

# O'Dwyer's

Communications & New Media

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## THE TRAVEL ISSUE

Sustainable PR for travel brands  
Creating travel brand ambassadors  
Instagram strategies for travel marketing  
Should travel brace for an economic downturn?  
How wellness is changing the travel industry  
The power of travel brand partnerships  
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August: Financial, I.R. & Prof Services

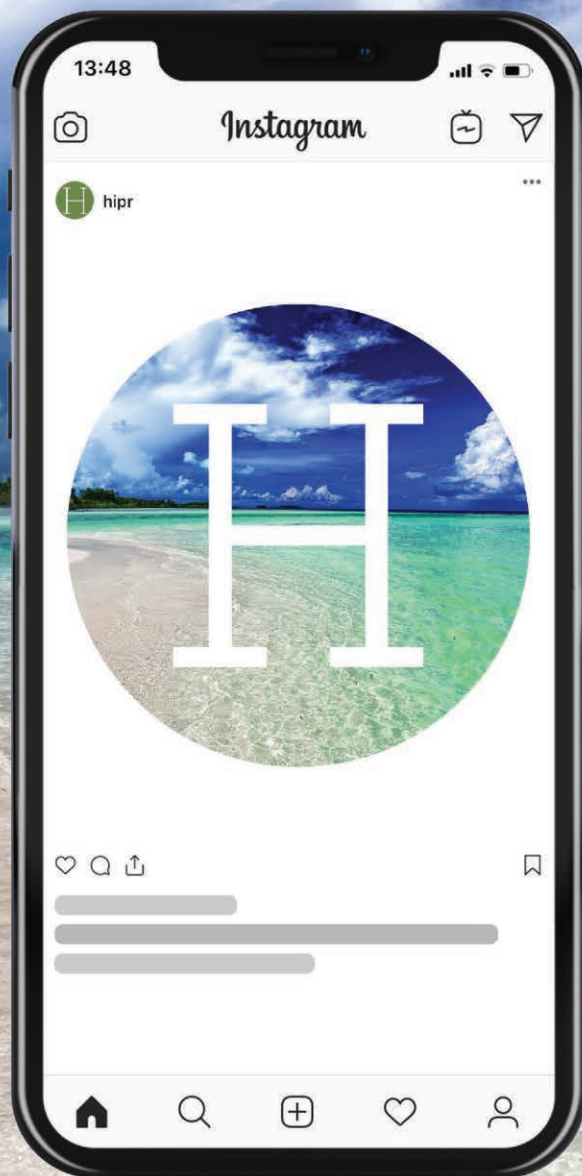
October: Healthcare & Medical

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# Kudos to PRSA plea for 'real' WH press secretary

**K**udos to Public Relations Society of America for calling on Donald Trump “to reestablish the all-important, traditional role of the press secretary to advocate for a free press and keep American citizens well-informed about actions being taken that will affect their lives.”

The Society’s June 19 statement followed Sarah Huckabee Sanders’ decision to “officially” quit the White House Press Secretary job, though, in reality, she walked away from that post a long time ago, holding only two press briefings during the past six months.

Sanders spent her down time auditioning for a contributor job at Rupert Murdoch’s Fox News by appearing more than a dozen times since mid-March on programs such as “Fox & Friends,” “America’s Newsroom,” “Hannity,” “Fox News Sunday,” “Outnumbered Overtime” and “Watters’ World.”

As it turns out, PRSA’s pleas fell on dead ears.

Stephanie Grisham, who’s been on Team Trump since 2015—most recently as spokeswoman for first lady Melania Trump—replaced Sanders as White House Press Secretary.

Grisham will also hold the dual role of White House Director of Communications, filling in the gap that was left by former Fox News exec Bill Shine when he left that position in March.

Sean Spicer previously held both roles as well.

Grisham has been known as a staunch supporter of Mrs. Trump, issuing a statement when the President’s first wife, Ivana, referred to herself as “first lady.” When former Deputy National Security Advisor Mira Ricardel was fired at the instigation of Melania Trump, Grisham issued the statement that Ricardel is “no longer deserved the honor of serving in this White House.”

Announcing Grisham’s promotion via Twitter, Mrs. Trump said that she could “think of no better person to serve the Administration & our country.”

While PRSA is earnest, it’s naïve to think the President would agree that routine and frequent press briefings provide the press the opportunity, as representatives of the people, “to ask in-depth, comprehensive questions and receive answers that inform the broader public.”

Trump, not known to ever smile, would bust a gut if he read PRSA’s statement, saying the critical function of the press is to scrutinize and hold the government accountable because that “aids in an open, honest and objective decision-making that is crucial to democratic societies.” He might even call it “fake news.”

PRSA’s heart is in the right place, but the White House Press Secretary job may just as well remain vacant while Trump remains in office.

Trump is his own mouthpiece. And Twitter is his megaphone.

On the same day PRSA issued its appeal, the *Wall Street Journal* published an op-ed piece by *New York Times* publisher A.G. Sulzberger who took Trump to task for charging the paper with a virtual act of treason.

“He’s gone from misrepresenting our business, to assaulting our integrity, to demonizing our journalism with a phrase that’s been used by generations of demagogues,” Sulzberger wrote.

Trump objected to the *Times* story about U.S. intelligence hacking into Russia’s electrical grid.

Prior to publication, the paper cleared the story with the White House Security Council, National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command. They raised no national security concerns.

Sulzberger wrote of the treason allegation: “There is no more serious charge a commander in chief can make against an independent news organization. Which presents a troubling question: What would it look like for Mr. Trump to escalate his attacks on the press further? Having already reached for the most incendiary language available, what is left but putting his threats into action?”

Trump got it wrong when he rolled out “Make America Great Again” as his first campaign slogan, a pitch that has now morphed into “Keep America Great.”

Sulzberger got it right in the *Journal*: “Mr. Trump’s campaign against journalists should concern every patriotic American. A free, fair and independent press is essential to our country’s strength and vitality and to every freedom that makes it great.”

Put that on a bumper sticker. ○

— Kevin McCauley

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# PR agency profitability slip

The average profitability of PR agencies in the U.S. was down slightly from last year, according to an annual Gould+Partners survey that measures PR firm profitability.

By Jon Gingerich

The average profitability of PR agencies in the U.S. was 16.3 percent of their net revenues in 2018, down from 18 percent a year prior, according to an annual survey conducted by PR merger and acquisition consultancy Gould+Partners.

Gould+Partners' annual Benchmarking report, which analyzes the key factors affecting PR firm profitability, found that PR firms accounting for between \$10 million and \$25 million in net revenues reported higher profitability than agencies of larger or smaller size, at 18.8 percent. This figure, however, still represents a 2.1 percent dip from the 20.9 percent profitability recorded last year for firms of this size.

By contrast, PR agencies in excess of \$25 million in revenue netted 15.7 percent profitability (an increase from last year's 14.7

percent), while firms boasting between \$3 million and \$10 million netted 12.3 percent (down from last year's 17.3 percent). Firms with under \$3 million in revenue netted the lowest average profitability, 14.9 percent, accounting for a four-percent decline from last year's 18.9 percent.

Overall, the 1.7 percent dip in average profitability among U.S. PR firms was still better than the 15.2 percent reported in 2016, but at 16.3 percent, remains below the 20 percent that Gould+Partners managing partner Rick Gould recommends as a minimum profitability goal.

"The 16.3 percent profitability, down from 18 percent a year ago, is a disappointing signal that PR firms are struggling in their goal of 20 percent operating profit," Gould told O'Dwyer's. "And the reason is in the labor

cost, not in the overhead. Labor costs keep rising without a corresponding increase in retainers and billing rates. The result is the lower profitability."

Total overhead in 2018 was about one percent higher than the year prior, 25.4 percent compared to 24.4 percent, according to the report.

The survey also discovered that revenue per professional staff member was \$253,054 in 2018, up more than \$13,000 from 2017's \$239,917. And agency staff turnover was also slightly lower last year, averaging 22.9 percent compared to 24.7 percent in 2017.

Gould+Partners' 2019 Benchmarking survey was based on responses from 41 "prominent, best of class" North American PR agencies. The survey was conducted in April and May. ○

## Consumers trust tech

A new study finds trust in tech remains high despite the sector's recent reputational woes.

By Steve Barnes

Despite the reputational hits that the tech sector has been taking recently, a new study from FleishmanHillard finds that in the US and UK, trust in tech remains surprisingly high.

"From Darlings to Damaged? Managing the Technology Sector's Reputation in an Age of Heightened Security" asked consumers in both countries about their attitudes and perceptions regarding the tech industry's reputation.

The main takeaway: While most consumers trust the tech industry, a sizeable group remains skeptical.

More than eight out of 10 (82 percent) of American respondents said they generally trust tech companies, and almost as many in the UK (79 percent) said the same.

When it comes to those who don't trust tech, there is a generation gap in both countries, but it manifests itself in very different ways. In the US, younger consumers are more likely to be dubious about tech companies than their elders, with 22 percent of Millennials and 26 percent of Gen Z respondents voicing skepticism.

However, in the UK, older consumers are more prone to show their distrust, with 38

percent of Silent Generation respondents (those born before 1945) and 29 percent of Boomers saying they did not trust tech companies.

Even though trust levels across the board are positive, a majority of respondents from both countries (70 percent) said that tech companies should increase their efforts to address such issues as the accessibility of user information, data breaches and general security.

That sentiment does not completely hold when it comes to regulation. Only 31 percent of respondents said that they thought tech companies are regulated too little.

Interestingly, while 60 percent of British respondents felt that UK tech companies were regulated about the right amount, only 54 percent of them felt the same with regard to US companies. The study's authors say those numbers indicate that UK consumers think there is a more relaxed attitude toward tech sector regulation in the US.

"As companies navigate the increasingly complex environment, the best approach is to commit to being transparent, and to work collaboratively with government, reg-

ulators and academia," said FleishmanHillard President and CEO John Saunders. ○

### PR news brief

#### News sites align to counter FB, Google ad 'lock'

A group of news sites from across the political spectrum have formed the Digital News Alliance, an advertising sales partnership that is intended to help them compete with Facebook and Google.

The alliance includes such conservative-leaning sites as The Daily Caller and Washington Free Beacon as well as left-leaning outlets that include Alternet and Raw Story. Mediaite and its sister site Law & Crime, which tend to take a more middle-of-the-road approach, are also part of the package.

According to both Daily Caller and Mediaite, the alliance will offer advertising packages geared toward the 2020 political advertising cycle, which WPP-owned media buying agency GroupM says is expected to bring in almost \$10 billion in ad spending, and beyond. Both sites note that the properties currently on board bring in over 145 million page views per month. They also have a combined 11 million Facebook followers and 1.1 million Twitter followers.

A *Wall Street Journal* report cites eMarketer figures that show Facebook and Google as controlling 60 percent of all digital ad spending, putting an ever-increasing amount of pressure on sites that depend on advertising revenue.

"This alliance will help fortify digital journalism's position in challenging market conditions and will bolster our continuing efforts to provide high-quality investigative reporting to our readers," said Washington Free Beacon president Aaron Harrison.

Law & Crime chief operating officer and general counsel Andrew Eisbrough told the *Journal* that the alliance is currently in talks with other political publishers to join up.



# Social media use down as Facebook numbers decline

The total daily time Americans spent on social media took a dip last year, the result of Facebook users now spending less time on that platform. Meanwhile, the surging popularity of Instagram now appears to be accounting for much of social media's current growth.

By Jon Gingerich

**T**he total daily time Americans spent on social media networks took a dip last year, the result of Facebook users now spending less time on that platform, according to recent analysis by digital market research company eMarketer.

Average daily time spent on Facebook by U.S. adults fell by about three minutes last year, according to eMarketer, from 41 minutes per day in 2017 to 38 minutes in 2018.

Because the platform accounts for the lion's share of overall social media activity in the U.S., the average daily time Americans spent with social media in 2018 declined by about a minute—or 1.9 percent—to an hour and 14 minutes.

By contrast, overall social media use time saw cumulative gains of about seven

minutes between 2016 and 2017 alone or 10.7 percent, and a similar six-minute gain between 2015 and 2016, or 10.4 percent. eMarketer predicts the average time Americans spend on social media networks will now remain essentially flat through 2021.

eMarketer estimates that the average daily time Americans spend on Facebook will continue to decline modestly over the next few years, remaining at 38 minutes per day in 2019 before sliding by about a minute to 37 minutes per day in 2020.

Meanwhile, the rising popularity of Instagram paints a different picture, as eMarketer suggests that the photo-sharing site is now a primary reason why the total daily time Americans spend on social media didn't plummet more last year.

eMarketer predicts that U.S. adult Instagram users will spend an average of 27 minutes per day on the site this year, up from 26 minutes per day in 2017-2018 and 24 minutes per day in 2016.

eMarketer predicts engagement will continue to pick up on the photo-sharing site, adding about a minute every year through 2021.

Finally, eMarketer also predicts that Americans' use of messaging app Snapchat may have plateaued. Use of that platform by U.S. adults apparently peaked last year, averaging 26 minutes of daily use time, up from 25 minutes in 2017 and 22 minutes in 2016. Future average daily time spent on Snapchat, however, isn't expected to change through 2021. ○

## Americans still prefer print

An overwhelming majority of Americans cite print as the preferred medium for reading, according to a recent survey.

By Jon Gingerich

**A**mericans enjoy the offline world, with an overwhelming majority still citing print as the preferred medium for reading books, magazines and newspapers, according to a new survey commissioned by graphic communications non-profit Two Sides.

The report, which surveyed North Amer-

ican consumers on their habits and attitudes regarding print and paper, found that when it comes to books, magazines and newspapers, print clearly wins as the preferred method for reading.

More than two-thirds of U.S. adults (68 percent) said print is their medium of choice when it comes to reading books. Nearly the

same amount (65 percent) think print provides a superior experience when reading magazines, and more than half (53 percent) choose print to read newspapers.

The survey found that nearly half of U.S. and Canadian consumers (49 percent and 46 percent, respectively) believe they spend too much time on their electronic devices, and 71 percent of Americans and 68 percent of Canadians value the idea of "switching off" their digital devices and reading more in print.

More than half of the survey respondents (53 percent) said they're concerned that an overuse of electronic devices could prove damaging to their health. In the U.S., nearly a third (31 percent) believe they're suffering from "digital overload."

The study also discovered that the recent push by service providers (such as banks and utilities) to ditch printed correspondence in favor of digital records might've left many consumers rankled: 86 percent of U.S. consumers believe they should have the right to choose how they receive their communications from these companies.

Anxieties surrounding cyber security could be behind these communications preferences. In the U.S., about three-quarters of respondents (74 percent) said they're concerned that electronic copies of their personal information are at risk for being hacked, stolen, lost or damaged. Nearly the same number (73 percent) admitted they keep hard copies of important documents at home, as they believe this is the safest and most secure way of storing their information. ○

## People are dodging online news

By Kevin McCauley

**A**growing number of people in the digital world actively avoid news sites, according to a survey released May 23 by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University.

About a third (32 percent) of the 75,000 respondents from 38 countries admit to dodging news sites, up six percentage points from two years ago when Reuters last posed the question.

News avoidance was up 11 percent in the UK, a rise that Reuters attributes to non-stop Brexit coverage.

Boredom, anger, sadness, a sense of powerlessness to change events and having a negative effect on their moods are among reasons why people turn off news sites.

Polly Curtis, a visiting fellow at the Reu-

ters Institute, frets about the growing "un-newsed" population.

She wrote in the *Financial Times* the un-newsed are "younger, less educated, have lower income and are less likely to work" than news consumers. "We don't like to talk about it, but news habits are closely aligned to something that looks very like class," wrote Curtis.

Reuters found that respondents who identify themselves as "populists" are more likely to identify TV as their main news source and Facebook as the top online information site.

Despite a marketing push by the news industry, only a handful of people pay for online news sites via subscription, membership or donation. Just 16 percent of U.S. respondents pay for online news and the bulk of them pay for only one site. ○



# Why PR is the right strategy in an economic downturn

**With forecasts swirling about an impending travel recession, it's critical for brands to begin preparations and pivot to PR for smart marketing strategies.**

By Julie Freeman

Those of us in the travel PR industry are poised to respond to another potential downturn. Although we're not anticipating an economic crisis of the same proportions as 2008, NJF's parent company, MMGY Global, has found that American intent for leisure travel has softened considerably over eight straight quarters, while price sensitivity has jumped significantly (34 percent cite travel costs as the number-one concern, versus 18 percent in 2016). Combined, that outlook is concerning.

When we align those findings with the events that led up to the economic slowdown of 2008, we can anticipate that travelers will cut back on discretionary spending, turning toward more frequent but less expensive trips with shorter-haul itineraries. Eleven years ago, that shift created a perfect storm that hit destinations and travel brands hard.

But something else happened that's important to remember. Travel PR took stock of the situation and spun it into a powerful narrative: the staycation. It's hard to imagine our travel culture without that concept, but we can look to the recession as the height of the staycation craze, which still has impact today.

On the one hand, current trends make it hard to fathom a travel recession: polar travel tours and cruises are selling out; trips to Vietnam, Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia are on the rise; airlines are continuously launching nonstop long-haul flights; mega-cruise ships are being built at a rapid rate; and luxury cruise lines keep raising the bar. But looking ahead to a potential downturn, our industry has multiple opportunities to get ahead of the curve, be proactive and benefit our clients, both domestic and international.

## **PR is a smart marketing strategy**

As travel brands may begin to cut their budgets, PR remains an affordable and effective option when prioritizing marketing channels. Whether pitching enticing narratives or promoting tactical deals, generating earned media is a longer-game investment that sits at the top or middle of the purchasing funnel. And while conversions may not be as trackable, a destination or travel brand's story can enjoy a long shelf life that outlasts even the tough times — just as we saw with the staycation.

## **We understand the new media landscape**

Media is drastically different today than

it was in 2008 when digital and social content were just starting to find their footing. With print media slashing budgets and cutting pages, it's up to us to educate our clients about where earned media can have the most impact. Glossy magazine spreads may still top our clients' wish lists, but we understand when and how online and influencer-driven campaigns present quicker, more agile delivery of information to targeted audiences, generating awareness, engagement and strong ROI.

## **Strategic packaging has strong impact**

When budgets are tight, how do we maximize ROI? We find the right partners to enhance a brand's credibility, reach targeted audiences and generate leads. For example, when we identified that travel has a positive impact on 75 percent of couples' relationships, we created a partnership for our client CheapCaribbean with relationship expert Anita Avedian. The media latched onto the story: an air-inclusive package that included virtual coaching sessions with the Kardashians' go-to love guru. In addition to bookings, we earned tens of millions of impressions on *People*, *Lonely Planet*, Yahoo and MSN, and the package was promoted across all partners' social media and newsletter audiences.

To capitalize on the Caribbean Tourism Organization naming 2018 the Year of Wellness and Rejuvenation, we teamed up with Crunch Fitness to launch the first-ever Wellness Week for Breezes Resort & Spa Bahamas. Our PR efforts included national broadcast segments and feature stories, dedicated emails, and a sweepstakes. Costs for our resort client were minimal and drove \$405,000 in revenue while garnering \$1.5 million in media value.

## **In a crisis, comms are your best asset**

During a crisis situation such as a recession, travel brands have even less of a margin to deal with additional roadblocks. From first response to recovery, PR communication is a nimble, timely and effective resource to get accurate messages out. While the following situations are different, the approach is similar. In 2018, Southwest Florida's coastlines had the most intense red tide outbreak in nearly half a century. We helped our client the Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel manage the situation at every stage. Then, as soon as the natural event receded, we sprang into action with PR tactics to show the clear waters in real

time, including a multimedia news release, an on-location satellite media tour and monthly press trips to provide in-destination experiences. Ultimately, our efforts to change the narrative from crisis to recovery resulted in 17 million media impressions across the U.S.

In addition, after a surge in crime, we worked with Los Cabos Tourism to develop a crisis playbook and create positive news about their diverse tourism offerings while conveying the new safety measures being put in place. NJF secured more than 500 stories in top media outlets — including the cover of the *New York Times* Top Places to Go 2018 issue — and educated hundreds of travel advisors, leading to a 20 percent year-over-year increase in visitation to Los Cabos.

## **Our expertise is founded on data**

PR agencies will benefit from focusing their efforts on the right markets. That includes the resilient mature market and, according to MMGY Global's research, Millennial families which represent an enormous opportunity. Based on 2018 data, traveling Millennials account for approximately 1.1 billion total travelers and within the leisure segment, 34 percent of those are families. Millennial families, in particular, are optimistic, engaged in travel, and our research shows that they follow similar travel patterns as their parents by taking weekend trips, multiple trips and road trips. (Overall, road tripping is on the rise. Our research shows that 51 percent of travelers took at least one road trip in the past 12 months, compared to 46 percent the previous year.) This audience is the quintessential "memory maker" that prefers to collect experiences over material goods. All of those factors mean that Millennial families are ready to receive messages shaped around similar "recession-inspired" travel trends that we've identified before.

While trends like staycations and road trips may make it seem like domestic travel should be the focus, we shouldn't overlook opportunities to lean in to international travel. Packaging products in a smart way will continue to attract travelers to go abroad. To date, we have already identified rich story angles such as how to cre-



Julie Freeman

— Continued on next page

# A shift in focus

How PR-driven cluster branding campaigns can meet the needs of destination management teams.

By Charlene Peters

Tourism spaces increasingly focused on wellness, food and wine present an opportunity to create a cost-effective communications strategy for clients. The idea is to collaborate with various partners to establish an all-encompassing, “work hard, play hard” travel experience. Identifying a brand’s core meaning and personality will ultimately facilitate a better communications strategy and lead to an understanding of which grouped markets can make one emotional connection.

To shift the focus from promoting a luxury hotel or resort, for example, solely as a place to rest your head — and possibly dine in the on-site restaurant — it’s important to build relationships with nearby wine destinations, spas or craft brewery tasting trails, to name a few options. These are but a few methods to utilize the concept of cluster branding.

Instead of competing for media space, cluster branding forms a powerful relationship for businesses to collaborate, rather than viewing their neighbors as competitors. Simultaneously, journalists are better able to gather enough story research for multiple outlets across several categories. For example, one itinerary that spans wellness and luxury could result in a story that is published in a general travel/lifestyle magazine, as well as in a spa magazine, and as an article for a luxury publication — which might also have an architectural focus. Beyond print, the possibilities are endless for niche blogs and social media posts/stories. Going one step further, a brand ambassador can be utilized for extended coverage of one product that executes integrative marketing initiatives across multiple channels.

Take, for instance, Facebook and Instagram, two platforms with the capability to promote the highlights of your daily life in full intensification — without full disclosure. One might say that each Facebook and Instagram user is creating his/her own personal brand. It’s up to the communications professional to utilize this personal brand to promote several businesses during one visit.

Gathering interest and building the framework for business clusters presents its own set of challenges, such as approval from decision-makers and organization of committees to oversee management of efforts. These challenges are worth the effort, however, as the end game is to present a more cost-effective way for a client to reach out to target audiences, increase visibility for participating businesses and focus on mes-

saging for the destination’s overall story. The goal is to become carriers of a brand and its values, utilizing the brand as a managerial tool and building an authentic network.

The best strategy for a communications team is to establish relationships with the audiences of a brand and its regional businesses that potentially add value, and then figure out each one’s differentiation and relevance that will ultimately attribute to overall brand strength and vitality. A PR-driven strategy might include representation of a resort to offer a package that includes guided morning hikes — if there’s a hiking trail nearby — forest bathing, the incorporation of an outside source for beach yoga — if the resort is oceanfront — a morning hike to the bottom of a volcano for detoxifying mud immersion and hot springs soak, or the use of on-site bikes for a ride to cooking classes that focus on an indigenous ingredient or signature dish of the destination.

The idea to “detox before you retox” is a concept gaining speed in the wellness-and-wine travel sector, as most travelers look forward to indulging in the food and wine scene at a destination but may be hesitant due to the foreseeable weight gain. How many times have you heard someone complain they’ve eaten too much during their vacation? When activity comes first, indulgence is the reward, and guests are more likely to have a positive experience to share with friends, colleagues and extended family when they return home relaxed and rejuvenated.

For instance, wellness travelers are happiest when they begin the day with meditation or yoga, and then take a healthy cooking class or juice class before embarking on a tour and ending with an indulgent wine-pairing dinner. Or perhaps a morning bike ride on a trail leading to stops at micro-breweries for tastings, followed by a reflexology massage or dip in a hot springs pool—if applicable—would best serve an audience on multiple levels. A hotel or resort could gain more exposure by diversifying and offering packages that incorporate regional businesses, such as guided hikes or a collaboration with an adventure activity company.

With the diversification of the lodging industry and new brands born daily, competition to differentiate is crucial. To face the challenges of incorporating stakeholders, a communications agency or professional may want to create the desire for businesses to participate in a cluster business event like

a passport marketing program or itinerary package presented on each business’ website and marketing collateral.

Co-authors Marcus Andersson, Adrian Solitander and Per Ekman of Tendensor published “Cluster Branding and Marketing — A Handbook on Cluster Brand Management,” and offer the following advice for PR:

- “Think about how PR activities can support the overall reputation of the cluster, as well as drive exposure around certain specific issues.
- Dare to have an opinion and take a stance.
- Consume lots of media to understand where the winds are blowing.
- Think about how you can find common ground and push an agenda jointly with other ‘influencers.’”

In the end, the brand is well-regarded, and consumers — as well as stakeholders — gain an intimate understanding regarding what’s offered. For the communications professional or agency, the contract becomes larger when a brand collaborates with regional businesses. This means an increase in budget dollars and ability to attract A-list journalists and micro-influencers. The result is trackable in key performance indicators: increased press coverage with multiple story angles, as well as comprehensive social media stories and posts. Building interest within various aspects of a destination and branding as a cluster is sure to enhance a communication professional or agency’s notable reputation in the tourism space.

Charlene Peters is Managing Partner at Hemsworth Communications. ○



Charlene Peters

## ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

— Continued from page 10

ate meaningful memories in an affordable, family-friendly destination like Costa Rica; how immersive, positive-impact tours with Intrepid Travel captivate and engage culturally curious travelers; and we secured a *Travel + Leisure* cover story on post-hurricane travel to the British Virgin Islands.

There’s no crystal ball to tell us definitively if a travel recession is coming. But armed with the 20/20 clarity of hindsight, this is an important time to start preparing and to be aggressive with your clients about leveraging and/or increasing their PR services. It’s a protective measure with tremendous benefits that can pay off for years to come.

Julie Freeman is EVP and Managing Director at NJF. ○



# The 'Gram' can rev up your social media marketing

**Facebook's sister network is fast-growing, generates higher engagement rates and influences more purchase decisions, especially when it comes to travel.**

By Stacy Moskowitz

Instagram continues to take social media by storm. In the U.S., there are more than 100 million users — that's 32 percent of Americans. According to Instagram, 80 percent of accounts follow a business and 68 percent of them interact with brands on a regular basis. That's nearly 10 times more than with Facebook and the highest of any social media platform.

According to MMGY Global's 2017–2018 "Portrait of American Travelers" study, 48 percent of Instagram users engage with the app to find new travel destinations and places to explore. It's no wonder, given the visual nature of the platform, with 95 million photos being posted each day.

But that doesn't mean brands are using Instagram as the influential tool it can be. While nearly all major travel and tourism brands are on Instagram, marketing strategies must evolve to stay relevant and harness the power the "Gram" can deliver.

You might consider trying various combinations of the following to take your social media marketing to new heights.

## User-generated content made simple

Most travelers post vacation photos on social networks. By leveraging user-generated content, you're showcasing your brand in the most authentic way possible.

Etihad Airways is a great example: it used its one million followers on Instagram as an opportunity to host a contest that asked people to share their favorite travel photos for a chance to win prizes. It's simple, can be budget-friendly, and honestly, there's no better way to credibly promote everything a brand has to offer than with earned third-party endorsements.

Do you have to offer an incentive? No. It's no secret now that sharing beautiful and unique vacation photos on social media to make friends jealous is a thing. Brands can capitalize on this by easily resharing these photos and giving credit to the originators, who'll likely grant permission.

Designating and encouraging use of related hashtags inserts your brand into the conversation between travelers and their followers. UGC couldn't be any easier.

## Customer service is key

Airlines manage customer service over social networks 24/7, but the original content they and most all travel brands publish aims to educate, entertain and entice. Some of this is because Instagram isn't necessarily thought of as a hub for customer service. It

should be!

With the number of travelers turning to the platform to choose their next vacation, it's never been more important for social media teams to be helpful and responsive.

Overall, brands must do better to engage customers and provide support via social, not just offer content you think they would like to see. Investing in a social monitoring and engagement management tool, that will up your social customer service game, will show that you're dedicated and interested in providing travelers with a personalized and unique experience.

This could be the difference when travelers make decisions.

## Accurate portrayal of your brand

I'm pretty sure I'd be hard-pressed to find a travel brand that hasn't at least gotten its feet wet with an influencer campaign of some kind. And since most influencers post alluring and inspirational photos and stories, how could someone not want to visit that destination or stay in that hotel?

Here's where things can go sideways. After seeing an influencer's content, travelers have preset expectations on what their experience should be. But according to Expedia, one in five Millennials and Gen X-ers have been disappointed by a destination when comparing it to what they saw on Instagram.

I can't stress enough the critical importance of brands holding their content partners accountable by allowing them to post only accurate representations of the places they visit. Better yet, copy that accompanies posts should overcommunicate their experience: can anyone do it; is it crowded; are there safety precautions; what do I need to know before I go? Brands that make sure their influencer partners keep their customer's expectations in mind will come out on top.

## Stories, stories, stories

Do you remember how many Instagram users there are? This means Stories has the potential to grow awareness and drive engagement by leaps and bounds. There's a catch though. In order to be able to view them, a user needs to be connected with a brand to see the content.

This is a prime opportunity for where to put some of your ad dollars. Percent of ad dollars spent on Stories has more than tripled since fall 2017. And with good reason. You can post ads between the slides of other

people's/brand's stories. Stories ads expand reach because non-followers can see your content, swipe up for more and/or start following your handle.

It's a no brainer that travel brands should be posting organic content, trialing ads and even beginning to cross over to IGTV to extend content.

## The new online booking game

When Facebook introduced the booking feature years ago, it was a bust. Instagram launched a similar feature a few years back, but retailers have still been slow to adopt. This looks to be changing.

With the platform's larger user base, the percentage of consumers who use social media to make travel decisions, the interesting ways retailers have used the e-commerce feature and the attractive pricing (for now) of early adopters, seems like airline, hotel and car rental brands should be dipping their toes in the water of Instagram booking.

This takes Instagram full-circle, from discovery to action, possibly making business an even more important component of the app. Plus, keeping the entire process all within one app is something we know pleases social media users.

I'd argue Instagram is—or should be—the go-to social network for travel brands. There really is so much that Instagram has to offer. I've only scratched the surface of possibilities, but what I know for sure is if you give it a chance and optimize opportunities, you will see meaningful results.

Stacy Moskowitz is a Senior Director in Padilla's Consumer Practice. ○



Stacy Moskowitz

## PR news brief

### MMGY works marketing for Colorado

MMGY Global has been selected as lead marketing agency for the Colorado Tourism Office

The firm will develop market strategy for the CTO, as well as spearheading tactical campaign deployment and measurement.

The new contract also allows MMGY to establish an office in Denver's RiNo district, which will support regional clients as well as other travel related brands based in the Colorado market.

MMGY Global currently employs 400 staff members and a network of destination marketing experts around the world, specializing in the travel, hospitality and entertainment industries.

Denver-based Karsh Hagan remains agency of record for the CTO.





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# Sustainable public relations for travel brands

**How PR agencies can take a thoughtful approach to developing strategies that promote ethical and sustainable brands in the travel and tourism sector.**

By Amy Sedeño

In a world with evolving concerns and values, the hospitality industry is embracing eco-friendly practices and the importance of sustainability as critical components to a successful branding strategy.

After all, studies show that 80 percent of 18 to 29-year-olds consider it important when booking a trip that a company offer sustainable travel options, and 90 percent consider a travel company's commitment to ethical travel an essential part of their booking journey. From internationally-known brands like Hyatt, Virgin, Hilton and Marriott to independent boutique properties, hotels are taking an active role in shaping industry standards for sustainable travel. But how does a hotel brand successfully navigate the world of sustainability in an ethical and impactful way with a message that's well-received by its key audiences? Here's where a public relations agency well-versed in green marketing comes in.

Working with sustainable, ethical brands requires rethinking the standardized PR process. Agencies are now looking at smaller budgets; unique, purpose-driven narratives; and savvy consumers that understand and seek sustainable practices. To top it off, many of these brands are not only looking to impact the environment and disrupt their industry but also to shift consumer habits and behaviors. This requires a new approach to PR programs inclusive of tailored media relations, awareness campaigns, thought leadership, a deep-dive of the topic of sustainability and a focus on the people and communities directly involved with the brands.

Through a strong public relations and messaging campaign, agencies can help sustainable travel brands, from hotels to products, effectively define and communicate their core brand values without getting diluted in an industry that's becoming increasingly saturated. Here are three things PR agencies working with ethical, sustainable brands must keep in mind when developing strategies for this new wave of travel brands and products:

## **Knowledge and awareness is critical**

In the client onboarding process or discovery meeting, it's important to have an in-depth discussion of the sustainable resources and practices that will later help to shape the communications plan. Research is key at this stage, equipping agencies with the know-how to lead their clients through

successful campaigns. Agencies should have a general understanding of what the word sustainability encompasses, its lingo, best practices and certifications related to sustainable businesses such as Green Globe, the Green Hotels Association and The World Travel and Tourism Council, among others.

This also transcends to a plan that includes a thought leadership program that will take your clients to key sustainability conferences, securing speaking opportunities that will showcase them as leaders in the eco-conscious movement and securing guest blog posts and social media appearances in outlets read and seen by their target audiences. At this discovery phase, and throughout the partnership, agency education should remain ongoing, subscribing to relevant industry blogs, attending keynotes and conferences and keeping up with new trends and headlines will allow PR practitioners to act as an expert counsel and source of knowledge for their clients.

## **Mindfulness of ROI and expenses**

While sustainable brands often have smaller budgets, that doesn't mean their campaigns should be less impactful. Agencies should take a thoughtful approach to budgets and seek how to minimize client expenses while maximizing exposure. For sustainable hotels, this might mean piggybacking on their local tourism board for media exposure; working with media/influencers on-the-ground versus investing in costly airfare; guiding the hotels and brands to work with influencers to produce content (videos/an image bank/social media posts) in exchange for stays and perks versus paid partnerships; and collaborating with like-minded, recognizable brands that can strengthen your client's awareness and message and increase visibility with the right audience.

It's important to highlight the macro vs. micro influencer dichotomy and understand the power of a trusted recommendation. While large numbers might seem attractive, working with micro and mid-level influencers allows brands to create genuine partnerships that yield a higher return on investment as well as content that is highly engaging and likable.

## **It's not enough to say you're sustainable**

Saying something is "eco-friendly" or "fair trade" is no longer enough in a saturated market competing for media attention. It's important to understand your

client's key differentiators and expand that message into verticals that include a business story, a lifestyle story, a foodie story, and angles that move the needle beyond the sustainability narrative. While niche green hospitality outlets are a great awareness resource to tell your sustainability story and highlight your programs and green efforts, they often lack the reach of their larger mainstream counterparts. It's the job of the PR agency, through creative storytelling, to weave in your sustainability story and its environmental benefits to a larger or differentiating theme that effectively engages media covering other beats.



Amy Sedeño

One great example is Hotel El Ganzo, a 70-room boutique hotel in San Jose del Cabo. Last year, El Ganzo launched a sustainability overhaul that included recycling and water conservation programs and plastics reduction. Rather than just focusing on the technical aspects of the news, media angles also incorporated information about their wellness/health programs, eco-friendly retreats, and seasonal dining offers.

Other stories can leverage mediable dates like Earth Day, celebrated on April 22. Cala Luna Boutique Hotel & Villas, a 39-room boutique hotel in the beach town of Tamarindo, Costa Rica launched a two-day Earth Day package that provided 30 percent off on all bookings made through their websites and donated five percent of each reservation to a local charity dedicated to Beach Clean Ups. Other important dates that can be turned into creative storytelling include World Oceans Day, World Wildlife Day, World Environment Day and World Rainforest Day.

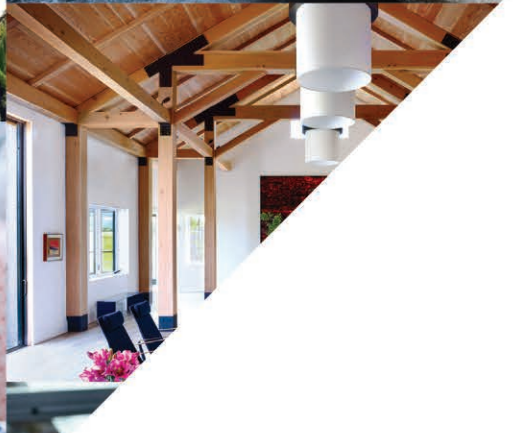
A complete media relations program should also promote green aspects of the brand through blogs, email blasts, social media channels and websites to ensure that all points of customer contacts are covered and to extend the life of media coverage. However, as Eugenio Lopez Matos, Assistant to the General Manager for Royal Isabela Puerto Rico said, "the message must be authentic. In order to communicate that a brand is sustainable, it must truly be sustainable. If the term is just used as a marketing plug, it won't resonate with the consumer."

Amy Sedeño is Director at Carolyn Izzo Integrated Communications (CIIC) in Miami. ○



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# The power of brand partnerships

How partnerships can re-energize a travel brand, reaching and engaging new audiences in innovative ways.

By Tanya Scalisi

**T**here's no 'I' in team." "No man is an island." "Teamwork makes the dream work." However cliché, there's an inordinate amount of truth in the idea that combining talented minds toward a mutually beneficial goal will result in success. And in the PR profession, particularly in industries like travel and hospitality, there are vast opportunities to defy categories and color outside the lines to make an impact. Simply put, we're better together.

As the hospitality space has grown over the years, hotel and travel brands are actively seeking out synergistic partnerships to elevate, activate and generate ongoing relevancy. In hospitality, we have the advantages of large—and often, many—spaces, a captive audience in our on-site guests, and the loyalty of the surrounding communities. Partnerships, which can manifest in several different ways, offer a chance to get in front of a new audience of consumers, media and decision-makers, and in today's marketplace, are a necessary component of campaigns. The impact of partnership development and execution can be heightened awareness and word of mouth, increased digital traffic, increased bookings, added revenue, new social followers and engagement and event attendance, all of which can be measurable ROI for a brand, hotel or organization.

A partnership can be as simple as consistent, transparent conversation with an adjacent organization: a hotel and its destination CVB communicating regularly with each other is a partnership that will, ideally, drive business for both. A partnership can exist with a contracted third-party—a hotel's in-room amenity line—or can be proactively sourced short term for the sake of storytelling. In our business, the client/agency relationship is most certainly a partnership, as is the agency/media/influencer relationship. Each exists separately, but working together effectively enhances everyone's role and success.

Partnerships can be an essential piece of a new hotel launch to rise above the crowded space—more than 1,000 hotels opened in the U.S. in 2018—or they can re-energize an established travel brand. New or new again, here are three high-level steps to take to ensure it's the best use of time, resources, and manpower:

**Goal-setting.** Narrow in on what you want to accomplish: driving revenue, data collection, more website traffic, maximiz-

ing underutilized space, repositioning and reaching new audiences? The path varies depending on the ultimate goal, as does determining which brands will be the best fit.

**Activating.** Determine your best partners and activations, make a connection, create a contract, make it happen! Is it a rotating pop-up retail shop in the lobby? A cocktail using a new infused water on the menu for a limited time? Regardless of how "big" the partnership is, a level of planning, division of responsibility and preparation is involved.

**Maximizing.** Market to get the message out before, during and after through media relations, content creation and activation invites. PR is just one piece of this puzzle as marketing and sales teams should be engaged as well. At completion, tracking the results helps to determine the benefit.

Here are some examples of hotel partnerships from the last 12-18 months that measured success in different ways:

## Exposure-driven

When a popular Northeast resort needed to give travelers a reason to visit in its colder off-season, PR got one of Manhattan's buzziest beauty shops to pop-up on site. The resort offered an opportunity to bring the brand to a new market, and the beauty brand offered an experience not currently available even in the same state. The partnership drew in a crowd in a slow time of year, awareness from media participation, real-time visuals from influencer attendance and social engagement. The resort and beauty company had a similar customer and saw value in aligning their brands and the result was mutually beneficial exposure.

## Customer-driven

A luxury Jersey Shore hotel was game for trying something new to raise its profile with New Yorkers. A business challenge the hotel faces is transportation, as nearly the only way to get to this resort is to drive and Manhattanites don't always own cars. So, PR connected the resort to a luxury car brand with a rental division, aligning the brand pillars of both and creating a guest incentive for car rentals so each brand's customers—and business—could benefit from the relationship.

## Message-driven

A well-visited resort in Florida was striving to be a leader in holistic wellness to complement its already well-received luxury travel experience. To cater to their

goals, the resort enlisted PR and destination support to coordinate a Wellness Festival at the property. Influential wellness and fitness brand partners led keynotes, panels and classes, media was brought in to cover, and packages were available for consumers. Dozens of media placements and social posts helped solidify the resort's commitment to wellness on-property and led to the event becoming an annual festival.

Partnerships are generation-proof. Meaning, there are brands, organizations, experiences out there that appeal to every age group, income level and type of traveler. That means there's a chance to use the partnership tactic regardless of your demographic. The supporting public relations campaign and marketing efforts should lean different ways depending on the target, but the concept of a partnership overall has mass appeal — and trackability. Here are some stats to consider when game-planning on your outreach. Google shared a statistic in June that by 2020, 85 percent of content consumed online will be video. This directly correlates to the Gen Zers who absorb the majority of their news and entertainment online, on social media, and through sensory engagement. Business Insider shared insight from a recent survey by the Reuters Institute that says digital outlets serve as the main source of news (64 percent) for those under 35. So, announce your partnership on social media (for those under 35) and traditional media (for those over 35).

With dozens of new hotel brands manifesting in the last five years—the most common themes being wellness, lifestyle or residentially-inspired designs—it's more important than ever for mature brands, individual resorts or companies in any industry to look toward differentiating. Partnerships offer the chance to do something new, and in many cases, temporary, to maintain relevancy on an ongoing basis without much commitment. Not every partnership needs to be brokered by PR or a third party. Amazing connections may already exist and simply need some strategy and insight to maximize their potential.

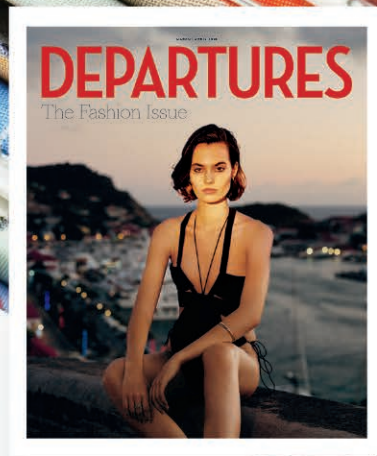
So, associate, collaborate, cooperate: there's never a bad time to create the human connection and partner up on storytelling, content creation or innovative experiences.

*Tanya Scalisi is a Senior Director at J Public Relations in New York. ○*



Tanya Scalisi





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# Creating lifelong brand ambassadors in the travel market

**With today's travelers relying more on self-discovery than traditional channels, PR pros must shift their marketing strategy to stay ahead.**

By Lou Hammond

**W**hether searching for a solo getaway or family reunion destination, consumers are driving the bus to make travel decisions. A recent survey found that only 28 percent of consumers turn to magazines and newspapers to discover new brands while 53 percent rely on friends and family and 42 percent Google.

While these statistics may seem grim for PR professionals, it's actually great news.

As an agency representing 20-plus destinations spanning cities, states, counties and countries across the globe, LHG is an industry leader in destination marketing and has a steady finger on the pulse of what makes travelers tick.

Instead of considering media coverage the end-all-be-all of public relations success, smart marketers focus on creating lifelong brand ambassadors who will evangelize a destination via word of mouth and social media. This approach requires a shift in the way PR professionals tackle media relations, but, when done correctly, pays big dividends.

To begin, destinations should take a hard look at their content marketing strategy and diversify efforts across earned, paid, shared and owned media to ensure each spoke of the marketing wheel complements the others. Think of this wheel as the framework for a successful campaign and content as the fuel that powers the wheel.

Here are four ways to create lifelong brand ambassadors through a successful content marketing plan:

## **Start with the traveler and work back**

Before proactively pushing out content to potential visitors, destinations must first define their audience through robust customer personas. To do this, start with your ideal lifelong brand ambassador and work backward. What are they reading? Who are they following? How do they consume information? Americans spend an average of 5.4 hours each day on their smart devices, so practitioners must pinpoint the best ways to get in front of their primary audience to get a piece of the pie. Monitoring age, gender, household income and geographic locations through Google Analytics is a great place to start. From there, you can also view referral traffic to see who is coming from news outlets versus social media or what key words people are searching to find your brand. Breaking down this

demographic information is the first step to narrowing down the primary channels of communication and will direct your strategy moving forward.

## **Create valuable content**

If content is the fuel that powers the marketing wheel, PR specialists must pay careful attention to the type of fuel they are infusing into their strategies. Just as gassing up a car with the wrong fuel type can cause serious damage, destinations must only create and disseminate content that is both relevant and valuable to the customer.

Now that you know your audience front and back, you must create targeted messaging that will resonate. Because today's consumer is inundated with brand messages, yours must be able to neatly communicate your destination's unique value proposition. What can you say that no one else can? What are the leading highlights that set you apart from other destinations or attractions? Your destination's unique value proposition will serve as the tent poles for your content strategy, so it's imperative that you nail down both the target audience and key messages. From there, ensure that these key messages come across loud and clear in your content — whether it's a blog, social, email or interview with a journalist.

An increase in fans, followers and web traffic is a good indication that steps one and two have been successful. Once this is established, it's time to move from discovery mode to conversion mode.

## **Rise through the Google ranks**

Now that you've reached your target audience with relevant and valuable content through traditional or social media, you must now make it easy for them to find your website. Since we know that 42 percent of consumers turn to Google to discover brands, a high search engine ranking is paramount. Google's algorithm is changing more and more every day, but we do know a few key things about what types of websites it prioritizes. The secret to a high-ranking site is — you guessed it — good content!

Websites that regularly publish original, relevant and valuable content will rise through the search engine ranks. If Google sees that website visitors are leaving your pages quickly (as seen through a high bounce rate), you'll be dinged. If Google sees that you are not refreshing your web content, you'll also be dinged. Google pri-

oritizes content by how fresh it is and how long a site keeps visitors before they bounce, so moving up in search engine rankings is a top way to determine success in this step.

## **Exceed expectations**

Once a customer makes a purchasing decision, brands are one step closer to creating lifelong ambassadors.

The only thing standing between a purchase and brand loyalty is a delightful experience. This experience must validate all the expectations that a consumer has made during the discovery and conversion phases.

As such, a company must train all guest-facing employees to be the face and voice of the company. Our agency utilizes a tool called a "message house" to ensure key messages are communicated during guest interactions. Once a visitor leaves your destination, smart brands use content to stay engaged through email and social media, providing a two-way dialogue to ensure feedback is heard and laying the groundwork for a future visit.

While converting a passive explorer into a lifelong brand ambassador is no easy feat, it can be done through captivating content deployed across earned, paid, shared and owned media. From discovery to conversion to engagement, PR pros must infuse strong content at every point in the marketing funnel. And after some 35 years in this industry, I'm proud to report that good content is still king.

*Lou Rena Hammond is Chairman and Founder of Lou Hammond Group, with offices in New York, Charleston, Miami, Los Angeles, Houston and Denver. ○*



Lou Hammond

## **PR news brief**

### **WPP sells the Farm**

WPP chief Mark Read is ironing out a deal to sell The Farm, film/TV post-production unit, to US-based Picture Shop, according to the *Times of London*.

Former WPP CEO Martin Sorrell acquired a majority stake in The Farm in 2004.

Founders Vikki Dunn and Nicky Sargent own a 25 percent stake in the studio.

The divestiture is part of Read's strategy to downsize WPP and focus on its creative and technology offerings.

At the June 12 annual general meeting, Read said his plan to sell a majority stake in the Kantar research business "is progressing in line with our expectations."

Reiterating 2019 financial guidance, Read noted revenues will be down 1.5 percent to 2.0 percent "with stronger headwinds in the first half, due to client assignment losses in the latter part of 2018."





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# Wellness is a winning strategy for the travel industry

**Responding to traveler demand, the hospitality industry has begun employing a suite of wellness strategies in recent years. Now, some resorts are going a step beyond and making wellness programs a focus of their brand experience.**

By Allyn Magrino

Not long ago, a hotel's "wellness strategy" was often limited to an old exercise bike along with some weights in a windowless basement room, and perhaps a bowl of sad-looking fruit in the lobby area.

Luckily for us—and the travel community at large—the hospitality industry has realized the enormous benefits of investing in sound wellness strategies. According to the Global Wellness Institute, wellness tourism is scheduled to become a \$919 billion market and grow at an average rate of 7.5 percent a year through 2022, while the growth rate for overall tourism over the same period is only 6.4 percent. Given the demand from travelers and the economic impact of employing such wellness strategies, the travel industry has responded with more programming, upgraded fitness facilities, healthier menus and entire resorts whose whole focus is wellness.

Gyms are no longer relegated to out-of-the-way spaces with no views, but are given prime real estate. For example, both the Hotel Pitrizza and the Cala di Volpe resorts on the Costa Smeralda of Sardinia have state-of-the-art gyms outdoors, in prime spaces next to a pool overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. While guests certainly relish partaking in the resorts' legendary Bellinis and cuisine, they're equally committed to keeping their fitness routines while vacationing. Similarly, the bustling Fontainebleau Miami Beach is known for its beautiful pools and lively environment, whose guests want to enjoy as much sun and excitement as they can. As such, the hotel's floor-to-ceiling windowed gym overlooks the Atlantic Ocean as well as the resort's legendary pools, allowing gym goers the opportunity to not miss a minute of the visual excitement offered by the property.

Some resorts are going a step beyond and offering "green exercise" programs, combining wellness and sustainability. JOALI Maldives offers an outdoor workout regime using RAW Fitness equipment — everything from handcrafted wooden structures to coconut hand weights and natural fiber ropes, all utilizing natural, recyclable materials from the resort, such as tree trunks, coconuts, wood, sand and rocks. This approach to "green exercise" is known to have positive physical and psy-

chological health benefits, including reducing stress and mental fatigue, and improving concentration and cognitive function.

Conventions and group meetings have often had a reputation for offering an excuse for attendees to eat and drink with abandon. Today, meeting planners are more often than not requesting healthier meals and snack options for attendees, along with yoga and stretch breaks or other group fitness activity. The JW Marriott Miami Turnberry Resort & Spa offers The Healthy menu for morning breaks, including everything from fresh fruit and nuts to all-natural protein bars and fruit-infused waters and ice tea. The Hilton Portland offers groups everything from Baby Goat Yoga to Multnomah Meditation sessions to a team running session with the director of F&B over some of Portland's famous bridges.

Even the legendary Las Vegas buffet has turned a corner, with the focus being less on "all-you-can-eat" of fried foods and more on a variety of healthy options. For example, the Wicked Spoon at the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas offers everything from freshly-grilled fish to a build-your-own-Pho bar, along with vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free dishes and desserts.

Healthy options are even being found at bars, with mocktails and lower alcohol beverages along with those with a sustainable

Today's travelers are increasingly devoting vacation time to fitness retreats, where they can focus their entire time on fitness, healthy eating and learning new strategies for maintaining their health. The Ranch Malibu offers four-, seven- and 10-day results-oriented fitness and wellness programs. Dedicated to improving the quality of one's life by improving their health, the programs recalibrate the mind and body through an intense fitness and wellness regimen paired with a highly structured, plant-based nutritional diet. Each day consists of eight hours of low impact activity — centered around a breathtaking and varied four-hour group hike each morning — afternoon nap time, fitness classes, yoga and daily massage.

SHA Wellness Clinic is an internationally recognized well-being clinic located in Alicante, Spain which offers 12 curated health programs expertly designed to meet the personal needs and objectives of each individual guest, including natural therapies, scientific medicine and healthy nutrition. The wellness clinic offers more than 300 treatments and a staff of over 35 doctors from more than 40 nationalities worldwide. Guest can choose from a variety of programs, from four to 30 days, covering everything from weight loss to sleep problems to menopause to smoking cessation, all while enjoying the benefits of a luxury resort with views of the Mediterranean.

Lastly, hotels realize that their guests' focus on wellness doesn't end when they go to bed. As such many properties are investing in state-of-the-art beds, such as The Estate Yountville, which outfitted its premier Villa accommodations with luxurious Hastens beds, made by hand in Sweden and prized for their natural materials, comfort and ability to provide a perfect sleep. And it's not just five-star hotels that are investing in sleep programs; Motto by Hilton, a new affordable lifestyle brand with hotels in urban locations, has put an emphasis on an elevated sleep experience, including premium mattresses, blackout window shades, a white noise app, and sound absorbing materials throughout the room.

Wellness programs provide winning strategies for both travel providers as well as guests, reaping not only economic benefits but those of health and happiness.

*Allyn Magrino is President and Chief Revenue Officer at Magrino PR. ○*



Allyn Magrino



The outdoor fitness center at the Hotel Pitrizza in Sardinia

message making up a bigger part of cocktail menus. For example, Canopy by Hilton, through its partnership with Proprietors LLC., sources cocktail ingredients from local distilleries and farms whenever possible. These drink menus have the smallest environmental footprint possible by creating waste-free cocktails and reusing leftover garnishes to make syrups and infusions.





# Are we there yet?



A destination is only as worthy as the journey you take to get there. Once you know where you need to go, we help you build your brand based on experiences and values; grow your organization through strategic communication; and protect your reputation when things don't go as planned.

See how we help travel and tourism organizations build, grow and protect at [PadillaCo.com](https://PadillaCo.com).

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connect with purpose

# Why independent hotels need PR more than ever

Garnering press coverage for independent hotel brands is more challenging than ever, which only underscores the importance of finding the right PR agency .

By Jennifer Hawkins

A few weeks ago, Bloomberg reported that Warren Buffett is “pessimistic on the newspaper industry at a time when public relations specialists are increasingly outnumbering journalists.” I can’t say I’m surprised. The six-to-one ratio of publicists to reporters is startling, creating a need for a specialist PR professional to break through the clutter.

The above spotlights both a challenge and an opportunity for independent hotels longing for quality media coverage and for the overabundance of PR professionals tasked with securing it.

The upside of our PR profession growing is spotlighting the importance of what we, as PR professionals, provide and do. With increased competition, independent hotels can’t expect that simply opening doors is all it takes to draw guests. While major hotel brands usually have significant budgets to create visibility through advertising and marketing campaigns, independent hotels need a more strategic “in” through earned media coverage, making the case for hiring the right PR agency with talent for targeted outreach as the way to get it.

## Creativity is key

Gone are the days when PR agencies were mere order-takers executing plans of in-house management teams. While we still collaborate with marketing teams, the main priority today is thinking and acting creatively to increase the visibility of clients with our own strategy.

In March, Hawkins International stepped beyond press releases, social media blasts and even trade shows to produce our first-ever “Spring Hospitality Showcase” at a venue in Lower Manhattan. Dubbed “It’s All in the Details,” the event provided nearly two-dozen travel and wellness clients a rare opportunity to directly captivate New York-based media and influencers with newsworthy experiences that illustrated their key luxury offerings and selling points.

Our clients were thoroughly engaged: Casa Madrona Hotel & Spa, an independent property based in Sausalito, California, highlighted its recent renovation by displaying a Wellness Bed by Eight offered in its new wellness guest rooms, with a bed-mounted selfie camera for event attendees to snap imagery and share across social media. Nomadic Expeditions, an award-winning independent provider of luxury adventure

travel to Mongolia, poured tastings of Mongolian vodka as internationally renowned musician Jigjiddorj Nanzaddorj dazzled the crowd on a traditional morin khuur fiddle. It was truly a special event bringing our clients to life in New York.

## Give them what they need

With the ranks of journalists dwindling, it’s important for independent hotels and their PR agencies to be even more cognizant of media’s needs when they’re working on a story. The Bloomberg article on the newspaper industry caused a tweet from a frustrated journalist: “Don’t reach out and ask what I’m working on/what’s top of mind for me right now. That’s popping up in my inbox and asking me to do work when you are the one who is technically supposed to be pitching me. Look up what I write and tailor a pitch.”

There are many ways to get a journalist’s attention, but least effective is bombarding them with needless communications that won’t interest them and misdirected information they’ll never use. PR pitching must be targeted: get to know what a journalist covers before sending a pitch; provide less information rather than more; compose communications in a way that makes them keep reading; always bear in mind the “no photos, no coverage” rule; tempt them with exclusives, if at all possible; and always, always, always be timely — nothing is less useful to a journalist than yesterday’s news.

## Authenticity speaks for itself

Along those same lines, PR agencies need to be selective and assured regarding the clients they take on and work with. If I’ve learned anything over the years, it’s that authenticity is its own best asset. If I can get a media-trained client in front of a journalist, they’ll inevitably tell a compelling story themselves with no smoke and mirrors required — and my agency benefits from the trust we gain.

Similarly, independent hotels should be familiar with other clients in a PR agency’s portfolio. Having a diverse client base of a global mix of luxury hotel groups and boutique properties has always been a boon for our agency because it speaks to how we’ve grown our reputation and expertise; we know how to curate what a journalist needs. If they’re working on a story that may not be a fit for one client, we have others to present and give them what they need. We’ve become a one-stop shop for

luxury news, innovative hospitality services and trends.

## Selective selling points

Comfortable rooms, stylish settings and even celebrity clientele are impressive selling points for garnering media coverage for independent hotels. But what else has a property got? It’s important for hotel owners and their agencies to think broadly and creatively for angles they may not have realized. Those might include bridal, food and beverage, wellness, spa, the surrounding destination, even distinctive personalities working on the property. Hotels are little worlds unto themselves with vibrant personalities that we love bringing to light.

Take, for instance, our longtime client XV Beacon in Boston. An independent property surrounded by major hotel brands with sizable budgets in the heart of town, XV Beacon has consistently appeared on lists of the best hotels in Boston since we helped launch it at the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve 2000. Our 20-year (and counting) PR program has focused on the little details that set XV Beacon apart in a highly competitive market: from the hotel’s extraordinary wine collection to its art-bedecked interiors, its contemporary rooms including cozy fireplaces in every guest room to its setting in a turn-of-the-20th-century Beaux-Arts building on historic Beacon Hill. There’s always something new and interesting for us to showcase to the media with an independent hotel like XV Beacon.

## Love you, too

Finally, in an age when media is taking a lot of unnecessary heat, it’s vital for independent hotels and their PR agencies to recognize journalists as partners. Treating those who cover the news with respect, providing them what they need and caring about them as people, as well as professionals, pay real dividends and make for life-long genuine friendships.

I’m happy to count many journalists as friends, and I know the feeling is mutual. After all, the tweet about PR people ended with: “Love you bye.”

*Jennifer Hawkins is Founder and President of Hawkins International Public Relations. ○*



Jennifer Hawkins



# It's all about digital — or is it?

PR pros today often give in to the temptation to focus their efforts on all things digital. In the process, they might lose sight of the idea that strategy is always the starting point for reaching, connecting and ultimately, influencing travel decisions

By Andy Jorishie

You've heard it before. In fact, you might've even been the one to say it. A proclamation that "it's all about digital" and that nothing else matters. We live in a world where, for the first time this year, the percentage of travelers that begin their planning process on a digital device will exceed 90 percent. We live in a world where Google is evolving to become the Amazon of travel, and amazontravel.com can book an experience for you around the world and back. We influence audiences through public relations and marketing communications that'll likely rely on a click on a digital device as the final conversion on their path to book a hotel, a flight, a meal or anything else that makes up the travel experience.

So, perhaps it's true that digital is everything. Or, is it? In my world, strategy is the starting point and the "result" is the "everything" that really matters. So, certainly the broadest definition of digital channels is critical. And keeping up with what appears to be changes happening at a radical pace is now the common course of business. The latest travel technology was developed to stay ahead of consumers who're planning more vacations and short escapes in the heat of the moment. Welcome is an iOS app that will help travelers build their itineraries through artificial intelligence fueled by recommendations and reviews. And, nearly 50 percent of smartphone users in the U.S. are comfortable researching, planning and booking a trip literally in the palm of their hand. The advance of 5G technology and the race by travel brands, OTAs and the technology providers themselves means the travel category is a proving ground for those who believe nothing else matters beyond the digital channel.

I cringe in a meeting when someone says that "digital is changing things." That already happened. The reality is that travel consumers are changing things because they've adapted to the tools available to them, and have compressed their ability to connect, decide and experience travel. The "dreaming" phase of travel planning is now done during a nap. Yes, personalization is critical. Above all, there's a need to match the travelers desire for personal messaging, personal itineraries, personal experi-

ences, personal time. Almost 60 percent of travelers even want brands to customize the content they deliver to them based on past behavior and travel preferences. And, the growing desire of a growing number of consumers to disconnect or reduce the amount of time they are connected through a digital device is also part of personalization.

There are so many shifts taking place in the consumer landscape today, that it would take far more words than this article would allow to address the coming influence of change. The desire to revisit your favorite childhood memories. Growing number of "sober social scenes" being created as part of the adult experience. Airbnb creating its own media channels to deliver more long-form video as people continue to prioritize experiences over things. And, don't get me started on the influence of Millennials as parents, and Gen Z as ... well, as Gen Z.

I'd also admit to cringing a few times when someone says the definition of public relations is changing. That already happened too. And, not simply adapting to embrace social media, or focusing on influencers. Public relations in the travel category has changed partly because we could no longer sit back and allow our advertising counterparts to drive strategy. And, the ability of our teams to push the envelope of creativity to gain the attention of a travel audience in virtually any channel that provides a platform. And, yes, there's no doubt that we have influenced change through our ability to capture a significant share-of-voice for our clients through digital channels. We're also held more accountable than ever before, partly because of the number of tools, technology and methodology for measurement, and partly because clients want to know there's a connection between their investment in public relations and the bottom-line.

So, if all of this is true, and so much of the world and the travel consumer landscape is lined with digital connectivity, how could anything else matter?

Have you sat in a meeting lately that's totally focused on digital? The conversations have shifted from technology and the digital transformation of organizations—another term that makes me cringe—back

to the consumer. The buzzword in digital today is "consumer centric." And, the struggle to create an immersive storyline that is only available through digital channels is real.

Don't get me wrong. At The Zimmerman Agency, we embrace digital. The growth of our digital, social and analytics teams has consumed more than office space. But, as digital is focusing on being more consumer centric, public relations is perhaps the most powerful discipline to reach, connect and influence travel decisions that aren't made by digital — they're made by a consumer. And, the consumer isn't yet living life through an Oculus headset, or allowing Alexa to determine where and when they go on vacation, or how a meeting planner will satisfy the needs of the attendee.

As public relations practitioners we aren't immune to the temptation to focus all of our efforts on digital. It's hard to believe it, but now that may actually be the easier route to take.

Particularly for travel clients, in public relations, we've never lost sight of the fact that our efforts must be consumer centric. And, potential travelers attend events, participate in activations; read articles; pay attention to influencers; take part in promotions; generate, share and curate content; read reviews; watch travel shows and let their voices be heard as they convince friends and family of the right place to go, stay and eat. And, while they may book through digital, the world around them is still not experienced on a laptop.

If someone in a meeting said that digital was not the most important channel today — I'd cringe at that too. Through public relations we've shifted the delivery of messages from a traditional consideration funnel where awareness was the primary focus of PR to a fuller funnel approach where consumer centric messages are delivered throughout the funnel and the most important outcome of our efforts is now measured on the bottom-line.

Andy Jorishie is EVP Director of Strategy at The Zimmerman Agency. ○



Andy Jorishie

# O'Dwyer's guide to TRAVEL AND TOURISM PR



The CIIC team hosting a wine tasting event with Barton & Guestier at Aliz Hotel Time Square.

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Since 2003, New York-based 5W Public Relations (5WPR) has worked with widely known and emerging brands, corporations and high-profile individuals. Our practice areas include B2C (Beauty & Fashion, Consumer Brands, Entertainment, Food & Beverage, Health & Wellness, Travel & Hospitality, Technology, Nonprofit), B2B (Corporate Communications and Reputation Management), Public Affairs, Crisis Communications, and Digital Strategy. We have a 360-degree approach to PR, social media, branding and digital marketing that delivers game-changing results to our clients.

Our more than 150 tenacious and creative communications practitioners develop and execute creative campaigns that connect our clients with their target audiences in memorable ways. Every aspect

of our programs is designed to impact our clients' bottom line, bringing leading businesses a resourceful, bold and results-driven approach to communication.

Clients include: The Trade Desk, Zeta Global, CareerBuilder, SAP NS2, Jill Stuart, Santa Margherita, Bowlero Corp., and many more.

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**Matt Kovacs**, president

BLAZE is the go-to PR agency for lifestyle brands hungry for a real piece of the marketshare. Fresh and seasoned, our boutique agency is comprised of veteran practitioners who stay one step ahead of trends and will not rest on the laurels of past successes. Our media strategies are meaty, creative and on-point because they are backed by a thoughtful process that considers the particular world of each brand.

Recent Awards: *PR Week*, Best Places to Work; *LA Business Journal*, Best Places to Work; One Planet Awards, Gold — PR Campaign of the Year; One Planet Awards,

Bronze — Product Launch of the Year

Clients include: AmaWaterways, Hilton Hotels, Marriott Hotels, Santa Barbara Airport, Ty Warner Hotels & Resorts

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**Carolyn Izzo-Feldman**, President & Founder  
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Carolyn Izzo Integrated Communications (CIIC) is an award-winning, highly respected full-service public relations and social media firm specializing in creating dynamic campaigns for the travel & tourism, real estate, hospitality, food & beverage and lifestyle industries. The CIIC team is made up of enthusiastic and connected PR professionals who bring 25+ years of combined experience from several of the country's top PR firms.

For 23 years, CIIC has been dedicated to servicing the travel & tour-

ism and real estate development markets with top-tier public relations campaigns and award-winning results. CIIC has represented leading hotels, hospitality brands and tourism boards in both the US and internationally, including, Marriott International, Hyatt Hotels, Hilton Hotels, Solmar Hotels & Resorts, Vivo Resorts, Aliz Hotel Times Square, Krystal Hotels & Resorts, El Ganzo Hotel, Atlantic Hotel & Spa, and the destinations of Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, Cancun, Riviera Maya/Tulum, and Barbados, to name a few.

CIIC's work is strategic, creative and results-driven, having been honored with Media Relations Awards by PR Daily, as well as numerous HSMIAI (Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International) Adrian Awards across Gold, Silver and Bronze categories. With offices in New York and Miami, CIIC is an esteemed member of LATAM PR and is a Certified Women's Business Enterprise by WBENC.

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**Teresa Delaney, Nichole DiBenedetto**, Partners

Based in New York City, D&D PR specializes in luxury travel, hospitality and lifestyle and is led by principals — Nichole DiBenedetto and Teresa Delaney — who have more than 40 years of combined experience in lifestyle and hospitality marketing.

Passionate about telling our clients' individual stories, the agency was born from a deep love of travel and personal curiosity of global exploration. From hotels and resorts to independent brands and destinations, each of our clients have a distinct tale to tell, inspiring us to be fervent storytellers. The D&D PR team gets a thrill from placing coverage in the most sought-after media and celebrating every success along with our clients. We take nothing for granted in the ever-changing world of travel and media. This is why we partner with our clients. We take the time to immerse ourselves in their world and



to discover first-hand the unique experiences they offer, so we can communicate their message with authentic enthusiasm.

No two clients' needs are alike, which is why each client receives a tailored approach. Supported by a strong team, the agency's partners oversee client campaigns, helping to curate the important details and respond directly to individual needs. We choose our partners carefully, protect their brands vehemently and tell their stories passionately. This level of commitment is what continues to stoke our creative fire and drive D&D PR to push ourselves and our team to exceed expectations.

Clients: Bankside Hotel – London; The Bannister Hotel & Yacht Club; Casa Bonita Tropical Lodge; Cox & Kings, Discover Your Italy; El Portillo Residences; Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun; Los Altos Residences; Mint Hotels & Residences; Punta Rucia Lodge; Ray Caye Private Island Resort; Saba Tourist Bureau.

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**Cathleen Decker, Stacy Royal,**  
Partners

Decker/Royal is an integrated communications workshop, merging rich storytelling, cleverly crafted content and strategic partnerships to connect audiences to its growing list of travel clients.

From prominent freelancers and qualified bloggers to consumer and trade print, digital and broadcast media, we maintain relationships with top influencers in the industry to maximize and ensure consistent coverage. Our ability to create narrative extends to blogposts, traditional copywriting and advertorials, a complementary skill set that recognizes the blurring line between advertising, marketing and traditional PR.

It's why we craft holistic campaigns, weaving media relations, strategic influencer marketing and social media tactics with events, activations and thought leadership opportunities all aimed at one purpose: delivering measurable results.

This year, we added TRAVELSAVERS, the organization of more than 2,500 independently owned



**For Contiki, the world's leading travel company for 18-35 year olds, D/R created #VoteWithNoRegrets, joining the national movement urging young people to vote to raise awareness of brand in the United States.**

travel agencies and personal travel assistant, App in the Air to our roster which among others, includes French retreat Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa, Uniworld, destination Reno Tahoe and Trafalgar.

## DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLORS INTERNATIONAL (DCI)

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**Karyl Leigh Barnes,** President,  
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One Agency. Two Specialized Practice Areas. Established in 1960, Development Counsellors International (DCI) focuses exclusively on travel marketing and economic development. During the last half century, we have worked with more than 500 cities, regions, states, provinces and countries to help them attract business investment, visitors and

talent. Our Tourism Practice partners with destinations to increase leisure, corporate and association visitor arrivals and spending. How? By winning the support of key influencers — media, digital influencers, meeting planners and the travel trade. Our goal always? Combine smart strategy with the right tactics to deliver powerful results. DCI's work has been recognized annually by the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International, achieving Best In Show and Platinum awards. DCI is globally connected through TAAN Worldwide, a network of 46 agencies in 29 countries.

## ELEVEN SIX

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**Katie Barr Cornish,** Principal  
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Eleven Six prides itself on creating a new normal in the PR agency world. It is not business as usual at this young and rapidly growing company.

Our media relationships are deep and varied. We seamlessly pitch across multiple verticals, placing our clients beyond the travel pages and in business, arts and fashion pieces. Our thinking is strategic and most importantly, creative. We push the creativity envelope, always aiming to spark the trends

and not just stay ahead of them. Our innovative campaigns deliver tangible, profitable results.

With a focus that goes beyond just public relations and includes marketing and social media, we are driven not only by how much press we can secure for our clients but rather how we can positively impact their bottom lines. The marketing and social media tactics we employ are creative, cost-effective, and realistic to execute. And most importantly, they drive sales and impact the bottom line.

Over the past year, Eleven Six has handled the openings of five Six Senses hotels and resorts globally, introduced the world to the first-ever rideshare submarine in The Great Barrier Reef — scUber, brought the Day of the Dead holiday to life in New York City in conjunction with Andaz Mayakoba through a series of partnerships and activations and signed on new clients such as Cradock Terry Hotel, Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa, King Charles Inn and Pestana Hotel Group. Additional clients include: Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya, Cavit Wines, Kimpton Hotel Eventi, Kimpton Ink48, Kimpton Muse Hotel, Remote Lands, Red Savannah, Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, The Ritz-Carlton New York Westchester, Tourism & Events Queensland and Visit Richmond.

## FAHLGREN MORTINE

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**Neil Mortine,** President and CEO  
**Marty McDonald,** Executive Vice President, Tourism Practice Leader

As a communications-led integrated agency, Fahlgren Mortine works with clients in 29 states, and is recognized as a firm that gets results. The agency has been recognized with dozens of national PR and tourism awards for enhancing brand perception, including Silver and Bronze Anvils from PRSA, Mercury and Destiny Awards from the U.S. Travel Association and many others. Headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, Fahlgren Mortine has locations in Colorado, Florida, Idaho, New York, South Carolina and West Virginia. Travel industry client experience includes Office of TourismOhio; Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of

Continued on page 26



## FAHLGREN MORTINE

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Commerce/CVB; Travel Nevada; Airstream; Niagara USA; Visit Sun Valley; North Dakota Department of Commerce/Tourism; Ski Utah; and many other destinations, regions, hospitality properties and more.

## FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN

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French/West/Vaughan (FWV), the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, is home to one of the country's leading Travel & Tourism practices.

For more than two decades, FWV's dedicated Travel and Tourism practice has worked with and helped grow a number of destinations, resorts, municipalities, attractions, museums, historic regions and event properties. We start by translating a client's assets into meaningful and emotional storylines and follow that up with meticulously crafted, research-driven campaigns that have been successful at increasing awareness, driving visitation and creating uniquely shareable visitor experiences.

Our experienced and passionate team of storytellers have helped travel, tourism, economic development and special event interests find their voice, from the mountains of Gatlinburg, Tenn., to the islands of the Dutch Caribbean.

Current travel and tourism industry clients include Concord Hospitality Enterprises, a hotel developer and operator of over 100 hotel properties across North America; the Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau (Wilmington, Carolina Beach, Kure Beach and Wrightsville Beach N.C.); the Wilmington Convention Center; the Greenville (N.C.) Convention & Visitors Bureau; the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and Dorothea Dix Park, a 308 acre destination park in Ra-



**From serene beaches to savage sand dunes, the Fahlgren Mortine team takes a hands-on approach to storytelling.**

leigh, N.C.

Prior travel and tourism work includes campaigns for Divi Resorts and its nine Caribbean properties; cooperative marketing campaigns for the tourism organizations of Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, St. Croix (U.S.V.I. Dept. of Tourism) and St. Maarten; the Dude Ranchers' Association; Gatlinburg, Tenn.; Cabarrus County, N.C. (home to NASCAR's Lowe's Motor Speedway); Oakland County, Mich.; Branson, Mo.; the Old Salem Moravian Village (N.C.); America's Historic Triangle (Williamsburg, Va.); the Greater Raleigh CVB (N.C.); Tweetsie Railroad (N.C.); Trailways Transportation System (Fairfax, Va.); the National Cowboy Hall of Fame & Western Heritage Center; the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame + Museum; and the

Washington Tourism Development Authority (N.C.).

FWV is a 15-time National Agency of the Year honoree and the recipient of over 900 awards for individual client campaigns. Founded in April 1997 by agency Chairman and CEO Rick French, FWV employs 113 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its headquarters in Raleigh, N.C., and offices in New York City, Los Angeles and Tampa. Operating divisions of FWV include FWV Fetching, the agency's specialized pet and veterinary medicine practice; AMP3 PR, a NYC-based PR, social media and influencer marketing agency; and Prix Productions, a longform documentary and feature film production company.



**French/West/Vaughan worked closely with the Wilmington and Beaches CVB to welcome visitors back to the destination following Hurricane Florence, including hosting a FAM trip for national media.**

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At Hawkins International, travel is our passion. As an award-winning public relations and communications agency, Hawkins International has built an impressive global reputation for full-scope and impactful integrated social and digital campaigns.

A bi-coastal agency with offices in New York and Los Angeles, Hawkins International boasts a strong team of communication professionals that seamlessly cross from traditional public strategies to social activations in dynamic and stimulating ways on behalf of a roster of internationally acclaimed hospitality clients.

With expertise in creative, engaging and multi-dimensional storytelling, Hawkins International promotes its clients through calculated media relations, influencer activations, inventive experiences and the development of newsworthy content for its prestigious clients which include hotels, resorts, and real estate and lifestyle brands. While Hawkins International specializes in new property launches, it continues to successfully drive national and regional coverage and engagement for its 60+ clients, including Accor, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Domio, La Compagnie, Seabourn Cruise Line, and Wilderness Safaris, among others.

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Hemsworth Communications is a full-service public relations agency that specializes in travel, tourism and hospitality. Capabil-



ities include brand strategy, media relations, promotions, social media, event planning, thought leadership and more.

With an impressive global reach, Hemsworth leverages its Passion. Insight. Connections. To surpass client expectations. The agency has been hired by companies large and small because of its track record for delivering outstanding results with a distinctively personal touch.

Ranked one of the country's fastest-growing agencies for five years running, Hemsworth has received numerous accolades including Adrian Awards, American Business Awards, "Best Places to Work" Awards and others.

Clients include Air Partner, AmaWaterways, Best Western Hotels & Resorts, Coral Hospitality's Georgia State Parks & Lodges, Driftwood, the HSMAI Foundation, Margaritaville Holdings, Massanutten Resort, Oasis Travel Network, Orion Span, SmartCruiser.com, Sonesta Fort Lauderdale, VIKAND, and others.

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HUNTER is an award-winning consumer products and services marketing communications firm with offices in New York and London, staff based across the US and international affiliate partners extending our reach around the globe.

Founded in 1989, Hunter has grown to be one of North America's most recognized and resourced firms providing strategic communications counsel and services to major consumer brands, products and services. Our motto is "we earn it," and at Hunter we focus on doing so in three key areas: earning consumer attention, earning client relationships and earning staff dedication. With a broad range of expertise in many industries, we proudly serve brands across Travel + Restaurants, Food + Beverage, Wine + Spirits, Home + Lifestyle, Health + Beauty, Retail + E-commerce, Education, Fashion, and Toys + Games.

Hunter offers a suite of global



The Impact PR & Communications team pictured at its office in the Hudson Valley.

services including a combination of communications strategies & architectures, creative campaigns & content partnerships, content creation & toolkits, and market counsel & executional support. Hunter's global offerings aim to unite marketers around the world to speak the same brand language but in their own native tongues and cultural vernaculars. The output of these efforts is to maintain consistency, control messaging, and maximize resources for our clients.

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IMAGINE PR is a New York-based, award-winning boutique public relations agency with a smart approach to hospitality and travel public relations. We specialize in experiential and luxury travel PR and work with a portfolio of key players that span the globe.

Clients Include: Ellerman House, Cape Town; Hotel Arts Barcelona, a Ritz-Carlton Company Hotel; Jacada Travel; Marchay; Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve; Natural Selection; Quasar Expeditions; Robin Pope Safaris; Singita; Slovenian Tourist Board; The Broadway Collection; The Draycott Hotel; The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, Thailand; The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala

Lumpur, Malaysia; The Saxon Hotel; ThirdHome; Tschuggen Hotel Group; YTL Hotels.

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**Filomena Fanelli**, CEO/Founder  
**Kate Wark**, Exec. VP

Impact PR & Communications crafts meaningful, strategic campaigns that help our clients exceed their goals by attracting attention and generating results that help their businesses flourish. Our team works tirelessly and leverages our relationships with media and influencers to create real value for our clients. Based in New York's Hudson Valley region, Impact PR & Communications is a certified Women Business Enterprise (WBE) and has just celebrated five years in business. Practice areas include travel and tourism; retail, real estate, design and construction; food and beverage; and non-profits. Our work for clients like Dutchess Tourism and Angry Orchard is strategically executed, award-winning and always done with heart.

For more information on Impact PR & Communication, call 845/462-4979, visit [www.prwithimpact.com](http://www.prwithimpact.com) or follow us on social media @prwithimpact.

## J PUBLIC RELATIONS

530 7th Ave., #502  
New York, NY 10018  
212/924-3600  
letstalk@jpublicrelations.com  
instagram.com/jpublicrelations/  
www.jpublicrelations.com

J Public Relations (JPR) is an international luxury PR, influencer management and social media agency specializing in hospitality, travel and luxury lifestyle brands. With 75 team members across four offices in New York City, London, Los Angeles and San Diego, plus a presence in Denver and Arizona, JPR is a trusted leader in media relations and brand strategy, trend forecasting, brand partnerships, influencer relations, digital and social strategy. JPR is an innovator in all things travel, being the first travel PR agency to launch a podcast in 2018, Priority Status.

Established in 2005, JPR has consistently risen to become the world's fastest growing agency in the travel and hospitality spaces. JPR's global roster includes more than 150+ hotels in the U.S., U.K. and throughout Europe, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai, New Zealand, Asia and more. JPR represents destinations such as North Carolina and Utah as well as brands including Marriott, Relais & Châteaux, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Vail Resorts Hospitality and multiple Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts.

JPR is listed on the *Observer's*

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## J PUBLIC RELATIONS

Continued from page 27

annual “PR Power 50” as one of the country’s most powerful PR firms and *Crain’s* “Best Places to Work in New York City.” The agency also garnered “Top Places to Work” by *PR News* and “Agency of the Year” by *Bulldog Reporter* in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success.

Sampling of clients: Adare Manor, Adventures by Disney (project work), Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort (project work), Chateau du Grand-Lucé, Chewton Glen, Cliveden House, Discover Baja California, Four Seasons Resort Lana’i, Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Helena Bay, Hotel del Coronado, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, InterContinental, Washington D.C. — The Wharf, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Rancho La Puerta, Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa, Relais & Châteaux, The Palms and The Shore Club, The Resort at Pendergalt, The Ritz Carlton (multiple properties), Vail Resorts Hospitality, Vail Mountain Resorts, Visit North Carolina and Visit Utah.

## K. SUTHERLAND PR

18 Winter Street, Studio C  
Reno, NV 89503  
775/360-6101  
ksutherlandpr.com

K. Sutherland PR is a full-service, boutique firm that offers a comprehensive and personal approach to modern public relations. Delivering 5-Star results for travel and tourism clients worldwide, the

firm knows what it takes to promote any destination or resort. At the heart of K. Sutherland PR lies their public relations expertise, but their services expand beyond traditional PR, offering clients a holistic mix of strategic communications, social media, influencer marketing, content marketing and more. K. Sutherland PR maximizes exposure through extensive understanding, and because they are a boutique PR agency, are able to provide impactful public relations services at affordable prices.

## LAURA DAVIDSON PUBLIC RELATIONS

72 Madison Ave., 8th Floor  
New York, NY 10016  
212/696-0660  
Facebook.com/lauradavidsonpr  
twitter.com/ldpr  
instagram.com/ldprtravel  
www.ldpr.com

**Laura Davidson**, President  
**Leslie Cohen**, Executive Vice President

LDPR is a dynamic and innovative travel and lifestyle PR agency headquartered in NYC with staff in Chicago, LA and San Francisco. The firm has been at the forefront of integrated initiatives for destinations, international hotel companies, independent resorts, luxury tour operators and lifestyle products. The agency delivers a highly personalized service, listening to clients’ needs and customizing strategies that deliver exceptional ROI. We have an in-house social media team to implement strategies, content development and influencer outreach. LDPR’s unique culture is defined by our collaborative and strategic approach to working with clients, media and our staff, leading



**The Kentucky Department of Tourism, a client of Lou Hammond Group, took Chicago by storm recently hosting 20 top local journalists, with a combined reach of 180 million, aboard a riverboat to experience the tourism offering of the Bluegrass state.**

to successful long-term partnerships and measurable results.

Our clients include Aman; Abercrombie & Kent; VisitScotland; Sydney/Destination New South Wales, Australia; Travel Portland, Oregon; Azores Getaways; Curtain Bluff, Antigua; The Resort at Paws Up, Montana; Andaz Maui At Wailea Resort; Atlantis Paradise Island, Bahamas; Park Hyatt, St. Kitts; The Dominick, New York City; The Ocean House, Watch Hill, Rhode Island; Briggs & Riley, among others.

## LOU HAMMOND GROUP

900 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
212/308-8880  
lhg@louhammond.com  
www.louhammond.com

**Lou Hammond**, Founder/  
Chairman  
**Stephen Hammond**, CEO  
**Terence Gallagher**, President,  
New York  
**Gina Stouffer**, President,  
Charleston

Lou Hammond Group (LHG) is a celebrated, integrated marketing communications firm with offices in New York, Charleston, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, and Miami. LHG has built a legendary reputation over the past 35 years as the leading mid-sized agency serving

the travel industry. A few things to know:

- Independent: known for boundless creativity and enthusiasm.
- Operates differently: no time sheets — clients get the attention they need when they need it.
- Global: founder of the PR World Network.
- One of the industry’s highest client retention rates serving destinations such as Norfolk, Providence, Sonoma, New Haven, Charleston and the state of Virginia for more than a decade.

At the end of the day, however, it’s all about the results. In the past year alone LHG has:

- Met individually with 90+ top-tier writers, conducted 57 media missions with clients in target markets such as New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago Houston, Dallas, Miami and Washington, D.C. hosted 360+ media visits and partnered with 180+ social media influencers.
- Secured broadcast hits from outlets such as: “Today,” “Good Morning America,” “CBS Sunday Morning,” CNBC, The Weather Channel, “LIVE with Kelly and Ryan” and AP podcast, “Get Outta Here.”
- Regularly delivered impactful results including: *Architectural Digest*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Departures*, *Food & Wine*, *Town &*



**Jamie Sigler O’Grady and Sarah Evans, Partners at J Public Relations.**

Continued on page 30



The logo features a stylized 'W' inside a blue circle, with concentric circles radiating outwards, creating a ripple effect.

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MaryLou Davidson | (941) 228-4061 | [MaryLou@WebTalkRadio.net](mailto:MaryLou@WebTalkRadio.net)

## LOU HAMMOND GROUP

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*Country, Worth, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Travel + Leisure*, to name a few including two cover stories.

- Added new travel clients: New Jersey Div. of Travel & Tourism, Fischer Travel Enterprises, Burgess Yachts, Cliff House Maine, Kentucky Dept. of Tourism.

- Continue to expand in-house creative services to include branding, marketing, advertising, content development, social media and digital solutions.

LHG clients know they are working with the most trusted, go-to media and influencer resource in the industry with a singular commitment delivering quality, measurable results.

## MAGRINO PR

352 Park Ave. South, 6th Flr.  
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allyn.magrino@magrinopr.com  
www.magrinopr.com

**Susan Magrino**, Chmn. & CEO  
**Allyn Magrino**, Pres. & Chief Revenue Officer  
**LeighAnn Ambrosi**, Exec. VP & Chief Admin. Officer

At Magrino, we put over 25 years of strategic insight and intelligence into everything we do. Employing our 360° lifestyle approach to brand building and public relations, our campaigns are focused, strategic and assembled to balance cost-effectiveness with positive results. That is the reason some of the world's most revered



**Allyn Magrino**, Pres. & Chief Revenue Officer of Magrino PR.

lifestyle brands turn to us — and return to us.

Magrino offers a full suite of public relations and social media services, from media relations and strategic partnerships to platform management, content creation and influencer and event marketing.

Magrino Travel Clients Include: Cala di Volpe, Canopy Hotels, Conrad DC, Conrad Dublin, Conrad Hotels, Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, Fontainebleau Miami Beach, Grace Bay Resorts, Hotel Pitritza, Hotel Romazzino, Independent Lodging Congress, Joali Maldives, JW Marriott Miami Turnberry Resort, JW Marriott Nashville, LXR Hotels, Marchesi Antinori, Motto by Hilton, Point Grace, The Duniway Portland, The Estate Yountville, The Lexington, The Ranch Malibu, SHA Wellness Clinic, Waldorf Astoria Hotels, and West Bay Club.

## MARDIKS PR

261 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
646/283-5273  
www.mardikspr.com

**Charles Mardiks**, President and Managing Director

At the intersection of creative and strategic, Mardiks PR is a marketing solution provider, specializing in travel and tourism. The agency leverages the power of storytelling to create engaging, integrated campaigns. Our multi-channel campaigns combine media outreach, social media and event activation along with strategic partnerships to build buzz and business for leading global travel brands, destinations and associations.

The agency was founded by Charles Mardiks. Charles has two decades of integrated marketing and public relations experience in global travel and tourism, and he brings together a highly networked, nimble team of senior-level, hands-on strategists and creative thinkers. The dedicated Mardiks team is fueled by a love for travel, a nose for news and a scrappiness that gets the job done. As a true extension of our clients' teams, we work diligently to nurture, build and connect media and industry relationships to solve clients' marketing problems with smart, strategic and creative solutions.

Current clients include: Athenaeum Hotel & Residences (London), Celestyal Cruises, Condor Airlines, HB Hospitality, Park Royal Beach Resort (Cancun), Safari Pros, Thomas Cook Airlines UK, Visit

Guernsey, Visit San Jose and Visit Sarasota County.

## MFA | FINN

a Finn Partners Company

301 E. 57th Street  
NY, NY 10022  
212/528-1691  
www.mfalt.com

**Missy Farren**, Managing Partner  
**Samantha Lacher**, Vice President

MFA | FINN provides sharp strategy and results that matter to a vast array of travel/tourism, culinary and hospitality clients. A consummate personal touch accompanies extreme professionalism, deep expertise, and the power of a global agency behind us.

True passion for travel drives success and relationships in various niches, including: culinary, Caribbean, adventure, ski and snow, family, romance, arts and culture, wellness, spa, culture, wine and spirits, fitness and sports. MFA | FINN specializes in strategic media relations; influencer campaigns; social media strategy and management; press trip planning and execution; partnership development; event facilitation; spokesperson positioning; and crisis communications.

Industry experience includes: Aspen Ski Co., Bluegreen Vacations, Cayman Airways, Cayman Cookout, The Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, Charlie Bird Restaurant (NYC), Chatham Bars Inn, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Colorado Ski Country, Dart Real Estate (Cayman Islands), Disneyland, Disneyland Food & Beverage, Golden Horseshoe Golf Club, Intrawest, Limelight Hotel, The Little Nell, The Lodge at Woodloch, Martin's Lane Winery, Megpies, Michelin Food & Travel, Mountain Collective, Mission Hill Family Estate winery, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Pasquale Jones Restaurant (NYC), Peet's Coffee, Replay Resorts / Yotel, The Ritz-Carlton Hotels of New York, Roadtrips Inc., St. Regis Aspen Resort, Ski Utah, Squaw Valley, Twin Farms, Westin Hotels & Resorts, Whistler Blackcomb, and more.

## NJF

an MMGY Global Company  
360 Lexington Ave., 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
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www.njfr.com

**Nancy Friedman**, Founder  
**Julie Freeman**, EVP & Managing Director  
**Lauren Kaufman**, SVP

At NJF, an MMGY Global company, we are global connectors, storytellers and curators of travel experiences — inspiring people to view the world differently and then see it for themselves. As marketers specializing solely in travel and hospitality, we help put travel brands on the map and navigate their narrative through innovative thinking, creativity and storytelling. NJF offers boutique service and expertise in consumer and trade media relations, social media, corporate and brand positioning, experiential and event marketing, strategic partnerships and promotions, influencer engagement and crisis communications.

For those seeking senior level counsel, unwavering brand advocacy and unrivaled media savvy, NJF is a PR powerhouse and one-stop shop. Hundreds of hotel, destination, travel and lifestyle brands have entrusted their reputations to NJF whose "Leave No Stone Unturned" philosophy has catapulted the firm to the top. Our integrated PR and social media team prides itself on long-standing client relationships and an innate ability to move within many spheres: tapping media and industry influencers, forging creative partnerships, uncovering strategic advantages, and providing global perspective. Our campaigns are rooted in research and insights, and we are master storytellers and content creators who know how to make news out of simple concepts or large-scale programs. We forge an emotional connection to reach our audiences where they live, work and play.

Industry innovators and thought leaders, NJF is the pioneer of Hotel Week NYC, and MMGY is the author of the widely acclaimed *Portrait of American Travelers*® annual research study. With offices in New York City, Kansas City, Los Angeles, London, Miami, Madrid, and Washington, D.C. and an international partner network, Travel Consul, we serve many of the world's premier travel and tourism brands. Other MMGY Global areas of expertise include research and insights, strategic communications planning and implementation, brand marketing, traditional and social media buying, digital/social media strategy, website development and management, e-CRM, travel industry relations and international destination representation.

Clients Include: Amtrak, Berkshire Hathaway Travel Protection, Blue World Voyages, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, British Virgin Islands, Cheap Caribbean, Costa Rica Tourism, Eurail, Generator



Hostels, Greater Palm Springs CVB, Hamilton Princess, Hotel Vermont, Intrepid Travel, ITC Hotels, Kennebunkport Resort Collection, Oceania Cruises, Pod Hotels, Proper Hotels, Refinery Hotel, Rhode Island Tourism, Sea Island, South Dakota Tourism, St. Petersburg/Clearwater, STA Travel, Tahiti Tourism, The Asbury, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, The Bowery, The Marmara, The Whitley Atlanta, The National World War II Museum, Visit California and Visit Dallas.

## PADILLA

1101 West River Parkway  
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Minneapolis, MN 55415  
612/455-1700  
PadillaCo.com

**Matt Kucharski**, President

Padilla is an independently operated, globally resourced public relations and communication company with offices across the United States. The agency builds, grows and protects brands and reputations worldwide by creating purposeful connections with the people who matter most through public relations, advertising, digital and social marketing, investor relations and brand strategy. Padilla includes the brand consultancy of Joe Smith, the food and nutrition experts at Food-Minds, and the research authorities at SMS Research Advisors.

We don't just connect consumers with brands, we convert them into brand advocates. Padilla's marketing experts combine industry knowledge and consumer branding channel expertise to exceed client expectations and achieve results. We apply insightful ingenuity and creative tenacity to engage consumers and drive purchases in the areas of travel and tourism markets, consumer packaged goods, personal care and beauty, OTC, home products, branded/specialty foods, pet care and consumer education.

Clients in the travel and tourism sectors have included Air New Zealand, Cambria Suites Hotels/Choice Hotels International, Meet Minneapolis, Tru by Hilton, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation/Amtrak Virginia, and Visit Houston.

Padilla is an AVENIR GLOBAL company and is a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, a partnership of 132 independently owned partner offices in 115 cities on six continents. Connect with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

## PEPPERCOMM

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www.peppercomm.com

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

Peppercomm's purpose is to use our innovation and imagination to inspire people to come to know and trust the organizations we work with.

Peppercomm is an award-winning strategic, integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York City with offices in San Francisco and London. The firm combines 24 award-winning years of expertise serving blue chip and breakout clients with forward-thinking new service offerings and the freshness of a start-up. This unique mix of experience and energy attracts and empowers teams with a creative edge, drive and a passion for promoting, protecting and connecting clients in a fast-changing marketplace. Travel experience includes clients such as 1 Above, AirPlus, Norwegian Cruise Line, Magellan Jets, Japan Airlines, Viking River Cruises and Tui Travel, among others.

Leveraging analytics to drive insights, our experts create a unique mix of thinking for today's fast-

paced media cycle. Core capabilities include media relations, creative design, website design, digital marketing, crisis communications, user experience, branding and positioning, and employee engagement. Visit [peppercomm.com](http://peppercomm.com) or find us on Twitter at @Peppercomm.

## TJM COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

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treva@tjmcommunications.com  
Facebook.com/TJMCommunicationsInc  
www.tjmcommunications.com

**Treva J. Marshall**, President

TJM Communications is an award-winning lifestyle public relations/content marketing firm specializing in travel, food and wine.

Since 2001, the agency has serviced international and domestic clients, focusing on delivering personalized service with an emphasis on innovation, creativity and strategy. Our work has been recognized with awards from Hospitality Sales and Marketing International (HSMI), PR Daily, Florida Public Relations Association and more. We operate as an extension of our clients' sales and marketing teams as trusted and integrated partners, delivering measurable results and a proven track record for client satisfaction.

Our travel client roster includes

global and domestic destinations, hotels, resorts and tourism entities, including clients such as: Walt Disney World, Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort, South African Tourism, Florida's Space Coast, Illinois Bureau of Tourism, Westgate Resorts, Cocoa Beach Pier, Hotel Majestic Barcelona, SunStream Hotels and Resorts and other noted hotels, resorts, destinations and tourist attractions.

## TURNER

250 W. 39th St., 16th Floor  
New York, NY 10018  
212/889-1700  
info@turnerpr.com  
www.turnerpr.com

**Christine Turner**, President  
**Angela Berardino**, CSO  
**Leslie Rummel**, SVP

TURNER is an industry leading communications agency specializing in travel and lifestyle brands. We partner with the world's best hotel, resort, destination, fashion, wellness and outdoor brands to tell stories that inspire action and engage the modern consumer.

Our approach to integrated public relations, digital, content, social media and experiential campaigns delivers bottom-line impact for our clients. We deliver powerful media exposure, influencer and celebrity engagement, brand partnerships and consumer activations. We've delivered award-winning work for destinations including Bermuda, Toronto, and Houston; a portfolio of boutique hotels and luxury re-

— Continued on page 32



On behalf of client Visit Costa Rica, we partnered with WanderLuxe, a luxury membership concierge service, to warm up festivalgoers at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival, introducing them to Costa Rica's "pura vida" lifestyle. Festivalgoers enjoyed wellness experiences, including daily yoga led by Lululemon, a sauna, facials, massages and a custom coffee bar serving authentic Costa Rican coffee – reflecting the destination's long history of traditional and environmentally-friendly coffee production. NJF developed the concept, generated top-tier press coverage and introduced new audiences to Costa Rica's diverse tourism offering.

## TURNER

— Continued from page 31

sorts; and global travel brands including Hertz and Audley.

Authenticity is a core value for TURNER and we're proud to live the lifestyles we represent through our clients. Our offices are in New York, Chicago, Miami, Denver and Los Angeles, and we have a team of multilingual associates to best service our worldwide client base.

## WEILL

29 Broadway  
New York, NY 10006  
212/288-1144  
866/PR-WEILL  
www.geoffreyweill.com

**Geoffrey Weill**, President  
**Ann-Rebecca Laschever**, EVP  
**Mark Liebermann**, SVP

WEILL is in its 25th year of specializing in luxury, exclusive travel experiences and national tourist offices.

Of our 30+ clients, more than 60% have been with us for more than 5 years, and 40% for more than ten. We specialize in across-the-spectrum communications, ensuring every client's messages are transmitted via all print, electronic, broadcast, digital, influencer and social media. For some clients, we also handle UK public relations.

Several of our clients have long been pioneers in sustainable travel and in health and wellness: Inkaterra, the innovator in sustainable travel in Peru; Soneva (Maldives, Thailand), which recycles 90% of the waste on site at Soneva Fushi; Heckfield Place, in Hampshire, which follows biodynamic principles on its 333 acres of farmland, are standard bearers in the industry.



Pigs are raised biodynamically at WEILL's client Heckfield Place in Hampshire, England.

Schloss Elmau in Bavaria is a destination in itself, with a full program of concerts, cultural activities, and spa and wellness programs. And, Nemacolin Woodlands Resort in western Pennsylvania is launching the first of its kind wellness program at its Holistic Healing Center in collaboration with the Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute of West Virginia University.

## ZAPWATER COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

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**David Zapata**, CEO  
**Cheryl Andrews**, Executive Vice President

**Jennifer Lake**, Senior Vice President

**Jennifer Barry**, Managing Director — Los Angeles

**Holly Zawyer**, Managing Director — Miami

**Stephanie Poquette**, Vice President, Social Media and Influencer Programming

Zapwater Communications is an integrated communications agency specializing in lifestyle brands, with a focus on travel, hospitality, and destination clients. Founded in 2005, the agency has grown into one of the premier creative firms in the United States. In fact, a leading public relations industry publication named Zapwater one



Finland has seen double digit growth of travelers from the USA since beginning work with Zapwater.

of the five most creative agencies in North America.

With offices in Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami, we share a culture that fosters creativity, quality, collaboration and enthusiasm. Long-standing relationships and the determination to lead in a dynamically evolving industry distinguishes the agency's work.

Our agency integrates multidisciplinary services such as digital engagement, experiential tactics and media relations — to drive bottom-line results. To date, Zapwater has won 145+ industry awards for excellence, including some of the industry's most prestigious accolades, many for our travel and destination clients.

Zapwater is also a founding member of Travel Lifestyle Network (TLN), representing the United States within its international network of owner-managed marketing and communications agencies serving tourism and lifestyle clients. Network members collaborate to deliver international expertise to clients seeking connections and reach across the globe.

Our travel client roster includes a curated mix of destinations, hotels & resorts and airlines including: Visit Finland, Finnair, PrivateFly, Visit Maldives, Grenada Tourism Authority, Tourisme Montréal, Turismo de Portugal, Travel Manitoba, Bianca Sands, Buenaventura Golf & Beach Resort, Cayo Espanto, Frangipani Beach Resort, Grand Residences Riviera Cancun, Hacienda San Angel, Hyatt Regency Trinidad, National Tourism Office of Serbia, La Paz Tourism, Fairmont Mayakoba, CASA Kimberly, Mount Cinnamon Resort, Ocean Clubs Resorts, Hawks Cay Resort, Hotel Zachary, Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country,

Marriott Marquis Chicago, Pacifica Hotels, Swissôtel Chicago, The Kinney SLO, The Kinney Venice Beach, The Santa Maria Hotel & Golf Resort Panama, Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort and Casino, and Coco Collection Resorts Maldives.

## THE ZIMMERMAN AGENCY

1821 Miccosukee Commons  
Tallahassee, FL 32308  
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www.zimmerman.com

**Carrie Zimmerman**, Founder/CEO  
**Kerry Anne Watson**, President

For more than three decades The Zimmerman Agency has been among the leading hospitality and travel public relations firms in North America. Today, the firm offers a highly creative and contemporary approach to public relations that includes the support of full-service influencer marketing and social media, a 360-degree approach to digital channels, and proprietary analytics. The Zimmerman Agency teams employ a signature WOW! level of creativity, strategy and technology to deliver relevant and timely communications for public relations and social media clients. The firm generates measurable results through public relations for extraordinary travel clients including Park City, Utah, Hard Rock Hotels, Hertz, Interstate Hotels & Resorts, Discover The Palm Beaches, the Southern Outer Banks, the Kessler Collection and award-winning resorts and hotels from Little Palm Island, Hotel DuPont, Montage Palmetto Bluff and more. The firm's consumer division represent major brands including Domino Sugar, Firehouse Subs, Pilot Pens, TastyKake and Wonder Bread. ○



# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2018)	Firm	Net Fees (2018)
1. <b>Edelman</b> , New York, NY	<b>\$39,843,000</b>	21. <b>360PR+</b> , Boston, MA	<b>\$973,895</b>
2. <b>APCO Worldwide</b> , Washington, DC	<b>15,022,400</b>	22. <b>Berk Communications</b> , New York, NY	<b>827,850</b>
3. <b>Zimmerman Agency</b> , Tallahassee, FL	<b>11,800,000</b>	23. <b>LaunchSquad</b> , San Francisco, CA	<b>523,000</b>
4. <b>Finn Partners</b> , New York, NY	<b>11,125,000</b>	24. <b>MP&amp;F Strategic Communications</b> , Nashville, TN	<b>497,354</b>
5. <b>J Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	<b>10,441,381</b>	25. <b>North 6th Agency, Inc.</b> , New York, NY	<b>321,000</b>
6. <b>Development Counsellors Int'l</b> , New York, NY	<b>10,050,306</b>	26. <b>Gregory FCA</b> , Ardmore, PA	<b>312,112</b>
7. <b>Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company</b> , New York, NY	<b>9,809,261</b>	27. <b>Hunter PR</b> , New York, NY	<b>300,000</b>
8. <b>NJF, an MMGY Global company</b> , New York, NY	<b>9,376,703</b>	28. <b>Tunheim</b> , Minneapolis, MN	<b>293,428</b>
9. <b>Lou Hammond Group</b> , New York, NY	<b>7,800,243</b>	29. <b>IW Group, Inc.</b> , West Hollywood, CA	<b>259,000</b>
10. <b>French   West   Vaughan</b> , Raleigh, NC	<b>5,095,114</b>	30. <b>Padilla</b> , Minneapolis, MN	<b>226,603</b>
11. <b>Hawkins Int'l Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	<b>5,000,000</b>	31. <b>Bellmont Partners</b> , Minneapolis, MN	<b>192,493</b>
12. <b>Kivvit</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>4,085,024</b>	32. <b>Inkhouse</b> , Waltham, MA	<b>177,165</b>
13. <b>Jackson Spalding</b> , Atlanta, GA	<b>3,798,010</b>	33. <b>Butler Associates, LLC</b> , New York, NY	<b>107,000</b>
14. <b>Coyne PR</b> , Parsippany, NJ	<b>3,300,000</b>	34. <b>Marketing Maven Public Relations</b> , Camarillo, CA	<b>75,087</b>
15. <b>rbb Communications</b> , Miami, FL	<b>3,257,863</b>	35. <b>BoardroomPR</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>60,000</b>
16. <b>5W Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	<b>2,300,000</b>	36. <b>Stuntman PR</b> , New York, NY	<b>55,000</b>
17. <b>Zeno Group</b> , New York, NY	<b>2,239,657</b>	37. <b>Public Communications Inc.</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>44,329</b>
18. <b>Zapwater Communications</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>1,681,271</b>	38. <b>Standing Partnership</b> , St. Louis, MO	<b>43,082</b>
19. <b>Hemsworth Communications</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>1,625,562</b>	39. <b>Fish Consulting</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>40,000</b>
20. <b>Citizen Relations</b> , Los Angeles, CA	<b>1,262,421</b>	40. <b>Havas Formula</b> , New York, NY	<b>31,452</b>



# Inclusive marketing in brand communications

**Inclusive marketing today has moved beyond a differentiating factor and has become a consumer expectation.**

By Dami Adenaike

**R**ace. Gender. Sexuality. Class. Immigration status. Ethnicity. Religion. Ability. What do these factors have to do with marketing? Only recently have brands utilized all the above to drive brand strategies as opposed to relying merely on target demographics based on perceived characteristics or stereotypes like “Baby Boomers” or “Working Moms.” For years, brands have used aspirational imagery to sell products, but now, a growing number of consumers prefer authentic advertising that not only represents the world around them but is also aligned with their values. According to the 2018 Accenture Holiday Survey, 70 percent of Millennials are more likely to choose one brand over another because it demonstrates inclusion and diversity in its advertising, company culture and business objectives.

## What is inclusive marketing?

Inclusive marketing is simply marketing that goes beyond a demographic’s perceived persona and includes important factors like age, race, income, sexuality, language and religion. Inclusive marketing involves creating content that truly reflects the diverse communities that brands are trying to target. It means elevating diverse voices, decreasing cultural bias and inspiring positive social change through thoughtful and respectful content.

## Getting started with inclusive marketing

Because of our social media age and the power consumers have today, brands are forced to adopt inclusive marketing, or risk being ostracized. For one, inclusivity and diversity have become increasingly popular topics: from the representation of different body types in the fashion industry to the inclusion of different races and sexualities on television, brands are choosing to break stereotypes and give consumers the opportunity to see themselves.

And thanks to social media and the various options presented to them, consumers are now able to communicate their needs and boycott a brand without having to give up a product or service entirely. Brands like Pepsi and Uber have been under fire recently for their poor choices in advertising and ignorance of issues that matter to consumers. On the other hand, beauty brand Fenty Beauty, for example, has been well received by consumers for launching a full range of skin color-matching products that previously hadn’t been an option for people with albinism or very dark skin tones. The Inter-

net showed so much support for the brand that the beauty line sold out instantly. Now, other makeup brands have been called out for failing to offer similar products. This just shows how much inclusivity matters and how adequate representation of our society can be advantageous for brand growth.

## Importance of inclusive marketing

As our society becomes more diverse and interconnected, it’s ever more important that brands remain genuine and make thoughtful decisions in their messaging, images, voices and values in a way that shows consumers they’re listening.

A big advantage of utilizing inclusive marketing strategies is the ability for brands to reach a wider audience. As competition rises between brands, it has become relatively difficult for brands to stand out from one and another. Inclusive marketing gives brands the opportunity to attract more consumers, thereby increasing sales, brand awareness and store or website traffic.

Another advantage of inclusive marketing is the ability to shape brand perception and image. With inclusive marketing, brands are able to communicate their support for various communities or a stance on social issues. Research from Accenture shows 51 percent of younger Millennials are more likely to shop at a retailer that demonstrates awareness of social and political issues with regards to inclusion and diversity.

Additionally, not only does inclusive marketing help communicate a brand’s image but it also helps avoid PR nightmares. Brands are urged to research their target audience and gain deeper understanding of the cultural environment in which they operate. Having a clear picture of their consumer base allows brands to utilize inclusive marketing the right way, thereby avoiding PR disasters.

## How to leverage inclusive marketing

One of the most important things brands have to keep in mind when utilizing inclusive marketing strategies is being aware of “intention vs impact.” Although brands may have positive intentions with their marketing strategies, the impact of their actions is what they’re held accountable for, and in turn, needs to be taken into account in every aspect of their business. Below are key strategies that marketers could use to enhance inclusive marketing:

**Think beyond target demographics.** Oftentimes, brands market themselves to a specific demographic without consider-

ing people outside that demographic. Expanding your audience can be a worthy investment. Taking the time to research and truly understand what your consumers are looking for allows brands to adequately create content that’s aligned with their brand messaging. For example, the brand Third Love recently featured a model in her 60s in its “To Each, Her Own” campaign and the response, especially from Millennial consumers, was overwhelmingly positive. Even though their ideal customer isn’t a woman in her 60s, they were able to use inclusive marketing to create a campaign that resonated with their audience.

**Authenticity is key.** Brands have to actively choose inclusion by making deliberate efforts and investments into how they can be more inclusive. Inclusivity doesn’t just happen overnight; brands have a duty to create environments in which consumers feel they belong. Not just creating a perception that they are inclusive by adding different ethnicities in marketing campaigns but making sure that their audience is truly represented by showing passion and dedication to inclusivity at the core of everything the brand is and does.

**Hire a diverse team.** The first question that comes to mind when a negative marketing campaign is launched is “who was in the room when the campaign got approved?” Hiring a diverse team that represents the target audience you’re marketing to allows different perspectives on ideas and creates opportunities for different ways of doing things. Identifying a culture fit for your company and pushing boundaries to avoid hiring same-minded people with singular perspectives, backgrounds and demographics. Brands should aim to have diverse hiring panels to encourage open discussion of various cultural biases especially in the early stages of a marketing campaign.

Inclusive marketing is no longer a differentiating factor but an expectation. In today’s social and political climate, consumers demand brands let go of the façade and aspirational imagery and develop diverse content, images and product lines that feel true and resonate. If fully executed, companies should expect inclusivity to aid in attaining their business goals and growth strategy. In a sense, doing well by doing good.

*Dami Adenaike hails from Nigeria and works as a social media strategist in Marketing Maven’s Los Angeles office. ○*



Dami Adenaike



## Spectrum's Seng switches to Current

Jacelyn Seng, who was Executive VP at Spectrum Science Communications, has joined Interpublic's Current Global as Executive VP-Client Experience and North American healthcare lead.

Experienced in the health tech, biotech and biopharma categories, Seng spent six years as Executive VP at Cohn & Wolfe before joining Spectrum last July.

Earlier, she held VP slots at Ruder Finn and Porter Novelli.

Interpublic merged Current Global with Weber Shandwick's Creation arm on April 1 to forge Current Global, which is part of its constituency management group. ○



Jacelyn Seng

## Uber's marketing chief Messina to exit

Rebecca Messina, Uber's first marketing chief, is stepping down after eight months, following the \$1 billion first-quarter red ink tide at the ride-hailing and delivery giant.

Her departure will come as CEO Dara Khosrowshahi promises to take a more "hands-on" approach to management.

Jill Hazelbaker, Senior VP-Communications and Public Policy, will be in charge of the combined group. She joined Uber in 2015 from the VP-Communications and Public Policy job at Snapchat and earlier worked on communications and policy issues in London for Google.

Messina, who held marketing jobs at Coca-Cola during a more than 21-year stint there, joined Uber from liquor company Beam Suntory, where she was Senior VP and Global Marketing Chief. ○



Rebecca Messina

## Buzzfeed's Jafar stars in Imax PR picture

Mark Jafar has come on board at Imax as Global Communications Head, according to the *Hollywood Reporter*. Jafar joins the company from

BuzzFeed, where he served as Vice President, Corporate Communications since May 2017.

Imax has hired Jafar to market the giant-screen exhibitor as its own movie-tech brand. He'll oversee communications and media relations for the company, and is also tasked with supporting efforts to communicate the company's brand narrative and strategic partnerships. ○



Mark Jafar

## Rosseter takes top Equifax Comms spot

Equifax has named Amanda Rosseter Chief Communications Officer. Rosseter comes to Equifax from The Coca-Cola Company, where she most recently held the position of Senior Director, Global External Communications.

She previously led communications in Coca-Cola's South and East Africa business unit, and also served the company as Global Group Director, Strategic Communications. Before coming to Coca-Cola, Rosseter was Chief Strategist, Communications and Public Affairs at Emory St. Joseph's Health System in Atlanta.

At Equifax, she'll lead corporate, executive and transformation communications, and serve on the CEO's extended senior leadership team. ○



Amanda Rosseter

## Hsia heads to FTI from Jane Street

Colleen Hsia has joined FTI Consulting as Senior Managing Director and Americas Head of Financial Services in the firm's strategic communications segment.

She comes to FTI from quantitative trading firm and liquidity provider Jane Street, where she was Global Head of Marketing. Before that, Hsia spent seven years at BlackRock, the world's largest as-



Colleen Hsia

set manager, serving as head of investment content, as well as Head of Institutional Marketing and Head of iShares Marketing in the Asia Pacific region.

At FTI, Hsia will lead a multidisciplinary team advising clients on matters of corporate reputation, public affairs, financial communications and crisis communications. ○

## Hewlett Packard Enterprise hires Aronson

Doron Aronson has been hired as Senior Director of Product Communications for Hewlett Packard Enterprise, the information tech company that was formed when HP split into two entities in 2015.

Aronson joins HPE from software company Malwarebytes, where he served as Global Director of Corporate Communications. He was previously Senior Public Relations and Corporate Communications Group Manager at Cisco, and has held executive positions at Cadence Design Systems and Sun Microsystems.

In his new post, Aronson will lead a team of PR professionals in support of HPE's product portfolio. He'll also provide counsel to senior business unit and marketing leaders on communications strategies. ○



Doron Aronson

## Wells Fargo's Frackman joins ICR

Marisa Frackman, who was Director of Healthcare Equity Capital Markets at Wells Fargo Securities, is now at ICR's Westwicke healthcare brand.

She takes on the Managing Director, Capital Markets title.

Frackman was previously a healthcare investment banking analyst at Deutsche Bank Securities.

ICR ranks No. 6 on *O'Dwyer's* rankings of independent firms with 2018 fees of \$69.2 million. It is the No. 2 financial firm (behind Edelman) with \$47.5 million in fees. ○



Marisa Frackman

# O'Dwyer's guide to INTERNATIONAL PR



**Henry Feintuch, president, Feintuch Communications at a recent PR-SA-NY seminar he moderated.**

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PROI at its recent Global Summit in Quebec City.

# Time to show their FAANGs

By Fraser Seitel

Say a prayer for Jeff Bezos. Sure he's the richest man in the world, at a pre-divorce net worth of \$154 billion.

But when you're public enemy number-one in the eyes of both Donald Trump and Alexandria Occasio-Cortez, you need all the prayers you can muster.



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

Bezos and the company he founded, Amazon, along with fellow tech industry giants Facebook, Apple and Google, find themselves the current favorite whipping boys of Washington politicians for a variety of sins, from privacy violations to anti-competitive practices to subverting the free press.

Indeed, as the Presidential campaign season rolls into high gear, Big Tech has become the Dominican Republic of industries. And Congress is taking dead aim at breaking up the "Big Four" tech companies that comprise the dreaded FAANGs, with only Netflix spared from current scrutiny.

Here are the combatants. In one corner are the "bad guys," the four tech giants who together employ 750,000 Americans, earn \$700 billion annually and enjoy an aggregate stock market value of \$3 trillion benefitting millions of American shareholders (Full disclosure, including me!).

They also supply an irreplaceable daily service on which hundreds of millions of Americans have come to depend, in most cases charging users \$0 for the privilege. In the other corner are the "good guys," a motley collection of publicity-seeking politicians, egghead academics and crusading anti-business journalists, hell bent on destroying these four tech titans, primarily because they've been too dominant and successful.

Their role model is Congresswoman Occasio-Cortez, who singlehandedly kept nasty Amazon out of Queens, costing her district thousands of jobs, millions in tax payments and the prospect of better lives for tens of thousands of her constituents.

With anti-business, antitrust zealot Elizabeth Warren leading the Democrat candidate charge and weak-kneed Republicans at the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission joining the opposition chorus, the pressure to break up Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Google will only intensify over the next year-and-a-half. As the *New York Times* succinctly put it, "When Americans fear the future, they turn to antitrust law."

Accordingly, with the ominous specter of driverless cars, delivery drones and artificial intelligence around the corner, the Big Tech Four stand squarely in the antitrust crosshairs. So what kind of public relations strategy, in the face of politically-fueled righteous wrath, should these four notoriously closed-mouthed companies adopt?

Here's the three-part plan I'd recommend:

## Be seen

Ever since its Cambridge Analytica data mining debacle, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his more loquacious COO Sheryl Sandberg have become gun-shy to go public. The same has generally been true about executives at the other three firms.

This is a losing strategy, especially in a more threatening election climate. What Big Tech needs now is for its highest executives to become more willing to go on television, give speeches and appear before an admittedly hostile and showboating Congress.

One CEO who recognizes this is Apple's Tim Cook, whose recent commencement speech at Stanford provides a perfect example of what all his fellow CEOs should be doing. After citing the many innovations to advance society for which Silicon Valley should be given credit, Cook acknowledged that companies like his should take "responsibility" for fixing problems in areas like privacy.

The Apple CEO, rather than staying on the defensive, demonstrated that standing up to critics by going on offense is a much better strategy. One tech CEO who would be wise to emulate his compatriot is Bezos. The Amazon CEO abhors the spotlight. But in this environment, there's no better spokesman for the public benefits of Big Tech than Bezos. A "60 Minutes" interview with the reclusive Amazon founder would be both gutsy and potentially golden to increase the understanding of the true value that these four companies represent in terms of America's might, reputation and standing in the world.

## Be heard

For many years, the standard for anti-trust in this country, developed principally by Judge Robert Bork, has been one based on the welfare of the consumer. If companies got too large and anti-competitive, this thinking went, they could charge oppressive prices that consumers would be forced to pay.

But for consumers, Google, Facebook and Amazon are essentially free, and Apple charges a competitive price for its hardware and nominally for its apps. The fact is, consumers adore the services provided by the Big Four, and this argument should be broadcast loudly and frequently by every Big Tech executive.

Another antitrust argument critics proffer is that of "unhealthy concentration," particularly from Google in search, Facebook in social media and Amazon in e-commerce. Here too, Big Tech needs to fight back, as some of its leaders have begun to do.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai, for example, went on CNN to warn that should America's tech giants be diminished through legislation or regulation, other countries are ready to step in to help their own companies "become the next Silicon Valley."

Facebook's Zuckerberg was more specific, arguing that breaking up his social-media company would simply clear the way for Chinese tech companies, which don't share American values, to step in and dominate.

Such statements are exactly what Big Tech needs to beat back the half-baked, often irresponsible, "see what sticks" arguments that politicians are wont to throw up.

## Be strong

Finally, the Big Tech Four must remain strong in the face of supercilious critics who would dismantle them.

That means continuing to innovate and announce new products. By contrast, last week's New York City Code Conference, usually a showplace for Big Tech innovation, instead became a piling-on exercise for criticism, led by conference organizer Kara Swisher, who ironically owes her journalistic success to access to tech executives but has become the industry's biggest turncoat.

The tech companies' best PR response to the Swishers of the world is to keep on keepin' on.

That's what Facebook did last week in introducing its new crypto currency, Libra. The immediate response from Maxine Wa-

— Continued on next page



# Financial advice for your PR agency

By Richard Goldstein

## Consider an SBA loan

Funding capital to support your PR agency's growth is an ongoing challenge. When searching for funding for your PR agency, you'll want to consider the loan programs offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The interest rates and terms can compare favorably with other types of loans.



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

To obtain an SBA loan, you'll work with a bank, community development organization or other financial institution, because the SBA itself doesn't actually make loans. Instead, it guarantees repayment of funds these financial institutions lend, which helps keep interest rates low.

Your PR agency generally will need to meet a few criteria to qualify for an SBA loan. You must operate for profit in the United States or its territories, and you must have tried to use other financial institutions resources, including your own assets, before applying for a loan. Your agency also may need to meet specific criteria regarding the amount of income it earns or its size.

Although you'll negotiate the interest rate with the lender, it can't exceed the maximum rate established by the SBA. This is calculated from a base rate, such as the prime rate, plus a markup. Lenders can also charge fees.

There are many SBA loan programs. For example, SBA 7(a) can be used to fund startup costs, buy equipment and refinancing existing debt, among other uses. To qualify for this type of loan, your agency must fall within SBA size standards. In general, this means your agency must be considered "small" within your industry, which is usually expressed either by the number of employees or annual income. The loan is usually repaid in monthly payments of principal and interest.

Most lenders ask for information on a business before they'll lend money, and the SBA is no exception. You may need to provide a current income statement, balance sheet and cash flow projection (your CPA should already be providing you with all the above). Agency owners with a 20 percent stake or more in the agency may need to

sign a personal guarantee.

To choose a financial institution with which to partner on an SBA loan, ask how many SBA loans they've completed. For the most part, the more loans they have completed, the better they can guide you through the process.

### Are your clients profitable

Every business needs customers to survive. (Note: you may call your customers "clients," but they're actually customers!)

Agency management spends a good deal of time trying to attract customers to their agency and keep them, while rarely asking whether those customers are desirable ones. If you truly want your agency to survive, you must evaluate whether your newfound customers are raising your business or dragging it down. It may make financial sense to drop those that fall into the latter category.

### Track data

Determining individual customer profitability should be your first step when considering which customers to drop. Your accounting system may be able to perform this already. If not, send an email to me at [rgoldstein@buchbinder.com](mailto:rgoldstein@buchbinder.com) and perhaps I can follow up on this subject in a future column. Note, it should be obvious there's a problem if your fee is \$25,000 and the cost to complete the engagement is \$50,000.

### Sort your customers

After you've assigned profitability levels to each customer or group of customers, sort them by that level. Highly profitable customers would be in the A group. The B group would be made up of customers who aren't extremely profitable, but who still positively contribute to your bottom line. The C group would include those customers who are dragging down your profitability. These are customers you can't afford to keep because, for example, they're overdemanding or abusive to employees, expect special service or constantly request more time to pay your invoices. In other words, they're in the "no longer profitable" category.

A caveat: you may have a client in the C category that's a marquee client that you may want to nevertheless put up with. This obviously is a business decision!

### Create differing objectives

With the A group, your objective should be to grow your business relationship, because they're worth the extra mile. Spend time learning why they're your best customers. Identify what motivates them to use your services, so you can continue to meet their demands. Your B group customers may be OK, but just by sitting in the middle, they can slide either way. Try and iden-

tify those who have a lot in common with your best customers. Focus your marketing efforts on them and track the results.

When it comes to the C group, spend a nominal amount of time to see if any of them might move up the ladder. If not, the C group just aren't a good fit for your agency. You may not want to fire these customers outright. Just stop focusing on them. They'll soon get the message and move on. Why not let them torture your competition?

### Prune for growth

It may seem counterintuitive to intentionally let go of customers. But as with any shrub or tree, by pruning and getting rid of deadwood, you will create space for a healthier company to grow. You will be better able to focus on and serve the best and profitable customers, ensuring that your agency will continue to stay loyal to your business over time. ○

## SHOW THEIR FAANGS

— Continued from page 38

ters, Chair of the House Financial Services Committee, was typically "upbeat and optimistic." Said the gentle congresswoman from California, "It's very important for them to stop right now what they're doing so that we can get a handle on this. This will be an alternative to the dollar so this is serious, and we must ask them for a moratorium."

Notwithstanding the fact that there are already 2,500 crypto currencies in circulation and that Maxine Waters isn't exactly the second coming of Milton Friedman, her response is typical of the "risk averse/stop them in their tracks" negativism that pervades Washington.

Facebook and the others must stand strong against such naysayers, introducing new products but also contributing to the public good and letting people know. Last week, for instance, Google pledged \$1 billion in land and money to work with local governments to build affordable housing. Exactly the right course!

Such public displays of goodwill will help remind people that Facebook, Apple, Amazon and Google are the best businesses our nation has and the envy of the world. Does that mean they should be free of scrutiny? No. Should they be subject to increased regulation in certain areas? Sure.

But the last thing we should do is kill America's four high-flying golden geese by dismantling them. And the worst thing these companies can do is sit back and take the abuse of self-serving politicians and regulators. ○

## NRA drops Ackerman McQueen

**T**he National Rifle Assn. has officially cut ties with long-time PR firm Ackerman McQueen and dropped its top D.C. lobbyist Chris Cox, who was once tipped as successor to CEO Wayne LePierre.

The NRA and AM have been embroiled in a messy lawsuit over billings and the release of financial documentation.

During its 38-year run, AM was responsible for the classic “From my cold, dead hands” messaging from the late actor Charlton Heston and for NRA-TV.

In a statement, LePierre said the TV operation is being turned off due to the required investment to keep it on and for concerns that its programs were “becoming too far removed from our core mission: defending the Second Amendment.”

The NRA will now focus on messaging via social media and its own website.

AQ charged NRA is trying to run away from its financial commitments by closing of NRA-TV.

“When given the opportunity to do the right thing, the NRA once again has taken action that we believe is intended to harm our company even at the expense of the NRA itself,” AM said in a statement.

The Oklahoma City shop believes “it’s time to move on to a new chapter without the chaos that has enveloped the NRA.” ○

## Carmen Group pilots Lockheed’s F-35 fighter pus

**C**armen Group is spearheading the lobbying push for Lockheed Martin’s controversial F-35 fighter jet program.

Critics have long attacked the F-35 as a financial boondoggle riddled with cost overruns.

The late Senator John McCain, who chaired the Armed Services Committee, branded the F-35 program as a “poster child for acquisition malpractice.”

The Pentagon announced June 11 that it reached a deal with Lockheed Martin to buy 470 F-35 jets for the Air Force, Navy, Marines and allied militaries for \$34 billion.

If the “handshake deal” is finalized in August, it would be the “largest procurement in the history of the DoD,” according to Vice Admiral Mathias Winter, F-35 program executive.

Carmen Group Chief David Carmen leads the F-35 team with Executive Managing Director Dal Harper and Gary Hoitsma, ex-Press Secretary for Senator James Inhofe (R-OK). ○

## Big food reps Glover Park for sustainability

**G**lover Park Group is handling agricultural and environmental issues for the Sustainable Food Policy Alliance.

Unilever US, Nestle USA, Danone North America and Mars Inc. launched the SFPA in 2018.

The goal is to impact U.S. policy on issues related to food safety, nutrition, climate change/renewable energy/resilient communities and consumer transparency related to information about the food that people buy.

In April, the SFPA urged U.S. decision-makers to establish a carbon pricing system aligned with climate science and to accelerate clean energy deployment as part of the strategies to reduce and



sequester greenhouse gases. It noted that “scalable, lasting solutions to climate change require government leadership.”

GPG’s SFPA team includes Joel Leftwich, who was Majority Staff Director on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry; and Grant Leslie, Aide to former Sen. Tom Daschle and ex-Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. ○

## T-Mobile places call to ex-congressman Wynn

**F**ormer Maryland Congressman Albert Wynn is representing T-Mobile as it works to merge with Sprint to create the No. 2 wireless carrier.

CNN reported that the Justice Department, which was considered the biggest potential hurdle to the deal, is expected to approve the \$26 billion merger. That nod will be contingent on whether the parties can agree to concessions, such as the divestiture of Sprint’s Boost Mobile pay-as-you-go unit.

The Federal Communications Commission also must sign off on the Sprint/T-Mobile marriage. The telecoms then must settle a lawsuit filed by attorneys general of New York and California that charged the merger would reduce competition in the marketplace.

As Senior Director at Greenberg Traurig, Wynn is involved in “legislative monitoring and outreach on issues related to wireless telecommunications” for T-Mobile.

In Congress, he served on the House Energy and Commerce Committee and its health and telecommunications subcommittees. Wynn was Senior Democratic Whip and Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus Political Action Committee. ○

## Rogers takes top advocacy post at CompTIA

**C**innamon Rogers, who most recently was Senior VP-Government Affairs at Telecommunications Industry Assn., has moved to Computing Technology Industry Assn. as Executive VP for Public Advocacy.

She will serve as the “leading voice” of the trade group that represents the \$5 trillion global information tech ecosystem and its 50 million professionals, according to Todd Thibodeaux, CEO of CompTIA.

Rogers represented TIA before Congress and regulatory agencies. Earlier, she was VP-Federal Affairs at Time Warner Cable. ○



Cinnamon Rogers



## Dominican Republic taps Rubinstein for travel crisis

The Dominican Republic completed a \$35,000 monthly contract with Rubenstein PR to provide advisory services regarding the impact that its reeling tourism sector will have on the economy of the Caribbean nation.

At least nine tourists have mysteriously died in the DR, including Leyla Cox, a Staten Island woman who passed away June 10 a day after celebrating her 53rd birthday.

Dominican officials have lashed out at U.S. media coverage of the deaths, dismissing it as “fake news” about an island that welcomes 6 million visitors a year.

“It’s all a hysteria against the Dominican Republic, to hurt our tourism, this is a very competitive industry and we get millions of tourists, we are a popular destination,” Carlos Suero, DR’s Ministry of Public Health spokesman, told Fox News.

The FBI has launched an investigation of the deaths and the U.S. State Dept. is monitoring the probe.

The State Dept. already had a “level 3—‘exercise increased caution’” travel warning on the DR for violent crime, including armed robbery, homicide and sexual assault.

Rubenstein’s contract with DR’s Consulate General in New York runs through Sept. 11. ○

## BCW inks \$1M pact with UAE unit

BCW has inked an \$84,000 monthly contract to represent the government of Ras Al Khaimah, which is one of the seven emirates of the United Arab Emirates.

Working for the RAK Media Office, BCW is to provide strategic

communications counsel, message development, events, thought leadership, issues management and PR/legal media counsel in the UK and U.S.

The one-year contract went into effect May 29.

RAK, which lacks the oil resources of fellow emirates Dubai and Abu Dhabi, has a diversified company geared to tourism, real estate, cement production and pharmaceuticals. It has a population of less than 500,000.

BCW’s Washington team on the RAK business includes Shaila Manyam, Yagmur Cosar, Michael Estevez, Christian Foster, William McQuillen and Aranthan Steve Jones. ○

## BerlinRosen flies with Singapore Air

BerlinRosen has been selected by Singapore Airlines as its public relations agency for North America. BerlinRosen will work to amplify the brand’s standing as a leader in luxury travel.

In addition to assisting with the launch of the company’s non-stop service between Seattle and Singapore this September, the BR team will support communications for inflight products, services, amenities, retail offerings and partnerships in all gateway markets, including New York, Newark, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Houston.

BerlinRosen also has agency-of-record relationships with lifestyle and hospitality clients, including the TWA Hotel, Brookfield Place, the Waldorf Astoria New York and the Wythe Hotel. ○



### FARA News



## NEW FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT FILINGS

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

**Morris Global Strategies LLC**, Franklin, TN registered Jun. 11, 2019 for **Arab Project Party Iraq**, Baghdad, Iraq, regarding communication with US government officials on behalf of the party’s leaders, Khams Khanjar and Sarmad Khanjar.

**Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP**, Columbia, SC, registered Jun. 6, 2019 for **Province of Nova Scotia**, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, regarding ferry service between Nova Scotia and Maine.

**Sonoran Policy Group, LLC**, Washington, D.C., registered Jun. 26, 2019 for **Federal Government of Somalia**, New York, NY, regarding counsel on strategic defense, counterterrorism, and security matters.

### Lobbying News



## NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT FILINGS

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

**38 North Solutions, LLC**, Washington, D.C. registered Jun. 24, 2019 for **Scale Microgrid Solutions**, Ridgewood, NJ, regarding microgrid inclusion in clean energy public policy.

**Alpine Group, Inc.**, Washington, D.C., registered Jun. 24, 2019 for **Independent Petroleum Association of America**, Washington, D.C., regarding energy issues related to onshore and offshore drilling.

**Forbes-Tate**, Washington, D.C., registered Jun. 24, 2019 for **AEON Biopharma**, Newport Beach, CA, regarding issues related to biologics.

**Holland & Knight, LLP**, Washington, D.C., registered Jun. 21, 2019 for **Burning Man Project**, San Francisco, CA, regarding permit approval.

**K&L Gates, LLP**, Washington, D.C., registered Jun. 21, 2019 for **Berkshire Hathaway Energy**, Washington, D.C., regarding issues related to recovery of lithium from geothermal brines.

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### J Public Relations

530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018

212/924-3600

letstalk@jpublicrelations.com

www.jpublicrelations.com

Employees: 65. Founded: 2005.

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

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

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

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

### Locations:

#### New York

530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018

212/924-3600

#### San Diego

2341 Fifth Ave., San Diego, CA 92101

619/255-7069

#### Los Angeles

429 Santa Monica Blvd., #280, Santa Monica, CA 90401

310/722-7066

#### London

14 Gray's Inn Rd., 3063, London, WC1X 8HN, UK

(011) 44 (20) 38905838

### Sampling of highlighted clients:

Adare Manor, Ireland

Adventures by Disney (project work)

Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort (project work)

Chateau du Grand-Luce, France

Chewton Glen, UK

Cliveden House, UK

Discover Baja California

Four Seasons Resort Lanai

Golden Oak Development by Walt Disney World Resort

Grace Hotels

Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Lake Como

Gurney's Resorts - Montauk & Newport

Helena Bay, New Zealand

Hotel del Coronado

InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown

InterContinental, Washington DC - The Wharf

Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts

Newport Beach & Company

Rancho La Puerta

Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa

Regent Seven Seas Cruises (project work)

Relais & Châteaux

The Palms and The Shore Club, Turks & Caicos

The Private Suite at LAX

The Resort at Pedregal

The Ritz-Carlton Hotels (15 properties)

Vail Resorts Hospitality

Vail Mountain Resorts



Jamie Sigler O'Grady & Sarah Evans,  
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