists assert, and denies support for his home state’s inherent vulnerabilities, which many say is ground zero for climate change impacts.

An oblivious Representative Steve Pearce (R-NM) similarly claimed during an election-year debate that he’s confident our climate isn’t changing because he has “Goo-gled this issue.” Science deniers have relied on the trite expression “I am not a scientist” to deflect responsibly when confronted with the facts. Michael McKenna, a Republican energy lobbyist and advisor to House Republicans and conservative political advocacy groups concerning energy and climate policy admitted the “I-am-not-a-scientist” idiom has to be “the dumbest answer I’ve ever heard. Using that logic would disqualify politicians from voting on anything.” He added, “Most politicians aren’t scientists, but they vote on science policy. They have opinions on Ebola, but they’re not epidemiologists. They shape highway and infrastructure laws, but they’re not engineers.”

On the campaign trail last fall, another well-known non-scientist, President Barack Obama, said, “It’s funny, if you ask a Republican in Congress if they believe in climate change, they say, ‘Well, uh, I’m not a scientist.’ But when it comes to a woman’s...”
right to choose, suddenly they’re a doctor.” Vice President Joe Biden criticized Florida’s GOP Governor Rick Scott, adding “He says when asked about climate change, ‘I’m not a scientist.’ But he sure the hell thinks he’s a doctor when he tells women what to do.” The AP reported that line drew the loudest applause of the event. Likewise, comedian and political satirist Bill Maher told an uproarious “Real Time” TV audience, “I mean, they’re not gynecologists, either, but it never stopped them from commenting on that.”

I think Comedy Central’s Stephen Colbert put it best, saying, “I hope that these conservative leaders can inspire all the children out there watching to think to themselves, ‘Hey, maybe someday I could grow up to be not-a-scientist.’” Remember kids,” he added, “if you get unhooked on science early, maybe someday you could completely lack any understanding of science and then grow up to be the Chairman of the Senate Environmental Committee.” It should be noted that Senator James Inhofe succeeded Senator Barbara Boxer as the new Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Politico recognized that he isn’t a scientist either, by reporting that the longtime Oklahoma Senator is the Hill’s most colorful critic of man-made climate change science, who categorically cited the Bible to disprove global warming in his 2012 book The Greatest Hoax: How the Education on climate change paramount

According to the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, healthy skepticism promotes the scientific method and critical thinking. They also cleverly raised concern that the words “skeptic” and “denier” are not synonyms, as ordinarily misused in the N.Y. Times article “Republicans Vow to Fight EPA and Approve Keystone Pipeline,” referred to Senator James Inhofe as “a prominent skeptic of climate change.” Scott Horsley, a White House Correspondent for NPR News, called Senator Inhofe “one of the leading climate change deniers in Congress.” The Committee recently called on journalists to “use more care when reporting on those who reject climate science, and hold to the principles of truth in labeling. Please stop using the word ‘skeptic’ to describe deniers.”

You might also wonder what sort of evidence “not-a-scientist” governors and Members of Congress would need to be convinced and, as the popular hashtag urges, to #ActOnClimate. After all, NASA says, “Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level.”

Similarly, in October, the U.S. Department of Defense released its “Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap” as the Pentagon maintained that climate change is a “threat multiplier” that could exacerbate terrorism, and recognizes a “long-term trend, but with wise planning and risk mitigation now, we can reduce adverse impacts down-range.”

A group of prominent scientists from the University of Miami, Florida State University and Eckerd College met with Governor Rick Scott last August to explain climate science and the urgency for his state to take action. “This is not complicated,” David Hastings, a marine science and chemistry professor from Eckerd, said. “We teach this to 18-year-olds every year, and I’ve been doing it for 25 years. It’s not hard science.” Hastings told the Governor, “As scientists, we’re the map makers. As policymakers, you’re the navigators,” and “we need strong leadership from your office, and from you in particular to minimize the impact.” Besides saying, “Thank you all,” Governor Scott spoke no other related comments, questions or promises to consider the climate expert’s admonitions.

Whether or not elected officials admit it, the effects of a warming planet are real. The U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the U.K. Royal Society recently joined forces to create a one-minute primer video explaining climate science in the simplest terms. They tackle how burning more fossil fuels heats the planet and contributes to the arctic thawing, and in what ways people generating more carbon pollution increase global temperatures and cause sea levels to rise. Right on cue, Bill Nye, the science educator popularly known as “Bill Nye the Science Guy,” spoke about why it doesn’t take a climate scientist to realize that we are “releasing carbon dioxide in the air at a prodigious rate and ... the earth’s getting warmer faster than it has ever gotten before.” According to Nye, “to have a generation of science students being brought up without awareness of climate change is just a formula for disaster.”

If someone’s ambition were truly to become a citizen legislator by doing the People’s business, they ought to be more concerned with serving the public interest and working toward the common good, rather than fueling ideological misinformation.

Aric Caplan is President of Caplan Communications in Rockville, MD.
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rice@daviespublicaffairs.com
www.DaviesPublicAffairs.com

Los Angeles
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With headquarters in New York, offices in Chicago, Raleigh and Basel, Switzerland, and affiliates in 50+ countries, we advise on sustainability reporting, strategic messaging and stakeholder engagement, materiality analysis, green technology marketing, supply chain monitoring, and cause marketing. Our portfolio encompasses a broad array of media, content, creative, digital, social, and event services.

Annual editions of our Sense & Sustainability Study continue to be an authoritative source for research into consumer opinions on the corporate commitment to environmental, social and governance (ESG) responsibilities. G&S also advances thought leadership via programs that feature journalists from leading news organizations, among them Businessweek, Newsweek and Time.

We achieve business results by precisely aligning sustainability communications with corporate strategies.

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Andy Beck, Executive VP

In today’s crowded and competitive energy markets, many companies are falling short in their communications. They’re forgetting a vital principle: that we motivate behavior by understanding and addressing the desires and needs of the end-user customer. Vanity product and service attributes — the default marketing formula among many companies — will only move the needle so far. What’s often lacking is the missing link: persuasive communications to end-user customers, based on genuine insight into how the products and services benefit end-users and address their needs. This is where Makovsky comes in.

Makovsky was founded on—and continues to be guided by—a singular vision. Before many others, we saw that agencies could play a vital role in helping clients succeed in highly specialized business sectors that require focused knowledge to connect and communicate with customer and investors. This was the inspiration for our guiding principle, “The Power of Specialized Thinking.”

We have an extraordinary record of success in building name recognition, share of voice and increased revenue for companies of all sizes. Led by the U.S. Department of Energy’s former head of public affairs, our energy and sustainability practice has decades of collective experience working with and for companies just like yours. The firm’s services include brand positioning, corporate identity design, Website design, content development, programing, public outreach, media relations, and thought leadership development.

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Michael Layne, Managing Partner

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We’re knowledgeable in many industries including environmental services, energy, financial services, healthcare, higher education, hospitality, legal, manufacturing, non-profit, real estate, retail and telecommunications.

**MWW**

One Meadowlands Plaza
East Rutherford, NJ 07073
201/507-9500
mkempner@mww.com
wmsmith@mww.com
rdsmith@mww.com
www.mww.com/mwwgov

Michael Kempner, President and Chief Executive Officer
William Murray, Executive Vice President
Douglas Smith, Executive Vice President, General Manager, Washington, DC

MWW, one of the nation’s top mid-sized public relations firms and one of the five largest independent global agencies, is a leading expert in the public affairs and government relations fields. Having worked at the highest levels of the executive branch, Congress and state and local governments, we understand how to help our clients Matter More™ in Washington, DC and in the communities where decision-makers operate.

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One East Wacker Drive
Suite 2450
Chicago, IL 60601
312/658-1770
Fax: 312/568-5425
www.pcipr.com

Jill Allread, APR, Pres. & CEO
Pamela Oettel, CFO & COO

Experience distinguishes PCI as a go-to agency on green issues. We serve a diversity of environmental clients, from advocacy organizations and professional associations, nationally ranked zoos and aquariums, conservation groups and regulatory agencies. It is an agency priority to use sustainable business practices daily at PCI because we share the belief with our environmentally conscious clients that it’s important to live sustainably.

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Profiles of Environmental PR & Public Affairs Firms

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Pam Fielding, President
Vlad Cartwright, Executive VP
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SevenTwenty is an integrated public relations and public affairs agency specializing in helping America’s top brands listen, engage and interact with their most important stakeholders – online and off. Leveraging a savvy integrated mix of media engagement, digital marketing, grassroots/grassroots, social media advocacy and issues management, SevenTwenty supports the public relations, public affairs and PAC programs of some of the nation’s most dynamic Fortune 500 companies and trade associations.

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733 Tenth Street, N.W.
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www.webershandwick.com

Cindy Drucker, Executive VP
Paul Massey, Executive VP

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Sachs Media Group: Ron Sachs, President/CEO and Michelle Ubben, Partner, COO, & Director of Campaigns & Branding.

The firm is headquartered in Tallahassee, with offices in Orlando and Washington, D.C. SMG is the go-to firm for public affairs in Florida and the southeast.

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Joan Schneider, Chief Executive Officer & Founder
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At Schneider Associates, we define public affairs as anything that impacts public opinion and drives behavior. In today’s complex communications environment, missteps can result in instantaneous online crisis situations that can lead to offline media challenges. Whether you’re facing a media crisis, securing approvals, advancing social or environmental causes, or trying to influence decision-makers at all levels of government, Schneider Associates can help.

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Ron Sachs, President & CEO

Sachs Media Group (SMG) is Florida’s dominant public affairs communications firm, building public and opinion-leader support for issues of statewide, regional and national importance. With strong bipartisan relationships, the SMG team is a smart, strong and strategic partner to any successful government relations team, generating public support, on-message media coverage and third-party validation of client priorities.

The firm combines public relations, marketing, advertising, crisis management, grassroots and digital/social media strategies, creating effective campaigns for corporate, nonprofit and government clients and is a national leader in branding and public education campaigns.

The firm’s leadership team — steeped in media, government and politics — deeply understands how to shape issues, move public and policymaker opinion, and win in the halls of power.

PCI
Continued from page 20

within our conservation and environmental practice since PCI has established a reputation of understanding our clients’ needs and delivering results.

Once clients begin working with PCI, they stay. Nearly half of our clients in the conservation and environmental fields have been with us 10 years or more and our clients benefit.

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The best crisis defense: the truth

By Fraser Seitel

There’s a reason that Chris Christie won’t win the Republican nomination for President, and Bill Cosby may never perform stand-up again.

They’re both perceived to be hiding the truth or, stated a tad less politically correct, lying.

The citizens of New Jersey have, according to the polls, largely given up on their portly governor, and he — judging by his love affair with the loathsome Jerry Jones in Dallas and his growing absences from the state — on them.

Christie’s steep decline, of course, stems from the infamous Bridgegate scandal of a year ago, and the governor’s initial reluctance and later sparse commentary about any role in he may have played in purposely causing traffic jams on the George Washington Bridge.

Basically, Christie feigned ignorance of the whole mess, blaming the tie-ups on the rogue actions of a long-term subordinate, who owed her career to him and rarely acted without his approval.

In other words, Christie’s convenient passing the blame onto a hapless subordinate simply didn’t wash, especially for one who has presented himself as a tough, hands-on manager. Christie was perceived as a liar, and his political upward mobility is over.

The same can be said for Cosby, the erstwhile role model, now dogged by endlessly-escalating charges of sexual abuse. Cosby’s lawyer — but not Cosby, himself — has denied the charges. Having a lawyer profess your innocence is, of course, the least-convincing proof an accused individual can serve up.

As Cosby continues to dig a deeper hole by lamely joking about the mounting accusations against him, he has become a pitiable character. The comedian can’t be saved. His failure to tell the truth has rendered a death knell on his career.

Now contrast the fate of these truth deniers with that of two others, one who admits his guilt, the other who professes his innocence, lawyer Alan Dershowitz and newsman Steve Kroft.

The combative Dershowitz was accused recently of having sex with an underage girl, hired by his former client, sleazeball investor Jeffrey Epstein. The girl’s lawyers singled out Dershowitz and England’s Prince Andrew as recipients of convicted sex offender Epstein’s largesse.

While Prince Andrew was mum in the face of the allegations, Dershowitz came storming out with both barrels blazing, insisting he had never even met his accuser. Dershowitz took his case to CNN, the “Today Show,” the Hollywood Reporter and anybody else who cared to listen.

Said the embattled counselor, “I’m going to demolish this woman’s credibility and prove she’s a serial liar. I won’t rest until the lawyers admit they made it up.” He also promised to have the woman’s lawyers disbarred as a result.

So rather than hiding or ignoring the damning allegations, Dershowitz did just the opposite. He sought out public attention, because, presumably, the truth was on his side.

And finally, there was poor, cornered Steve Kroft, the CBS “60 Minutes” newsman, outed by the National Enquirer for an adulterous affair with a mistress.

While others might have let the whole, sordid tale play itself out without comment, to the glee of the New York Post, Daily Mail and like-minded purveyors of scandal — Kroft took the high road in his low-life tale.

The chastened newsman acknowledged his dalliance, “I had an extramarital affair that was a serious lapse of personal judgment and extremely hurtful to my wife and family, and for that I have nothing but regret.”

Gravely embarrassed? Of course. Damaged credibility? Without question. But the difference between Kroft, who admitted the truth, and Christie and Cosby, who didn’t, is that the former’s career will continue, relatively unimpeded, while the best days of the latter two are clearly behind them.
Out-of-pocket expenses in the PR industry

By Richard Goldstein

When considering client profitability and overall agency profitability, the recovery of out-of-pocket expenses (OOP) can be a key factor for agency profitability. Under certain circumstances a mark-up on these expenses should be considered. Unfortunately, many agency principals tell me that they do not mark-up OOP expenses and more importantly, do not understand the book and tax accounting rules for these expenses. Accordingly, this month I am discussing what you need to know about OOP.

Types of expenses

The expense part of a client budget at a PR firm can add up to a significant sum of the overall client budget. As a result, agency clients will put these costs under a microscope. Properly supporting these costs to your client is important to avoid write-offs and low profitability.

There are two types of costs that an agency bills back to its clients: its own overhead expenses and expenses incurred on behalf of clients. Generally, the term “rebillables” has been used in the PR industry to describe expenses billed back to clients. I generally prefer to use the term “rebillables” for internal overhead expenses and “CPT” (client pass through) for expenses (really costs) incurred on behalf of clients.

Recovering rebillables

Al Croft said it is always worth billing all reasonable expenses back to clients. Either track the exact costs (should be automated) or charge a percentage of the time to cover such costs. In my view, 6% or 7% of the time bill, added to each invoice to cover miscellaneous postage, copies, telephone costs, etc., seems fair. Larger costs such as mailings or copy runs should be billed separately.

Charging expenses back to clients adds cash directly to your bottom line. For example, how many copies do you make monthly? Only 2,000 copies per month charged to clients at 25 cents each puts $6,000 back into your pocket annually and helps pay for the copier and the maintenance contract. There may be a question as to whether an item is an agency or client expense. For example, if you take a client to lunch, that seems to be an agency expense. However, if you take both a client and an editor to lunch, that is the client’s expense. Remember there is no such thing as a free lunch. The rule of thumb is: Anything you do or spend on behalf of the clients gets billed back.

Substantiation

One way to impress a client as well as the IRS is to show that the agency has strict record and receipt-keeping requirements. Generally your client will expect you to meet the IRS substantiation requirements.

In order for you or your client to deduct a business expense, it must be an “ordinary and necessary” business expense. These terms have been broadly defined to mean customary or usual, and appropriate or helpful. Thus, if it is reasonable in your business to entertain a reporter or other business people, you should pass the deductible test.

In order for your client to deduct, as an example, a meal expense that you are billing back, you need to provide the client all the supporting documentation that is required to deduct the meal. Remember, meals for the most part are only 50% tax deductible. Your goal is to make sure the client has all that is needed to deduct the cost of the meal or your client will push the expense back to you! Not only will you have a bad debt but will also absorb the 50% disallowance.

Third party service


When your PR agency buys items or third-party services for a client, the traditional approach has been to bill them to the client separately as “OOP” expenses.

It is important to recognize that these expenses are not your revenue! For example, assume your agency fees for the year are $1 million. You need to hire a third party service provider for a client at a cost of $250,000. Your revenue for the year is not $1.0 million plus $250,000. The cost of the service provider is not your business expense deductible for tax purposes. It is merely a receivable from the client. If your agreement is to pay the service provider on behalf of the client, the cost is not tax deductible! It is a payment of a client liability — or an offsetting receivable and payable, not revenue and expense.

You may want to send two bills out each month. Once for fee earned and the other for expenses. Items representing CPT should be billed separately enclosing any necessary documentation.

Mark-up

Many agencies do not mark-up client expenses. This is a mistake. You are providing a service to the client and in some cases acting as a bank! Often, the agency’s direct OOP expense is increased by 17.65% (This has been a stand in the industry for as long as I can remember.) It represents, in addition to the dollar for dollar reimbursement, a fee to cover the time and series involved in obtaining the item or the third-party service billed. It is important that this provision be spelled out correctly in your client agreement and be reviewed with your legal counsel. If a client does not want to pay the mark-up, consider having the client directly negotiate the terms of the third party service provider and have all bills go directly to the client for payment.

Caution

When you bill back a client expense or an overhead expense, there could be sales tax issues. For example, the state can take the view that the mark-up is not really a fee but an additional cost of the item. If that is the case, the mark-up itself can be subject to sales tax. You need to discuss this issue with your own CPA and/or lawyer. If this can be an issue, you may want to label the mark-up as an administrative fee. Again, get the proper advice before acting.

PR news brief

Ogilvy cashes in with MoneyGram

Ogilvy Government Relations signed on as DC representative for MoneyGram International, a leading financial services company targeting the under-banked market.

The WPP unit handles matters concerning federal financial regulation, tax reform and money transmision services.

Dee Buchanan, whom Ogilvy calls the “go-to-guy” to the House Financial Services Committee, where he served as a top Aide to Chairman Jeb Hensarling (R-Tx), is a member of the OGR team.

Former Democratic staffers Moses Mercado (Missoury Congresswoman Dick Gephardt), Tony Bullock (New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan), Dean Aquilieri (California Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi) and Gordon Taylor (Louisiana Representative Chris Long) join Buchanan on the business.

MoneyGram is in the financial doldrums as revenues dipped 8.5% to $356 million during its latest financial quarter and net loss weighed in at $3 million compared to a $22.5 million year ago profit.

The Dallas-based company had a tough January, as U.S. tax court rejected its plea to gain bank status in order to write off about $550 million in losses triggered by the global financial collapse. The court ruled MoneyGram fails to meet the “bare requisites” for a bank.
Former Edelman exec says “PR is dead” in new book

“Trust Me, PR is Dead”

By Robert Phillips

Unbound (January 25, 2015) • 234 pages

Robert Phillips, former Edelman U.K. executive, has published Trust Me, PR Is Dead, a book that attacks the idea that information can be “managed” and that institutions can “implant messages” in target audiences.

Phillips says that PR, like media, political parties, diplomacy and internal communications, is undergoing disruption at the hands of the web and is “seemingly unaware of its own death throes.”

He says there is a new age of “individual empowerment” in which power is shifting from state to citizen, employer to employee, and corporation to citizen-consumer.

Phillips published Citizen Renaissance in 2008, which had a similar call for “citizen revolution to help address huge issues of well-being and climate change.” He says that global warming cannot be controlled unless “we leave a large proportion of the remaining fossil fuels in the ground.”

“Our communications world is now social—and between the people—and democratic, because it gives voice to all,” he writes. “Joined together, this provides a unique opportunity for communications to be transformative … we cannot continue spouting flimsy research statistics, empty slogans, and crass diversionary tactics.”

Some say PR lives

Advance publicity on the book fall touched off rebuffals from PR executives and groups including Kathy Cripps, President of the PR Council, which changed its name from the Council of PR Firms but kept PR in the title.

“Whether a firm is helping clients to create dialogue in social communities, engaging with their audiences, or moving people to action, it’s PR and it’s never been more relevant,” she said.

Only eight of the current 103 Council members use “PR” in their titles, down from 13 a year ago. Only six of the 50 largest firms ranked by O'Dwyer’s use PR and none in the top 15. Only 11% of the 1,450 registrants at the 2014 conference of the PR Society in D.C. last October used PR as part of their titles. Using “communications” somewhere in their titles were 386 or 26% of the registrants.

PR executives told an ethics panel of the Society’s New York chapter last year that lawyers “have the final say” in communications matters.

The Centre for Corporate Public Affairs, Melbourne, published a five-page essay in 2013 called “PR Is Dead” by Director Wayne Burns saying only one percent of the organizations it surveyed had a “PR” function.

PR survives only on the “tactical fringes of marketing communications,” he wrote. What was once seen as “good PR,” positive and frequent news media coverage and reporting, well-attended corporate events and product launches, marketing campaigns — are not an end in themselves.” Currently valued are “socio-political outcomes defined and generated by organizational strategy, and by PA strategy that contributes to and underpins broader organizational objectives,” he says.

Up on measurement, down on CSR

Phillips urges more measurement of PR “outcomes” and less emphasis on “output.”

He has long been a foe of ad value equivalency (AVE), which multiplies ad space by anywhere from three to ten times the dollar value of the space. The R.H. Macy formula was ten times.

Almost all PR counselors call AVE a “wicked” measurement but he feels at least half of them “use it to justify success to clients.”

Better tools are available, he says. “With better data, gathered in real time, we can begin to track sentiment in media — just as supermarkets can move stock between aisles and at different heights in immediate response to customer demands. We can focus on what is engaging and when best to engage. We are guided not by the corporation’s blind supply, but by the citizen-consumer’s real time demand.”

Other sectors than PR, he writes, “simply offer greater insight and more measurable success … seventy-five years after Edward Bernay’s germinated the modern PR industry, there is bizarrely still no consistent application of proper measurement criteria … show me one board-level executive who is prepared to sign off on a significant budget against loose promises of increased awareness or engagement … without proper measurement, there can be no accountability. And without accountability, PR will only further become marginalized.”

CSR hijacked by sales

Corporate Social Responsibility was a “trend spotted early by PR folk” but in the “frenzy to monetize, the industry failed to think,” says Phillips. “Rather than lead a progressive agenda based on co-created, citizen-centric actions, it defaulted to selling stuff. What emerged was mostly ‘greenwash’ and thereafter an ill-formed CSR industry that today is more about bureaucratic, tick-box compliancy and reporting than it is about social movement and societal change.”

Behavioral trust has to “sit at the heart of everything and be embedded in every business action,” according to Phillips.

“It cannot be either side-channelled or sub-contracted. Trust is built through the honest behaviors of all real people from within, not by rules and words commanded from above. Neither advertising nor over-spun PR will work in building a brand or company.”

A “re-branded CSR practitioner” has told him that a “reform movement” has started within the CSR sector.

Polman of Unilever praised

Phillips does not have many words of praise for captains of industry but one exception is Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever since 2009.

Calling Unilever the “world’s second-largest Fast Moving Consumer Goods Company,” with seven of ten households using its products, Phillips says “Polman is the pin-up for a new generation of CEOs—thoughtful, responsible and challenging convention. His stated mission, to double the company’s sales while halving its environmental footprint, boldly goes where few CEOs have gone before.”

The company touts its “Unilever Sustainable Living Plan.” Polman, who received an Outstanding Achievement Award of the Atlantic Council in 2012, said, “Now is the time for business to step-up and lead.” Phillips noted that this was also the key message of the 2012 Edelman Trust Barometer which Richard Edelman had shared with Polman while at the World Economic Forum a few months earlier.  

— Jack O’Dwyer
Pedersen quits Grayling

Pet Pedersen, former Edelman Global Tech Chair, has resigned the CEO slot at Grayling, Huntsworth’s global flagship.

The move comes as former Hill & Knowlton CEO Paul Taaffe, who was recruited in December for the Huntsworth helm, readsy to take command of the holding company in April. Huntsworth released a statement to say that Grayling’s executive management team will oversee day-to-day activities on an interim basis.

Peter Chadlington, the Huntsworth CEO who hired Pedersen, credited him for making an important contribution to the firm and “repositioning as a digitally focused international PR company building multinational client engagement.”

He wished Pedersen well.

Virginia Tech PR chief to retire

Larry Hincker, the Associate VP for university relations who helped “brand” Virginia Tech and led the institution’s PR through a 2007 campus shooting, will retire this year after 25 years in Blacksburg.

Hincker served four university presidents through three decades speaking for VT and serving as senior communications officer. Current President Timothy Sands credit ed Hincker with securing the school’s reputation as a leading research university in the US and abroad.

“Most gratifying to me are the changing and improved perceptions of Virginia Tech’s reputation,” said Hincker. “As communicators, we don’t create the brand; we simply put a spotlight on it. I am pleased to know that university relations had some role in helping cement our place among higher education leaders.”

Hincker is credited with leading a 1990 brand management program that embraced the name Virginia Tech over the university’s official moniker, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Former VT President Charles Steger recalled Hincker’s efforts as the face of the university through the 2007 campus massacre that left 32 dead. “In our darkest hour, Larry’s leadership, resolve, and compassion helped to hold our devastat ed community together,” he said. He represented all of the Hokie Nation as he sought to do the impossible — explain the unexplainable to millions of people watching all over the world.”

Hincker, a VT grad, joined VT in 1988 as Director of Educational Communications and took over university relations a year later. He said he’ll stay in place until a replacement takes over.

Gennaro manages Voya’s PR

Paul Gennaro has joined Voya Financial as Senior VP-corporate Communications & Chief Communications Officer. He’ll handle internal/external PR, counsel top management and protect the reputation of the $511 billion asset giant among its stakeholders.

Most recently, Gennaro was Senior VP-Corporate Communications at AECOM, the $20 billion infrastructure & support services company. Earlier, he was in charge of global PR at Johns Manville and did stints at Ingersoll-Rand, Dell and American Express.

Gennaro began his communications career in the US Navy. Voya serves the retirement needs of 13 million customers. Its corporate goal is to position as “America’s Retirement Company.” Voya is the former US business of Amsterdam-based ING Group.

Gennaro reports to CEO Rodney Martin.

Fixmer spins for Universal Music

Andy Fixmer, a veteran media and entertainment reporter for Bloomberg News, has moved to the PR realm as VP of Global Communications for Universal Music Group.

Fixmer exits a nine-month stint as Special Projects Editor for Mashable, following eight years covering the Hollywood beat for Bloomberg in Los Angeles.

For music giant Universal, he covers corporate, policy, financial and internal communications under EVP and global head of comms. Will Tanous.

Universal, part of Vivendi, includes record labels like A&M Records, Capitol Records, Def Jam Recordings, and Virgin Records, among others.

Fixmer was a staffer for the Los Angeles Business Journal and Times of Trenton (NJ).

Ketchum’s Scibetta enrolls at Stony Brook

Nicholas Scibetta, Director of Ketchum’s Global Media Network, took the VP-communications job at Stony Brook University on Jan. 26. It’s a new position for the Long Island school that is a research flagship of the New York State public university system.

Scibetta is charged with enhancing the SB brand in the state, nation and overseas via strategic communications, media relations, marketing and social media.

The more than 20-year PR veteran will report to SB President Samuel Stanley.

At Ketchum, Scibetta managed a network of 300 media specialists. He developed and managed top accounts at the Omnicom property including the Russian Federation, Oprah Winfrey’s Leadership Academy for Girls, Spanish and Greek tourism ministries and Disney.

Previously, Scibetta did entertainment publicity at Rubenstein PR.

Lerner to head Glover Park NYC

Winnie Lerner, who ran global communications for New York Stock Exchange-listed Ralph Lauren Corp., has joined Glover Park Group to head its New York outpost.

She’ll focus on expanding the corporate and capital markets business of the Washington-headquartered PA/lobbying shop.

Lerner spent 17 years at Abernathy MacGregor Group before decamping for the consumer fashion house.
Arkansas Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin has joined Washington’s Purple Strategies as a Senior Advisor while holding the state position. The former Republican Congressman and aide to Karl Rove in the Bush White House was elected lieutenant governor in November and took up that part-time role on Jan. 13. The firm noted many former lieutenant governors held simultaneous public and private employment.

Purple Strategies President and CEO Steve McMahon said Griffin’s experience in politics and the Army Reserve will help shape public opinion for clients. Griffin served as interim U.S. Attorney in Arkansas but was never confirmed and was elected to Congress in 2010 serving as Deputy Majority Whip and holding a post on the Ways and Means Committee.

Griffin is an 18-year Army Reserve veteran.

Scandal-rocked secret service slaps PA staffer

Jane Murphy, who heads governmental & PA at the Secret Service, is among four officials demoted in January in wake of a series of embarrassing and troubling security lapses. The raft of blunders at the protective force include the knife-wielding White House fence-jumper who then strolled into the executive mansion, an Atlanta elevator where President Obama shared the car with a gun-toting passenger and the 2011 lackluster response to a gun shot fired at the White House.

The Department of Homeland Security released a blistering review in December of the SS that found “starved for leadership” and sapped by low morale among the rank & file.

Acting SS director Joseph Clancy told Murphy and the chiefs of protection, investigations and technology that they must leave their jobs.

If they fail to resign or retire, the foursome would be re-assigned within the SS or the DHS. “Change is necessary to gain a fresh perspective on how we conduct business,” said a statement from Murphy, who took over for Julia Pearson three months ago.

He’s certain that any of the demoted officials “will be productive and valued assets” in other positions at the agency or its DHS parent.

FEMA weighs flood program PR

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is assessing agency PR and marketing capabilities to handle the $75 million account to promote the National Flood Insurance Program, FloodSmart.

FEMA is asking agencies to submit a declaration of interest that shows prior experience, resources and other capabilities for the large-scale contract. Firms can be based anywhere in the U.S. but should have a Washington, D.C. presence.

A group of firms, including Ogilvy PR, JWT, Leapfrog Solutions, Blue Water Media, Spurrier Media and Bender Consulting currently handle the five-year account after a successful pitch in 2011.

The 43-year-old flood insurance program covers property owners, towns and regions with flood plain management plans.

Details are at fbo.gov.

D.C. ethics watchdog launches new PR firm

Melanie Sloan, founding Executive Director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, has launched Triumph Strategy with Michael Huttner, Founder of ProgressNow.

From offices in DC and Boulder, TS offers crisis management and narrative development for private/public companies, trade assns., labor unions and political candidates.

Sloan, who launched CREW in 2003, was assistant US attorney in DC and counsel for the House Judiciary Committee. She is of counsel to CREW.

Most recently Huttner worked on the successful re-election campaign of Colorado’s Democratic Governor John Hickenlooper.

Clinton White House alum launches PR shop

Ben Finzel, who served in the Clinton Administration’s Dept. of Energy, has launched RenewPR, an energy and environmental PR firm.

He served as Legislative Director for New Mexico Congressman Bill Richardson, whom Clinton tapped as Energy Secretary.

Finzel went on to hold the Communications Director job for DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

The 25 year-plus veteran of Edelman, FleishmanHillard and Widmeyer Communications also was Press Secretary for Congressman Tim Valentine and Executive VP at Glen Echo Group, a PR boutique.

Finzel’s goal is to restore “common sense to communications” for companies, alliances, foundations and NGO clients.

He says RenewPR will offer “simple, direct advice from creative, knowledgeable and committed counselors unencumbered by bureaucracy and process.”

Arkansas Lt. Gov joins Purple Strategies

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Qatar hires Mercury

Qatar has retained Omnicom’s Mercury Public Affairs to a six-month “strategic consulting and management services” contract worth $930,000 in fees. Mercury Vice Chairman Ambassador Adam Ereli is working the Qatari business.

The former U.S. Representative to Bahrain from ’07 to ’11, hammered out joint venture deals with Occidental Petroleum and Thomson-Reuters, a $3 billion aircraft sale for Boeing and negotiated base access and security agreements for the US Naval Forces Central Command and Fifth Fleet.

Former Minnesota Congressman & Mercury partner Vin Weber, a well-connected Republican politician, joins Emeri on the business. The contract is null and void if Mercury removes either men from the job.

Mercury is targeting the Senate, Congress and non-governmental organizations for Qatar.

It reports to Ambassador Mohamed Jaman Al Kuwari.

UAE re-ups at The Harbour Group

United Arab Emirates has extended its relationship with The Harbour Group through 2017 for “no more than $5 million per year,” according to its contract.

The work calls for implementation of the comprehensive public diplomacy and communications program to enhance awareness and understanding of the UAE among American policymakers and opinion leaders.

Harbour is to develop PR materials for the UAE’s embassy including websites, video, social media, white papers, issue updates, speeches, press releases and briefing kits.

The firm will arrange visits for UAE embassy officials and private delegations beyond the Washington markets.

Managing Director Richard Mintz, an alum from Burson-Marsteller, U.S. Dept. of Transportation and Hillary Rodham Clinton’s staff) directs the UAE business.

His counterpart Matthew Triaca (one-time head of B-M’s aviation and transportation practice) handles the client’s day-to-day activities.

H+K guides Egyptian tourism

Hill+Knowlton has registered the Egyptian government’s Ministry of Tourism as a client in the U.S., in an effort managed by the London office of the WPP-owned unit.

Egypt suffered a 95% plunge in tourism dollars since the beginning of the Arab Spring and ouster of the government of Islamist Mohamed Morsi, who was a freely elected President.

The consolidation of power by military man Abdel Fatah al-Sisi in May has restored a sense of stability in the minds of potential visitors to Egypt.

Tourist arrives surged 70% during the third quarter of 2014.

September was especially strong as the number of arrivals jumped 193% to 884,000 compared to the comparable 2013 period.

The Financial Times on November 24 reported that an improved tourism sector would add $3.3 billion or 1.2% of gross domestic product to the hard-pressed Egyptian economy.

Sisi is taking matters into his own hands. He’s the first Egyptian leader to meet with international tour operators.

NEW FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATIONS 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.


The Rogich Communications Group, Las Vegas, NV, registered Jan. 19, 2015 for People’s Republic of China Ambassador Cut Tiankai, Washington, D.C., to advise the Government of the People’s Republic of China on matters related to strengthening the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China, including presenting its views to the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government and to business interests within the U.S.

Greenhill Group LLC, Arlington, VA, registered Jan. 14, 2015 for H.E. Shaykh Abdalrazzaq Hatem al-Sulayman, Amman, Jordan, to provide consulting services for the owner of a general construction company in Iraq which shall include assistance in contacts with the U.S. government, diplomatic missions, news organizations, and U.S. and other companies wishing to do business in Al Anbar Governorate and other areas of Iraq.

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.


Cavarocchi Ruscio Dennis Associates, LLC, Washington D.C., registered Jan. 21, 2015 for Susan G. Komen, Dallas, TX, regarding appropriations for breast cancer research, screening and programmatic activities at the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Defense as well as private and public insurance coverage of diagnostic mammography and breast cancer treatments.


Pace, LLP, Arlington, VA, registered Jan. 21, 2015 for American International Automobile Dealers Association, Alexandria, VA, regarding the Trade Promotion Authority.

While we specialize in search engine marketing, we are more than just an SEO firm. We blend a variety of marketing tactics to maximize the effectiveness and return on investment of search engine campaigns.

We excel in non-traditional search marketing environments where the next steps are rarely obvious and there are no existing models to copy or fall back on.

Since every client’s situation is unique, we focus to understand their specific needs and create customized solutions that accomplish their goals online.

IMPACT COMMUNICATIONS

Impact Communications, 11 Bristol Place, Wilton, CT 06897-1524. (203) 529-3047; cell: (917) 208-0720; fax: (203) 529-3048; JRimpact@aol.com. Jon Rosen, President.

BE PREPARED! Impact Communications trains your spokespersons to successfully communicate critical messages to your targeted audiences during print, television, and radio news interviews. Your customized workshops are issue-driven and role-play based. Videotaping/critiquing. Groupsprivately. Faced-to-face/telephone interviews/news conferences. Private label seminars for public relations agencies.

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At Point, Inc., P.O. Box 361, Roseland, NJ 07068. 973/324-0866; fax: 973/324-0778. services@atpoint.com; www.atpoint.com. Mick Gyure.

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