# **Communications & New Media** July 2021 I Vol. 35 No. 4

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Fraser Seitel

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Jim Lukaszewski

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normal will impact their business.

As Europe reopens, hoteliers face

PROMOTING TRAVEL

a new series of challenges.

**ACROSS BORDERS** 



#### GOP's PR hurdle: Americans like Biden

f the Republican Party wants to regain a foothold in either chamber of Congress next year—let alone reclaim the White House in 2024—it needs to build a case for why the Biden Administration's policies don't work. The problem? They're having a hard time getting that message to stick. Meanwhile, they're doing a bang-up job reminding Americans that the GOP remains out of touch with reality and fixated on halcyon days that ended in January.

There's only one card left in the deck at this point, and it's a player's favorite: block everything President Biden wants to do, just like they did with President Obama.

Ever since he assumed office, Biden has consistently garnered high approval numbers. According to a June Gallup poll, 56 percent of Americans currently approve of the way he's handling his role as President. Compare this with Trump, who left the White House with an approval rating of just 34 percent. Trump maintained an average 41 percent approval rating throughout his term, the lowest ever recorded, beating Harry Truman, who since 1953 held the record for the worst average presidential job approval rating (45.4 percent). Trump is also the only President on record who never passed a 50 percent approval threshold at any time.

Like it or not, Biden's \$4 trillion economic plan—which encompasses infrastructure, climate change, child care and the minimum wage—is popular. And while it remains to be seen what signature policy or action will define Biden's presidency, he's widely recognized—fairly or not—for overseeing our ongoing exit from the COVID-19 pandemic, with a May AP-NORC poll revealing that 71 percent of Americans approve of his handling of the crisis.

America's image abroad has gotten a much-needed boost under Biden as well. According to a June Pew Research Center survey, 75 percent of respondents living in 12 countries expressed confidence in Biden, more than four times the 17 percent who said the same of Trump last year. Overall, 61 percent said they're confident in Biden's ability to do the right thing in the matter of international affairs.

The problem: Biden's ambitions of a Congress that makes across-the-aisle deals on key policy issues just aren't going to happen. Even the most popular legislative act of his presidency so far—the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus stimulus package—barely made it to his desk. That's because the GOP's pushback against Biden's popularity has manifested itself in a shopworn strategy that's become old hat for the Party: obstruct, block, derail, filibuster. Ensure a Democrat-led Congress doesn't get anything done and then, with the 2022 election looming, offer solutions to fix the gridlock they created.

Think of it as a one-trick elephant. In the early days of Obama's presidency, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell famously said "The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president." So, it was nothing short of a déjà vu moment when McConnell said at a May press conference that "one-hundred percent of our focus is on stopping this new administration."

Considering the bloodbath of the 2010 midterms, where Republicans won the House with the greatest shift in seats since 1948, GOP leaders presumably see this kind of partisan railroading as a clear path to victory. (Conservative voters see it as a winning strategy as well: According to a May Vox/Data for Progress survey, 50 percent of Republican voters said they're in favor of congressional Republicans refusing to compromise with Biden.)

So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that Senate Republicans are using the same strategy to obstruct President Biden's agenda that they used on Obama. They blocked the landmark voting rights bill ("For The People Act"). They stopped the formation of a bipartisan commission to probe the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Even Biden's infrastructure plan, the one item for which both parties seem to find common ground, appears to be in jeopardy (to Republicans' credit: Biden isn't blameless in that fight). As a result, it's hard to envision any other item in Biden's plans—from climate change to gun control—overcoming a filibuster in the Senate, lest Democrats bypass Republican support through reconciliation if they want to get anything done

Even the rhetoric is the same. During the Obama Administration, it was death panels and fears that government would take away Americans' guns. This year, it's critical race theory, the Green New Deal, mail-in voting and conspiracy theories like the big lie that the 2020 election was rigged, a claim that even former Trump Attorney General William Barr has referred to as "bullshit."

To overstate the obvious: the prospect of bipartisanship seems unlikely anytime soon. Annoying as these obstacles are, it deserves to be said that the GOP isn't offering much in the way of a competing narrative. The Republican Party remains hopelessly stuck in the past and under the spell of Trump, who despite being out of office for six months and costing the Party the White House and both chambers of Congress, remains its de facto leader. The GOP needs to tell a different story. It needs to ditch Trump and remind its constituents what it's going to do tomorrow, not what it did yesterday. Anything less is a loser's game.  $\mathbf{O}$ 

— Jon Gingerich



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# 

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# Americans can't tell difference between real, fake news

Americans who are the most confident in their ability to spot "fake news" online are the most likely to fall for it, according to a study.

By Jon Gingerich

mericans who are the most confident in their ability to spot "fake news" online are the most likely to fall for it, according to a recent study published in peer-reviewed scientific journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

The study, which focused on Americans' ability to recognize misinformation and disinformation online, quizzed respondents' competency in distinguishing between fake and actual news headlines. It found that many Americans appear to overestimate their abilities in telling the difference between legitimate and false news, and this overconfidence may be at least partially responsible for why individuals are vulnerabile to the phenomenon—and worse, why they share fake news.

Participants were presented with a series of news headlines and asked to discern which were real and which were fake. Those headlines, which appeared on Facebook's news feed during the 2018 U.S.

midterm elections, were published by actual mainstream as well as bogus news sources. Half the headlines were congenial to Democrats and the other half were congenial to Republicans.

The study found that most participants overestimate their abilities in identifying fake news content: while 90 percent of respondents claimed to possess above-average abilities in differentiating false from real news content, a whopping 75 percent fell short in their performance.

On average, respondents placed themselves 22 percentage points higher than their actual score. About one in five (20 percent) rated themselves 50 percentage points or higher than their score.

A second, web-tracking portion of the study analyzed respondents' online activity, and discovered that those who overestimated their false news discernment abilities the most were 14 percent more likely than the least overconfident to visit websites

that spread false or misleading content, and were 7 percent more likely than the average respondent to consume false news content.

In other words, not only do many Americans have a hard time identifying misinformation, there seems to be a correlation between one's perceived confidence in spotting fake news and one's vulnerability to it.

The study's authors referred to the idea of fake news being a problem that individuals aren't personally vulnerable to as a "classic example of the third-person effect," or the belief that mass media messages have a greater influence on others than on themselves. This overconfidence could make individuals more susceptible to exposing themselves to fake news and to accept it as fact, especially when those stories comport with their own political beliefs.

"Overall, our results suggest that people are often unaware of their own vulnerability to misinformation," the study's authors wrote. "Targeting these confidently misinformed individuals may be the key to reducing much of the information pollution on social media sites. The question of how best to do so remains open." **O** 

# PR firms remained profitable in 2020

Cuts to overhead, deferred rents and economic assistance in the form of grants and loans allowed PR firms in the U.S. to yield strong operating profits last year in spite of the coronavirus, according to a recent industry survey.

By Jon Gingerich

.S. PR agencies managed to remain profitable in 2020 despite the severe economic damage wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to an annual industry survey conducted by PR merger and acquisition consultancy Gould+Partners.

Gould+Partners' latest Benchmarking report, which analyzes key factors affecting PR firm profitability, found that PR agencies in 2020 saw, on average, profitability reach 18.2 percent of firms' net revenues (calculated as fee billings + markups), up from 17.4 percent in pre-pandemic 2019.

The survey's findings discovered that profitability last year was particularly high at the largest firms: PR agencies with revenues in excess of \$25 million netted average operating profits of 20.2 percent in 2020. Firms accounting for between \$3 million and \$10 million in revenues netted profitability of 18.1 percent, while firms with between \$10 million and \$25 million in revenues netted 17 percent. The smallest firms—those with

under \$3 million in revenues—netted the smallest profitability, 15.8 percent.

Gould+Partners Managing Partner Rick Gould told O'Dwyer's that "there were three main reasons" that the PR sector was able to weather the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, Gould cited economic recovery grants and loans such as the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program, which offered billions in small business relief and provided a lifeline to retain staff that would have been laid off or furloughed. Second, many agencies in 2020 were able to get rent abated or deferred. Finally, Gould said that many firms—driven either by careful planning or a mere state of panic—made a series of line-by-line cuts in their overhead, to everything from travel and expenses to freezing salaries, pay cuts and bonuses. Indeed, the Gould+Partners report found that total overhead in 2020 averaged 23.6 percent, down from 24.8 percent in 2019.

"All of these moves went directly to the bottom line," Gould said. "By watching the numbers monthly, by managing by best practices benchmarks, [agency owners] were able to squeeze out additional profitability and move into 2021 much leaner and positioned for an even better 2021. It truly showed the resilience of the well-managed PR agencies."

When broken out by region, the report found that PR firms located in the U.S. Northeast boasted the highest average operating profits in 2020 (25.4 percent), followed by firms in Canada (22.5 percent), northern California (20.1 percent) and the U.S. Southeast (18.2 percent). Among the least profitable were firms located in the Midwest (16.9 percent), firms located in the New York City metro area (15.8 percent) and firms in the Southwest (13.8 percent).

The study also found that revenue per professional staff member averaged \$256,667 in 2020, up from \$244,840 in 2019; and staff turnover for the year averaged 18 percent, compared to 2019's 16.7 percent.

Gould+Partners' latest Benchmarking Survey was based on responses from 37 "prominent, best of class" North American PR agencies. Responses were collected in May. •

# Data privacy, security top consumer concerns

Brands are failing to live up to consumer expectations when it comes to data privacy and security issues, according to a recent FleishmanHillard study.

By Jon Gingerich

ata privacy and security are the top issues consumers care about and are now the top challenges most expect companies to act on, according to a new study by FleishmanHillard.

FleishmanHillard's biennial study, which seeks to measure the gap between consumer expectations and their actual experiences with companies and brands, analyzed insights from respondents in six countries and their experiences with more than 300 companies across 20 industries in an effort to uncover what role consumers around the world believe companies should take in addressing today's top societal, political and business challenges.

According to the study, a majority of consumers globally said that data privacy (55 percent) and data security (57 percent) are now the top issues that are most important to them.

More than half of consumers (56 percent) admitted that privacy concerns have made them less likely to use products or services from companies that use consumer data for their own benefit, and as a result, only 45 percent said they're now willing to let companies collect their personal information, even when it means providing them with greater convenience and personalization. More than two-thirds (68 percent) also think companies must demonstrate that they've made meaningful data and consumer protection practices that go beyond mandated regulations.

Following data privacy and security, other top issues of consumer concern include access to affordable, quality healthcare (54 percent), violence against women and access to affordable, quality education (both 50 percent), freedom of speech (48 percent) and protecting the environment and climate change (47 percent).

When it comes to the issues on which consumers most want companies to take action, data security and privacy again topped the list (47 and 48 percent, respectively), followed by protecting the environment and climate change (44 percent), minimum wage (40 percent), income and wage gaps (38 percent) and racism and racial justice issues (33 percent).

The study undergirds the relatively newfound concept that how brands engage with society is often viewed as more important than the customer benefits its products or services offer. In fact, fewer than half (47 percent) of respondents said their perceptions and beliefs about a company are shaped by attributes solely related to the unit, TRUE Global Intelligence. •

products or services a company provides. A third (32 percent) said those perceptions are instead shaped by a company's impact on society, and nearly a quarter (21 percent) said those perceptions come from the ways in which a company's management behaves. In fact, the FleishmanHillard study discovered that two-thirds of consumers (66 percent) believe that for a company to be more credible than its competitors, it must talk about its behaviors and impact on society as well as the environment.

In the eyes of the public, it appears a large part of this responsibility rests on the shoulders of company leaders. Two-thirds of those polled (65 percent) believe CEOs should speak up on issues that "may not have a significant impact on the business but have a significant impact on society." Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) said CEOs should have an active voice on supporting and influencing environmental policy change, and 65 percent believe CEOs should play a role influencing health policy. An additional 72 percent believe CEOs should demonstrate their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, both internally and externally.

"Authentici-FleishmanHillard's latest ty Gap" study surveyed more than 10,200 adults in Brazil, China, Germany, UK and the U.S. between March and April. The survey was conducted by FH's intelligence

# Communicators satisfied with pandemic outreach

Most PR pros are satisfied with their company's outreach policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a recent study.

By Steve Barnes

even out of 10 communications professionals are satisfied with their organization's outreach and management policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study conducted by the University of Alabama's Plank Center for Leadership in Communications.

The Center's 2020-21 North American Communication Monitor surveyed 1,046 communication professionals from the U.S. and Canada. Not surprisingly, it found the pandemic has been top of mind for a large majority of communications pros. Three quarters of those surveyed said that they pay attention to news about COVID-19, while more than eight in 10 (83.2 percent) say that the coronavirus outbreak is a heavily discussed topic.

COVID-19 has also had a significant im-

pact on the daily work of communications professionals. Roughly two out of three respondents (66.2 percent) said the pandemic is relevant to their work, with nearly the same number (65.8 percent) noting that it had a direct impact on the daily work of their department or agency.

The effect of the pandemic was particularly noted by those who worked for public companies. Out of those professionals, 85.2 percent said that the pandemic was relevant to their work and 76.5 thought that the pandemic affected their daily duties. Those numbers were significantly lower at consultancies and agencies, with 56.9 percent finding the pandemic relevant to their work, and 59 percent noting its direct impact.

A variety of other factors also affected the impact that the pandemic had on communication pros. Those between 40 and 49 seemed to be the most affected (with 70.9 percent finding the pandemic relevant to their daily work), while the impact was felt less among those under 29 (55 percent).

Those higher in the pecking order also said they felt the effects of the pandemic on their daily work most strongly, with CEOs and team leaders being more likely to mention that effect than were the team members working for them.

The study also asked respondents which sources they use most to find information about COVID-19. Public health organizations and officials were used by 72 percent, with national news outlets (69.2 percent) and local news outlets (61.9 percent) next on the list. At the bottom of the list were social influencers and bloggers (33.8 percent) and church or religious leaders (33.2 percent).

Public health organizations also ranked the highest when it came to trust, with 34.6 percent of those surveyed calling them the most trusted source. O

# Programs born out of pandemic still inspiring travelers

Nearly every industry was affected by the COVID crisis, but perhaps none more dramatically than the travel sector. If we've learned anything coming out of this pandemic, however, it's that in times of struggle, we often discover just how resilient and creative we can be.

By Lauren Mackiel

ccording to Tourism Economics, global travel spending experienced a 42 percent annual decline in 2020, and international travel dropped 76 percent. While the pandemic shook the travel industry to its core, many pivoted to meet the needs of a new reality. Tourism and hospitality providers leveraged the time by developing creative solves in hopes of capturing the hearts of travelers, inspiring them in the short-term to visit in the longterm.

#### Remote work becomes dream vacation

Remote work increased from 20 percent pre-COVID to 71 percent at its peak, according to Pew Research. We saw international destinations turn their eve from the absent leisure traveler to the "bleisure" traveler. Countries competed to lure remote workers touting gorgeous landscapes as the new "home office."

For example, imagine taking conference calls or conducting board meetings just steps away from Seven Mile Beach in the Cayman Islands, or brainstorming business solutions while paddling through its mangrove forests ... sounds like a dream, doesn't it? The Cayman Islands turned those dreams into reality. With borders still closed, the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism and Ministry of Tourism launched the Global Citizen Concierge Program, allowing eligible professionals to embrace a remote lifestyle and immerse themselves fully in the luxury, adventure, culture and beauty of the Cayman Islands. Digital nomads can revive their work-life balance and apply to live and work remotely for up to two years at the bespoke, luxury destination. The GCCP provides extended stability as compared to other destinations only offering a six month stay or less. Since the initiative was launched in October 2020, more than 100 successful applications from families, couples and individuals have been The dock at Rum Point. received, with most entrants coming from the U.S. and Europe. Successful applicants still have this unique remote work opportunity.

For consumers looking for a change of scenery while staying closer to home, Hilton created a new offering that allows remote workers to stay remote without worrying about barking dogs, the neighbor's

lawn mower or cats on keyboards. Work-Spaces by Hilton launched in the midst of the pandemic to give remote workers a chance to eliminate the distractions of home without heading back to the office. With WorkSpaces by Hilton, consumers can book a room at a local Hilton property for a day rate. The program comes with all the amenities we love about an office—a desk, comfortable office chair, lightning fast Wi-Fi and plenty of free coffee and tea—without the construction project happening next door.

#### **Guaranteeing a good time**

National data indicates that most U.S. travelers daydream about visiting Hawaii more than any other destination; however, this amazing set of islands suffered huge setbacks as tourism plummeted more than 90 percent at the height of the pandemic (Associated Press). In an effort to inspire vacationers to its shores, Outrigger Hotels and Resorts launched the first-ever experiential promise made by a hospitality brand. Entitled "The Outrigger Promise," it pledged that all guests will have a vacation of a lifetime, and if not, the brand will credit guests for a future stay to try again—on the house. The industry-first offer was so successful in bringing happiness to travelers that Outrigger extended the offer through June 2021, good for stays booked through Dec. 21, 2021.



Photo: Will Burrard-Lucas

In even better news, Hawaii recently announced that once it reaches a 60 percent vaccination rate, the state will lift pre-arrival testing and quarantine requirements for domestic U.S. travelers (Travel and Leisure). Paradise awaits.

#### Virtual escapes

Another trend that erupted this past year was virtually escaping and connecting online. Destinations and hot tourist spots were quick to reimagine their experienc-

es bringing them right to consumers' doors, or more literally, their

Google Arts & Culture partnered with more than 2,500 museums and galleries around the world, including Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum, London's National Gallery and the



Lauren Mackiel

Whitney Museum of American Art (Fast Company). For the first time, many of the world's most awe-inspiring locations provided virtual access to travelers so they could get an up-close view of popular historical artwork.

Known as the Culinary Capital of the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism hosted its first-ever intimate and immersive virtual "Cook-and-Sip" event for top-tier media and influencers. The unique press engagement featured on-island culinary and mixology talent and reinforced key destination messaging keeping Cayman top of mind among media while borders remain closed.

With so many people missing travel, Hilton decided to offer a peek behind the curtain and allow guests to bring some of their favorite hotel experiences directly into their homes. The Hilton at Home series not only kept Hilton relevant during a time when travel wasn't an option, but also served up Hilton's signature hospitality for those stuck at home. From free video backgrounds featuring fabulous Hilton destinations around the world, to downloadable coloring pages and cocktail demonstrations, Hilton at Home touched on all elements of a virtual hotel stay. The program's highlight was the release of the world-famous DoubleTree cookie

recipe. Over the years, millions of travelers have enjoyed that warm, chewy cookie upon check-in. As baking increased in popularity during the pandemic, the timing

Continued on page 19

# PR and marcom, post-pandemic

Good communications efforts have been critical for companies during COVID-19. As we move into a post-pandemic world, here's what PR and marketing pros can do to keep those newfound seats at the table. By Jamie Kightley

t's been a ground-changing couple of years for the C-suite. According to Cision's fourth annual Comms Report, 85 percent of PR pros said the C-suite is now relying on them for strategic counsel. It appears that PR's value has extended beyond simple informing the sales pipeline, that business executives are more dependent on strategic guidance from PR and marketing professionals than ever before.

Good COVID communications was essential during the pandemic and fell into the lap of marketing and PR professionals alike. The manner in which businesses responded will have a lasting legacy on how those organizations are perceived. Research from IAB UK and YouGov shows that 80 percent of UK respondents are less likely to purchase from a company that had been insensitive during the crisis, with another 35 percent stating they now pay more attention to how companies behave. And it's been the job of communications teams to keep organizations' reputations intact throughout this crisis.

It's not just PR and communications pros that are experiencing the surge in demand. CIOs also have a newfound weight on their shoulders through an overnight growth in responsibilities and required agility—in the U.S. well over 90 percent of CIOs are now working closely with their CMO to improve the customer experience and promote innovation.

#### PR and marcom prove their flexibility

PR stands for public relations, which means many different publics, from employees, to investors, to customers, to prospects, to the media, to analysts. PR showed itself to be among the most agile of sectors when initially adapting to new ways of working. Marketing communications were used to help and inform internal staff, keep morale high and ensure everyone knew the company was coping with the challenges, whether through furloughs or shorter weeks.

But PR and marketing also stepped up to the customer plate to create digital events such as product launches, thought leadership summits or topical webinar series. The digital trend has proved particularly popular, and 71 percent of marketers believe virtual events are here to stay throughout 2021 and beyond. And let's not forget the media's role in all this: All essential audiences need to communicate "business as usual" during difficult times, bring together customers, prospects and new solutions and achieve essential third-party endorsement in target media.

More than three quarters of B2B buyers and their sales counterparts say they prefer the new COVID-induced digital reality, not only for safety reasons but for ease, speed and convenience. Organizations have had to juggle service disruptions and brand reputations and relevancy, alongside workforce welfare, so finding effective digital communication methods and newfound ways of networking have become essential when choosing to engage with people—whether that be customers, clients, staff or journal-

#### Taking advantage of available tools

With a widespread number of digital services fast-forwarded by the pandemic, digital events have brought a windfall of new solutions to the market while communicating to the eager ears of potential audiences.

Newfound methods have included the use of social media as a means of interaction between PR pros and journalists. The organic and natural nature of the interaction can help solidify the PR-journalist relationship.

Remote working has forced countless Zoom calls, internal and external online meetings, and events—the demand for digital communication and collaboration escalates. But other technology investments, particularly in data analytics, will be key.

#### Advanced analytics for media watching

Data analytics is well-proven to provide insights into customer behaviors and allow insightful and data-driven business decisions, so it's no shock that analytics tools have become precious and integral assets to PR and communications professionals. Advancements in digital technology have made insights much more easily accessible, transforming the way businesses operate and as such, have become a crucial tool that PR and communications experts must incorporate into their strategies.

There are now analytics tools that offer the ability to observe who's been reading your stories and from where, and pinpoint which messages are driving sales most successfully and why. When extended in PR, analytics results can allow for a much more targeted approach, providing relevant media and journalist suggestions that can boost media placement opportunities.

Measurement and analytics tools such as Power BI, Hubspot and Marketo can help show a real focus on long-term campaign results, indicating to company managers that PR pros are achieving ROI through these efforts.

#### 'Deep-seated' at the C-suite table

The pandemic hasn't changed PR, marketing and CIOs' roles but it has undoubtedly accelerated their responsibilities far more quickly than anticipated—and they've

certainly proved their worth during the last 12 months. While businesses continue to adapt to our new normal, PR and comms professionals are top of the speed dial list. Company leaders are still reliant on this strategic counsel, but will they maintain that seat?



Jamie Kightley

Yes. New developments in data-driven analytics will help marketing pros align their proposed PR strategy with company and C-suite goals to ensure common ground. By adapting to emerging communications platforms, marketing teams kept communication flowing and adjusted to the new ways of working.

Jamie Kightley is Head of Client Services at IBA International. •

#### PR news brief

#### Brunswick, Sard Verbinnen, Trident top Chambers' rankings

Brunswick Group, Sard Verbinnen & Co. and Trident DMG were named the top PR & communications firms offering litigation support in this year's rankings from Chambers.

All three were placed in Band 1, the top tier of the rankings, which evaluate firms based on technical legal ability, professional conduct, client service, commercial astuteness, diligence and commitment. They all were in Band 1 last year as well.

Brunswick received kudos for being "particularly good at distilling complex issues into digestible statements useful for customers and others," SVC was praised for having "a great reputation among the editorial boards of major top-tier media" and Trident DMG was called "particularly effective in navigating communications strategies adjacent to litigation.'

Ripp Media, Finsbury Glover Hering and FTI Consulting took spots in the Band 2 category. Band 3 includes PRC Haggerty, Reevemark, Sitrick And Company, The Levinson Group, Edelman and Infinite Global.

Lanny Davis of Trident DMG and Sitrick And Company's Mike Sitrick were named Senior Statespeople in Chambers' individual rankings.

Ellen Moskowitz of Brunswick Group placed in Band 1, while Ripp Media's Allan Ripp, SVC's George Sard and Paul Holmes of FGH were in Band 2.

Chambers ranks firms and individuals from Band 1 to 6, and stresses that being ranked in any of the bands is a "significant achievement."

# Travel is back, but industry is transformed

The COVID-19 pandemic turned the PR world upside down and changed the way we work along with it. The result has been a more innovative, evolved approach that has reimagined the way public relations professionals have traditionally viewed the client-agency relationship.

By Samantha Jacobs

n 2020, a pandemic flipped the world upside down. As a PR agency rooted in travel and tourism with a deep passion for those we serve and what we do, we had two choices regarding how we could handle the most difficult challenge we'd ever faced. We could sit back and watch to see what would happen, or we could leverage our innovative mindset to create a new way of doing business that would evolve with the times and set us—and our clients—up for future success.

So, what did we do? We adapted, fast. With nearly every aspect of our lives transformed, we decided to flip the traditional agency model on its head, redefining our business, but doing so in a way that stayed true to our core philosophies. We evolved our approach in a way that showed our clients—and the industry at large—that we believe in the future of travel, we believe in them, we're here for the long term, and by sticking together, we can come out of these difficult times stronger than ever.

#### A flexible client/agency model

As an independent, family-owned company, Hemsworth has the ability to be nimble and adapt with the times. As the reality of the pandemic set in last spring, we knew we had to get creative in terms of how we support the brands and companies that rely on us to share their stories. While we've always provided tailored programming, our pandemic evolution became focused on flexibility. We developed an entirely new structure that innovated the way many have traditionally thought about the client-agency relationship, launching our COVID-19 PR Stimulus Program.

From upfront pro bono support to those that qualify and reduced retainers to a "Flex Pay" contract and the removal of set hourly fees or minimums, this initiative was a firstof-its-kind solution. It was a risk, but we suspected there was a need for something different, and we went for it. The industry took note, and we immediately saw that we were right in our thinking. Resources on the client side were being rapidly depleted. Brands were losing their in-house PR teams. Agency budgets were no longer what they once were. There was a need for quality agency resources under a more flexible structure, so that travel-centric businesses could get through these difficult times without completely abandoning their PR strategy.

#### **Reaching consumers in innovative ways**

Just as we were challenged to adapt our business in the midst of a pandemic, so were our clients. Hotels, resorts, tourist boards, cruise lines, travel brands ... those we spoke to in the early pandemic days—and even much later—found themselves challenged by the desire to reach their target audience in a thoughtful, engaging and yes, affordable way.

Even while travelers were sheltering in place at home, we knew from the conversations we were having with top media from around the world that people were craving inspiration and finding themselves overwhelmed at times by an increasing sense of wanderlust. As a result, virtual armchair tourism was born. Some might say this was a trend or short-term necessity, but we believe it's something that's here to stay. Creating compelling branded travel and tourism campaigns that inspire travelers from home? Yes, please! When travelers are ready to go, they will. Nothing is quite like having your toes in the sand at your favorite beach resort or setting out to explore a new city on a bucket list adventure.

Our clients have had the unique opportunity to connect with travelers—and media—on a more personal and authentic level by providing a mental escape and establishing a deeper bond that will position them at the forefront for the industry's rebound. We've had fun working with our clients to develop unique, cost-effective ways to build anticipation and demand, and we believe this is a concept to be embraced long-term.

#### Delivering content to media in new ways

Our approach to flexible communication with travelers, and creating unique client programming, carries over to the way we communicate with media, as well. When COVID hit, the media landscape was also turned completely upside down. Staff writers with whom we had longstanding relationships were laid off and found themselves embarking on freelance careers. Many publications suspended their print editions and sadly, a few of our favorite titles shuttered completely. Media corporations changed their approach to working in the office as well, so sending media materials or mailers in a traditional sense are no longer a dependable option with so many journalists and editors now working remote.

As the world begins to re-open, travel media are starting to have an appetite to get back out there, participating in hosted or

individual press trips. But again, the impact of a pandemic has had a ripple effect. Many of those same journalists are still restricted by their parent corporations' travel policies and rules around vaccines. As a result, we've begun embracing a new



Samantha Jacobs

way of communication on behalf of our clients, with virtual press conferences and yes, even virtual press trips. Though challenging, finding new ways to communicate with the media has helped personalize our approach even more. And our clients are winning as a result.

#### Offering employee flexibility

As we navigated our way through the pandemic, we learned that flexibility was key not only for our clients and the media, but also for our team. According to a recent survey conducted by Wakefield Research for Graebel Companies Inc., nearly three in five workers (59 percent) said they're more willing to relocate for work now than they were prior to the pandemic. In fact, 80 percent of workers would relocate during the pandemic, and there's a growing interest in relocation post-pandemic as workers pack their bags and set out to explore a new world of opportunities.

We've always offered work-from-home days and relocation options but in the past, we were a bit hesitant to embrace the concept of full-time remote team members. That said, our thinking has evolved and again, we find ourselves committing to a flexible mindset. Travel is coming back with a bang and as we've worked to build an incredibly strong team to support our clients' post-pandemic growth, we've done so with a new way of thinking. We've adjusted our policies and now allow our team to work from any location. We've hired team members from other markets with remote starts, allowing them to thoughtfully plan their relocations. As a result, we've added some incredibly talented new team mem-

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# Travel communications realities after the pandemic

The travel and hospitality industry is set for a monumental rebound. Now that travel is coming back, however, PR pros must educate clients to the fact that business will return to a new normal.

By Geoffrey Weill

or fifteen months we've been in the doldrums, along with the rest of America. Few industries have suffered like ours: our costs, our clients, our offices. As the reboot of the travel and hospitality industry progresses, it's clear our work isn't going to go back to what it was before the pandemic. The worldwide lockdown taught us to be creative, to utilize new strategies, new tactics, new technologies. While we don't know yet if the twenties will be roaring, we do know we're never fully going back to 2019 practices.

It's not just that *Departures* has departed. We're not going to trash all those new things we learned. Our clients, and we, couldn't have survived without a massively increased presence online, massively enhanced use of social media, without Zoom, without less-releases-more-pitches. And we ain't going back.

The first big change many of us will have to face is that business travel will never be the same. Fifteen months of Zoom has taught every boss in the world that flying 20 people to San Francisco or San Juan or Samoa to sit in a darkened conference room and watch a PowerPoint is just not going to be happening much anymore. Yes, the big kahunas will still fly to important meetings, but much of the day-to-day travel of sales people and mid-management may be out the window for good.

But there's a definite upside. Because leisure travel is going to come roaring back. And it's going to be even bigger than ever. Why? Because everyone who works at a desk in an office can extend their vacation for a few days or a week of working remotely. We've all learned that working remotely has some downsides, but it works. So that one-weeker to Italy can handily be stretched to 10 or 14 days. Most of our clients are too worried about the day-to-day and making up for months of crashed revenue to have worked this out yet. It's our job to tell them. And to reassure them that the upsides of the new normal far outweigh the downsides.

Sure, things won't fully revive until at least 2022. Yet, to paraphrase "Bye Bye Birdie," there's still a lot of reviving to do now. The travel media are eager for new stories, new angles, not merely to run the tired backlog that's piled up since early 2020. The new normal is short and sweet. The 10-page story may not be dead, but it's ailing. Because few have the time or the attention span to

read ten pages any more. And with so much now being read online, clients' foot-stamping passion for a "cover" is almost as dated as a Palm Pilot. That's another message we need our clients to understand.

All of us have clients of a certain age—like this writer—who still want the coffee-table magazine trophy, and yes, we'll endeavor to give it to them. But I'll never forget what former National Geographic editor Carolyn Bennett Patterson, the "Auntie Mame" of travel writers, once told me forty years ago: "Geoffrey, Darlin, nobody reads those articles: they just read the photo captions." And if it was true in 1981, it's even more true now. The reality of 2021 is that the quarter-page photo with an alluring, information-filled caption in magazine X is going to get a lot more of a read than the six-pages of single-spaced prose in magazine Z. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that less is more.

Of course, print was beginning to wobble long before COVID. And newspaper travel sections went out with the fidget spinner. But with the exception of the fabulous Departures, the best will survive and their burgeoning online presence will help them flourish. And we'll happily work with them all. But it's to social media where we communications specialists are going to have to direct more of our energies. No longer is it good enough for a hotel owner's nephew to handle their Instagram. We have to step in and have them realize that social media is intrinsic to their overall PR strategy: it's no longer a cute hobby on the sidelines for those perplexing Millennials. We have to tell our clients that Instagram is the new Facebook, and TikTok is the new Instagram, and in 2022 or 2023 SlamBam may well be the new TikTok. Our clients need our help to figure out what's happening on that phone in their pocket, lest they figure it out on their own.

Most of our clients have been writhing in agony for close to 18 months, and as the world gradually returns to normal they may be too busy gearing up their operations and sales to think about PR. So, we're going to have to be more proactive than ever. We must underscore what we need to do for them to supercharge their return to business-as-usual. We have to push them. We have to create plans, make proposals, be creative and, wherever possible, get the right journalists and the right influencers to visit them as soon as possible.

The elephant in the room is fees. Many of us are going to have to do all this pushing and shoving and creating while we're still earning a reduced fee. Because there isn't an agency that works in the travel and hospitality sphere that hasn't had to make compromises on

fees during the pandemic. (And don't believe those who claim they haven't.) And it's a problem. Once again, we are going to have tread lightly—but firmly. Because many clients have grown accustomed to us working our behinds off for that lower



**Geoffrey Weill** 

fee. So, we have to aim to get back to 2019 rates by late fall. And, of course, in 2022, 2019 fees won't be enough; but if we can get back to February 2020 by November 2021, we should all be happy. And then in 2022, when we're truly back to normal, we can push for more.

In September 2020, midway through the worst of the lockdown, this writer crossed the Atlantic. I wanted to demonstrate to our clients that we're still around and that Americans are aching to get back on planes. And, yeah, I wanted to see for myself if Europe still existed, and if travel—despite the masks and curfews and tests and nose-swabbing—was still not only possible, but pleasurable. And it is. Indeed, I'm writing this article on the train from Venice to Innsbruck, on my fifth trip across the pond to demonstrate to our friends in the media—and especially to our clients—that all isn't lost.

A week ago, I flew from Newark to Milan on a "COVID-free" flight. If ever PR firms or their clients doubted America's eagerness to travel again, they should've been with me on that Dreamliner, which didn't have an empty seat. Looking around, I realized maybe five percent of my fellow passengers were on business; the remaining 95 percent were Americans on their way to European vacations. And that felt truly encouraging.

It's been hell, but we've survived. We've learned it's never going to be 2019 again. It's going to be 2021 and 2022. And we all have to be sure to put all that learning to good use.

Geoffrey Weill is President of New York-based Geoffrey Weill Associates. •



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# **Promoting travel across borders**

Now that Europe is reopening and travelers are venturing back across the pond, hoteliers are finding themselves faced with a new series of challenges.

By Jennifer Hawkins

s borders slammed shut across Europe last spring, public relations professionals representing hotels across the pond were confronted with challenges they'd likely never anticipated, including keeping clients in the news—and in business—as travel cratered around the world. Now, with European countries beginning to welcome fully vaccinated travelers again, promoting travel is back to being by the book, right?

Not quite. Not all the hotels are staffed up and not all the countries have the same requirements for entry, so there's a lot of navigation for the traveler and those who promote travel. As Annalisa Maestri, Global Communications Manager from Dorchester Collection, told us during a Clubhouse session our agency hosted, "Every country (in Europe) is opening on a different timeframe, so we are strategically tapping our brains to find creative solutions. Hotels need a long-term focus and should be thinking about their local markets and also creating new enticing offerings. For everyone, 'creativity' and 'flexibility' are the keywords."

From our bi-coastal bases in New York and California, our agency has racked up a lot of hours and experience working to promote and position luxury hotels, resorts, airlines, cruise lines, tour operators and destinations on literally every continent. We're listening to our clients, hearing what they have to say and how they want us to tell their story. We wanted to keep our journalist friends and colleagues up to date with news they could use.

Like most of us during the lockdown, we had to dial-up more Zoom calls than we can count to stay in touch with our clients abroad. We wanted frequent updates: Are they open yet? And if not, when do they hope to be? Are they planning to operate at full capacity? And if so, are they having trouble hiring talent? What creative offerings are they planning to entice new guests? And what standard offerings might be missed by returning guests if they're put on hold? Details are a PR rep's best friend if you want to distinguish your clients' unique offerings.

If your client hasn't finalized details of their planned reopening yet, there's no time like the present to do so. Aid them with a quick-but-deep dive to gauge their shortterm needs and longer-term challenges, and activate the best approach to meeting their goals. This may involve repackaging existing client services and offerings as well as creating new ones that are right for the moment. But remember: they should be catering to those guests who know them and love them—and have missed them—so they can make sure to shine brightest when they're authentic about welcoming back guests.

We live by Action Plans that merge effective PR tactics and relevant social media messaging— always geared toward building awareness of the property and its targeted audience. We want to help our clients drive bookings as well as tell the hotel's story in compelling, trend-driven ways. It's that high-quality content with excellent photography, great access to the talent on property and, again, creative authentic programming.

Giving priority to being creative with placements, pitches and press releases was important even when the hotels weren't open. We did a lot of on-camera interviews with on-property personalities such as executive chefs, spa directors and owners for radio and interactive Instagram Live sessions, and we created shareable country-specific playlists to inspire travelers to travel again. We were attempting to keep the tone vital.

Not having properties to promote, we pivoted and were determined to leverage the visionaries and thought leaders behind the brand to be the spokespeople for their property or destination, but we also felt it important to keep the conversations going about our collective Love of Travel. The economic impact of travel isn't lost on us or the media. We were motivated to put forward many of our clients to speak out about what they are doing to address guest safety issues, but also to be ambassadors for the travel industry as a whole. Keeping our clients talking and communicating what they were seeing firsthand in their countryfrom Ireland to France, Italy to the UK—it was all different at the same time. And the media appreciated the frank and personal accounts.

We also put effort and expertise into managing our clients' and our own social media presence. Nothing turns off potential travelers like an out-of-date Facebook page, which sends the message that the property is either understaffed, doesn't care or is too pre-occupied to convey the hospitality that waits behind its door. By developing dynamic posts and buzz-worthy content to strategically engage with audiences and drive bookings, our clients were able to keep guests informed and engaged. It was a time to experiment with different platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Clubhouse, Instagram, Instagram Stories

and IGTV. Many of the engagements had huge followings that were hungry for updates about the hotels, protocols, the destination and, of course, the peo-

The linchpin for all of the above is creative communications colorful content. The old



Jennifer Hawkins

rule of thumb for traditional media-"no images, no story"-holds even truer for digital outlets, making a robust library of edited photographs and video assets essential to ensuring a cohesive brand identity and amplifying its message. Videos, in particular, needn't be overly produced: In our experience, genuine, well-edited video content shot with a smart phone can work just as well or even better than something too slick.

What about influencers? Our clients have told us that influencers are vital to getting a hotel's message out, but we stress to them the importance of selecting influencers who can authentically convey a specific focus like family travel or luxury—and aren't generically featuring a hotel. "Economically speaking, hotels should be very selective and very clear about what the deliverables should be. We have discovered the positives of offering stays to those special few are focused and targeted," one client said during our Clubhouse session, adding, "It is important to put a lot of effort into finding the right media and influencers to effectively demonstrate the authentic luxury we provide."

Finally, as with any PR outreach effort, open communication and transparency is the dominating principal to promoting hotels and resorts, the better for travelers and media to know what to expect and not be confronted by surprises as they venture back to Europe. As one of our clients told us: "Hotels should have always embraced this, and now it is more important than ever."

Jennifer Hawkins is Founder and President of Hawkins International Public Relations. O



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# Travel's long-awaited turning point

Travelers are ready to forge ahead and put COVID concerns in the rearview mirror. Here's how we can effectively jumpstart PR efforts now that the post-pandemic surge is in full swing.

By Julie Freeman

y the time you read this, the travel recovery landscape will have shifted yet again. As we emerge from crisis containment and the last 15 months of switching back and forth between "pause, ready, set" phases to full on recovery "go" mode, this shift also means there's absolutely no time to wait for companies to restart their PR efforts.

While MMGY Global predicted that the pent-up demand for travel would be unleashed in a big way, we never anticipated the speed of the trajectory. As our 2021 Portrait of American Travelers survey Summer Edition found, U.S. travelers are ready to put COVID concerns behind them and forge ahead without looking in the rearview mirror. The "wait and see" mindset that many destinations and travel brands were forced into during the pandemic has been cast aside, and now is the time to shift gears, make strategic decisions, capitalize on the pent-up demand and capture the travel surge.

#### The surge is well underway

Based on numbers from our most recent Portrait of American Travelers report, intent to take a vacation in the coming months has increased significantly, with 72 percent of U.S. adults planning to do so-up from 62 percent recorded at the

beginning of the year.

While Gen Z already showed a high intent to travel, we saw the biggest jump in Boomers—increasing from 54 percent to 70 percent. This was no surprise considering Boomers had first access to vaccines and are more likely to have disposable income available time to travel.

At the same time, with families separated for so long, there's also strong interest in multigenerational travel, with 43 percent of travelers intending to take a vacation with parents, grandparents, and kids in tow.

With summer well underway, we're already seeing a major spike in keyword searches for "beaches," "parks," "camping" and other terms usually associated with

outdoor fun. As was the case even in the earlier days of the pandemic, there's continued interest in road trips with 57 percent of travelers indicating they took one in the last year, and 76 percent intending to in the coming months. Also on the rise is travel spend on overnight leisure trips, with Boomers showing intent to take fewer trips but spend more than other generations, so it's a key market to target right now.

It appears we finally hit a crucial turning point. The beginning of summer showed a strong rebound in air travel, crossing more than two million travelers in a single day for the first time since March 2020. We're also seeing strong conversions to domestic hotel bookings, with U.S. hotel occupancy reaching its highest levels in June since November 2019, according to research from

With borders reopening at a fast clip beginning with destinations like Iceland, Mexico, parts of the Caribbean and now the EU—we're anticipating a huge surge of international travel on the horizon. Cruise lines are already enjoying a strong performance with record bookings, despite strict safety standards, and even at the height of the pandemic our research showed that traveler intentions to cruise only decreased

We also predicted early that leisure travel would precede business travel, which would return at a slower pace, with the long-lead nature of meetings and events

naturally feeding into an extended recovery time. In a recent survey of its members, the Global Business Travel Association found that 79 percent would be "very comfortable" or "comfortable" traveling for business after receiving the COVID-19



Julie Freeman

vaccination. GBTA itself will resume its annual conference this November in Orlando, marking the return of large-scale meetings and events.

#### Powering your PR strategy

We're amidst a great travel reawakening. With the surge already upon us, and consumers ready and willing to splurge on great travel experiences, it's time to harness that energy in a positive and directed way.

At MMGY NJF, we've been helping our clients navigate through the COVID crisis and have a clear-eyed view on how to capture prospective travelers in an enormously competitive landscape. Whether

> you're a DMO, hotel or resort, airline, cruise line or travel supplier, it's essential to have a firm strategy in place that allows you to be nimble and progressive in your execution.

> Redirect the narrative. For the past year, road trips, outdoor exploration and regional travel were the main story angles for journalists, and we rallied around curating virtual experiences to meet these trends. While open spaces and domestic travel are still hot topics, now is also the time to court writers with story

ideas and individual opportunities to get back to big cities and international des-

\$4,000 \$3,500 \$3,000 \$2,500 \$2,000 \$1,500 \$1,000 \$500 Gen Z Millennials (Spring) Avg. Number of Vacations Expect to Take Next 12 Months

(Summer) Avg. Number of Vacations Expect to Take Next 12 Months --- (Spring) Avg. Amount Expect to Spend

--- (Summer) Avg. Amount Expect to Spend

Leisure travel and spending for the next 12 months.

slightly. In fact, extended voyages including World Cruises are in highest demand amongst luxury cruisers, an audience whose loyalty is fierce.

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#### TRAVEL'S TURNING POINT

\_ Continued from page 18

tinations. But we must do it in a way that fits these times: taking cleanliness, crowds and general safety into account, and providing real-time support while on the road. Speaking of which: safety is essential, but no longer pivotal for our messaging. In the early days, we saw hotel brands partnering with cleaning brands, and destinations crafting roadmaps to safety in conjunction with leading health organizations. Those messages should remain a priority, but they no longer need to be front and center. Rather, this needs to be baked into your messaging as an essential, non-negotiable part of the experience—with an understanding that this topic will continue to evolve in the coming months and years.

Be authentic to differentiate your brand from the competition. Staying true to who you are and what your brand stands for is crucial to re-engaging with and capturing bookings from repeat visitors and to attracting new ones. One of our most recent PR campaigns for our client, Visit California, showcased once-in-a-lifetime experiences from across the state. "Dreaming On In California" reminded consumers that California stands for dreaming big and called upon locals and visitors to apply and share their stories of postponed dreams, skipped plans and canceled celebrations from 2020 for the opportunity to make those missed moments come true this year, California style. Unforgettable experiences highlighting key messaging

pillars included a meal prepared by celebrity chef Curtis Stone, behind-the-scenes access at a San Diego Padres game, a magical Disneyland Resort vacation, a luxury road trip with stops at Marriott International properties across the state and a series of fairytale micro-weddings at the luxurious Carneros Resort and Spa. In addition to extensive media coverage, winners shared their experiences across social media, further inspiring followers to create their own only-in-California itineraries.

Community engagement plus inclusivity is critical to a go-forward PR strategy. Part of tourism recovery involves messaging, empowering and engaging locals like never before as ambassadors for their own brand. By doing so, brands can highlight those stories that truly make a destination or product unique. Bringing more invested stakeholders to the table means improved coordination, partnerships, story development and overall enthusiasm which helps to drive PR strategies. In addition, travel brands can attract a more diverse audience by understanding the motivations and behaviors of underrepresented travelers. MMGY Global's recent release of the "Black Traveler: Insights, Opportunities & Priorities" report discovered the enormous spending power of Black travelers in the U.S.: spending more than \$129 billion on domestic and international travel before the pandemic. Forthcoming this summer is a study on the needs and priorities of Latinx U.S. Travelers.

Develop creative packages leveraging brand standouts and new travel habits such as reverse compression. We have always maintained that offering deep discounts isn't a sustainable strategy, even if it garners headlines in the short term. The demand for travel has already led to weekends and peak travel times filling up, so we're seeing what MMGY Global has coined "reverse compression." Because deals are hard to come by, travelers are relying on flexibility to improve their experience and find greater value. Workfrom-home and hybrid work models mean that mid-week travel is now a possibility, and travelers are continuing to expect the generous cancellation and rebooking policies we saw mid-pandemic. It's up to us to design creative packages that grab media attention while meeting the needs of trav-

#### Let's go places now

As we forge ahead, our strategic planning and crisis-management expertise have empowered us to find what works best for each client. We know that the travel cycle is rapidly changing, and people will continue to expect this flexibility as they approach their trip planning. We understand innately that travelers are seeking out memorable experiences, are drawn to sustainable choices and are prepared to splurge on meaningful travel. As you embark on your PR recovery efforts, remain authentic and continue to mold your approach against an ever-shifting environment. One thing's for certain: the competition is fierce, but we're here to help and go places together.

Julie Freeman is EVP and Managing Director of MMGY NJF. O

#### TRAVEL INDUSTRY TRANSFORMED

Continued from page 12

bers in the process, and we've added boots on the ground in new locations as well.

As an industry, we're facing a new world. The way we live and work has drastically—and, in some cases, permanently changed. It's time agency leaders embrace

a new way of thinking about their service model, working in the spirit of absolute partnership, showing our clients, our media friends and our team members that we're here for them in any way they need us to be. Flexibility is critical. The same way of doing things won't cut it anymore. Evolution needs to be about more than just the services you offer, the industries in which you operate, or the talent you're adding to your team. Evolution—and innovation—is

a mindset, rooted in a flexible way of partnering with—and servicing—those around

Looking back, innovation, flexibility and adaptivity are three core themes for Hemsworth over the past year, and we firmly believe they are themes that should carry through any agency in our sector as we enter a new world.

Samantha Jacobs is Founder and President of Hemsworth Communications. O

#### COVID PROGRAMS INSPIRE TRAVELERS

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was perfect to release the recipe and give guests a sweet taste of Hilton, even if they couldn't experience it in person. Hilton at Home helped remind consumers what they love about travel and what they had to look forward to once travel resumed.

#### **Looking forward**

TripAdvisor reports that nearly half (47) percent) of travelers surveyed globally are planning to travel internationally this year, including 45 percent of U.S. travelers. And they plan to spend more on those experiences to make up for lost time (Forbes). While the first quarter of 2021 was also challenging-international tourist arrivals were down 83 percent in the first quarter of 2021, according to The United Nations World Tourism Organization—there are signs of increased consumer confidence and plans to travel based on rising vaccination levels and the easing of lockdowns and travel restrictions. Only time will tell if these trends are here to stay. In the meantime, the industry and travelers have much to look forward to.

Lauren Mackiel is SVP at Coyne PR. O

# Getting heads into beds: a PR plan for travel's recovery

As the hospitality industry emerges from the devasting economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing strategic, research-driven marketing campaigns that share hospitality and travel brands' stories will be more important than ever.

By Dave Nobs

erhaps no other industry was more adversely affected by COVID-19 than the travel and tourism sector. And yet, arguably no industry is more important to the nation's recovery.

According to Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, there's no better time to acknowledge the outsized role travel will play in fueling an economic rebound.

"Before the pandemic, travel generated \$2.6 trillion in economic output, supported 17 million American jobs and delivered a \$51 billion trade surplus to the U.S. in 2019. Given the industry's importance to America's economy and workforce, a full, nationwide recovery effectively hinges on travel's revival," Dow said. "While we are beginning to see signs of a recovery on the horizon, much work remains ahead to ensure its growth."

"Brands need to be prepared for this travel resurgence—they need to have plans ready to drive the demand," said Clayton Reid, CEO of MMGY Global, in a recent Ad Age interview with Adrianne Pasquarelli. "It will be an increasingly competitive environment where [marketers] will be scrambling to not only bring back their current customers but to steal market share."

#### Start with strategy

As the old saying goes, failing to plan means planning to fail. As the hospitality industry emerges from a devasting loss of business resulting from the pandemic, putting a strategic marketing plan in place is more important now than ever before.

Typically, this process starts with primary, secondary, industry and competitive research. One of the biggest mistakes we've seen is companies that don't have a marketing plan in place and no thought given to ways in which to measure success.

Understanding who your customer is and what she or he wants is critical. Get to know them better. Who are your best customers? What makes them tick? What do they enjoy? What type of experiences are they seeking? And who else would likely stay at your hotel in the future?

In doing our own research, we found that proximity matters but there's much more that goes into deciding where to stay while traveling. According to Lavidge's Hospitality Marketing Report, respondents ranked these words in order of preference in determining where to stay: affordable (66 percent), clean (58 percent), comfortable (54 percent), quality (47 percent) and safe (46

Safety is increasingly significant to a growing segment of travelers. "This is the most important issue for me as I travel alone at times or with my children," one respondent explained. "Safety in our world is most important. If a resort or hotel cares about safety, then everything else should also be important to their establishment as

#### The rise of digital

There's arguably no brand more synonymous with hospitality than Hilton. It was the first hotel chain to put TVs in rooms and the first to build airport hotels, among other things. If you watched the acclaimed "Man Men" series, you'll remember both the company and its founder, Conrad Hilton, were portrayed as advertising icons in several episodes.

Recently, Hilton CMO Geraldine Calpin explained how the brand is innovating to meet the expectations of their guests in the digital age to Jason Spero, Google VP of Global Performance Solutions.

"To be first among guests used to be about great amenities. That's becoming history," Calpin said. "Customer expectations today are accelerating. Our customers are accustomed to controlling their life from the palm of their hand. We have to be constantly obsessive about how we can use digital and technology to create a better experience for our guests to reduce the friction out of those travel moments."

According to our research, we're seeing digital marketing continue to grow. As an example, programmatic media, which is a data-driven approach to ad placement that provides one-to-one communications by leveraging real-time bidding in online auctions to get the best placement for an ad at the best price, is increasing. Search engine optimization, email marketing and paid social are also being used more frequently by hospitality brands.

#### Storytelling through PR

PR is essential for hotels and resorts to tell and share their own stories, which can allow them to survive-and even thriveas we emerge from these disruptive conditions. Effectively communicating the value of your property to both business and leisure travelers is an essential part of public relations.

Targeted FAM trips that allow media to

familiarize themselves with your property, promoting health and wellness options, creating content in the form of videos, infographics, blogs and podcasts, and aligning your property with causes that are important to your guests, in addition to media



**Dave Nobs** 

outreach, thought leadership and crisis preparedness, are all vital to success in planning and implementing a PR campaign.

While our research uncovered several commonalities among travelers who expect a safe, clean and comfortable place to stay at a reasonable price, there's a need to effectively segment and target your customers rather than attempting to reach everyone with a single message.

Standing out in today's crowded market is tough—but possible—for hospitality brands willing to put in the effort. Creatively, focus on how best to communicate that "one thing" that makes each unique. Start by knowing who you are as a brand and knowing your audience. Then, formulate a marketing strategy and graduate to a formal plan. Finally, keep your marketing and communications engaging and relevant to your guests throughout the campaign.

Dave Nobs is Managing Director at Lavidge in Phoenix, and an adjunct professor at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Communication. O

#### PR news brief

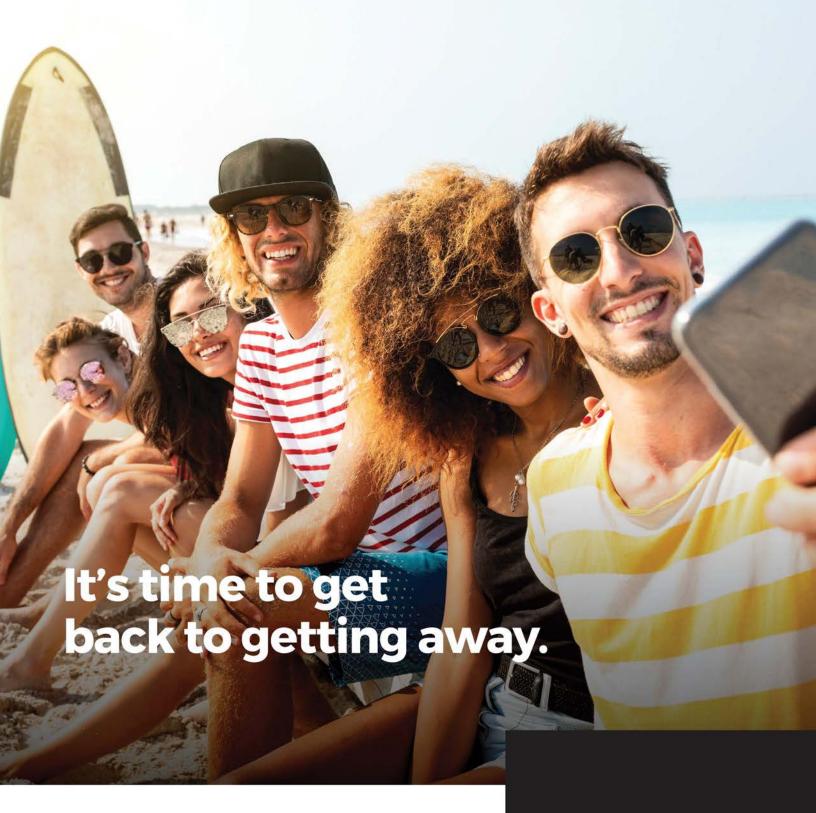
#### Novavax uses Solebury Trout for COVID vaccine IR

Solebury Trout is working with the investment community for Novavax, which has announced its COVID-19 vaccine has a 93 percent efficacy rate

The firm plans to file for regulatory approval for its NVX-CoV2373 vaccine in the third quarter.

Once approved. Novavax said it will be able to produce 100 million shots a month by the end of Q3 and 150 doses by year-end. Novavax, which is 33 years old, has never had a vaccine approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Solebury Trout's Alexandria Roy represents Novavax.



#### Slowly but surely, the world of travel is returning.

Once again people are looking to get away, explore, create memories, and once-in-lifetime adventures — and that is exactly what we help travel brands and destinations deliver.

As a renowned travel PR and marketing agency FINN Partners makes meaningful connections between you and the travelers you want to reach.

Find out more at finnpartners.com



# From Google to responsible tourism: 25 years of travel

An overview of the last-quarter century of the travel industry proves the adage that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

By Carolyn Izzo-Feldman

996 was a pivotal time for travel. Expedia was founded as a division of Microsoft, two Stanford University students released the first version of Google and, inspired by Southwest Airlines, EasyJet and Ryanair took on the low-cost airline model.

That same year, Carolyn Izzo Integrated Communications (CIIC) opened its doors, and today, the agency celebrates 25 years of developing strategic communications campaigns for travel and hospitality clients worldwide. So, what does 25 years of working in the travel industry look like?

Fast Forward to the 2000s, when TripAdvisor revolutionized the way travelers researched and booked hotels and attractions, Facebook pioneered the concept of "sharing" and the dialogue between brands and consumers became a two-way conversation. This, plus the launch of the iPhone in 2007, gave users the ability to make travel decisions from the palm of their hands.

We've witnessed the transformation of travel firsthand and how the industry has changed in fundamental ways, making it more accessible and desirable than ever. Digital maps have replaced paper maps, translation apps have opened doors for travelers to go anywhere their heart desires and communicate in any language, influencers now shape travel decisions and drive consumer traffic to Instagrammable spots and online booking has begun replacing the local travel agent.

And while technology has certainly improved travel, we've also seen many issues throughout the years that have challenged the industry and how tourism authorities have responded. One example is the rise of overtourism that has affected destinations from Venice to Barcelona and how cities and national parks have implemented regulations to curb the negative impact of receiving too many visitors; the effects of 9/11 and how it brought forth new security travel measures that are now considered the norm.

Today, we're witnessing the wake of a new travel transformation, and a revival, as the world recovers from the global COVID-19 pandemic, which brought travel as we knew it to a standstill. We're now experiencing the rise of travel advisers and their strong influence on travel decisions. According to the ASTA, 76 percent of travel advisers are seeing an increase in customers as compared to before the pandemic.

During our tenure working with global destinations and brands, managing crises and adapting to new styles of public relations and marketing, two words come to mind to describe the travel sector: adaptability and innovation. These are the words we believe will mark the full recovery of the travel industry and reshape some of its challenges, all while paving the way for a more responsible comeback.

#### A responsible recovery

Green travel, which started as a small niche, has now become mainstream and key to rebuilding a sustainable industry. Companies and destinations are adopting zero-waste itineraries, helping us offset our carbon footprint and doing their part to engage the traveler experience to benefit local communities. Slow travel, a more mindful approach to discovering a destination, has also emerged.

By not returning to "business as usual" and taking into account global issues like climate change and the need to protect local diversity and cultural heritage, the travel industry will be able to create positive outcomes for the environment and communities, especially in a time when people are seeking meaningful connections to both others and natural spaces.

According to Booking.com's predictions for future travel, 69 percent of travelers expect the travel industry to offer more sustainable options; 51 percent will avoid traveling during peak season and 48 percent will visit alternative destinations to avoid overcrowding. This will allow destinations to adopt new crowd management measures. In addition, 55 percent of travelers will look for options where their money will be able to positively impact a local community and 53 percent will consider reducing waste and/or recycling their plastic when traveling once all travel restrictions are lifted.

This new consumer mindset will also change the way we book travel, with 35 percent of travelers wanting online travel booking sites to give rewards for making sustainable choices, 29 percent looking for OTAs to use clearly identifiable verbiage to promote sustainable choices and 28 percent expecting travel companies to offer tips on how to be more environmentally conscious while traveling.

Our toll on the environment also came into focus as the world went on pause. Photos of clear waterways in Venice, the reduction of CO2 emissions and enhanced air quality were getting more views and shares than the average daily posts. During the lockdown, animals were observed in areas normally bustling with people. As a result, we've become more aware of the value of wildlife and will be seeking more purposeful experiences with nature. Virtual eco-tourism and safaris have already seen increased interest. This has also created more interest in how to combat illegal wildlife trading.

While sustainability is at the forefront of change, regenerative tourism, which refers to leaving a place better than you found it, is another concept that has grown in popularity for the mindful traveler. This includes generating economic opportunity for econo-



Carolyn Izzo-Feldman

mies dependent on tourism with conscious investments, supporting a destination's recovery efforts by giving back directly to local communities and incorporating local, immersive activities as part of the guest experience, such as beach-clean ups, supporting local artisans and reforestation

Although there's still a long road ahead, global efforts have already surfaced to drive the short- and long-term recovery of tourism, like the World Tourism Organization highlighting various roles of public-private committees and task forces in crisis response and recovery.

These consolidated efforts seek a responsible recovery for industry while highlighting social impact, climate and environmental action, protecting cultural and natural heritage, promoting conscious travel and immersive experiences, creating jobs globally that directly benefit and empower local communities and eliminating illegal wildlife trade.

So, what will the next 25 years in travel bring? Ultimately, only history will tell, but the hope is that with continued improvements, awareness and efforts towards social responsibility, the next quarter century will prove the best is yet to come.

Carolyn Izzo-Feldman is Founder and CEO of CIIC PR. O



# HAWKINS INTERNATIONAL NEW YORK | LOS ANGELES

# Revenue's relevance in the public relations plan

The communications industry is often so caught up in the role of measurement that it loses sight of arguably the most important component in the measurement mix—the client's bottom line.

**Bv Curtis Zimmerman** 

t's difficult to analyze a travel trend, read an article about marketing or overhear never-ending insightful tidbits from consultants and not read about COVID, Post-COVID or the indefatigable impact of the remote workforce—due to COVID. Today, I read an article proclaiming that companies-once again, due to COVID-that had a more digitally mature consumer experience performed better than those that didn't during 2020. I'm guessing that no one reading this article would be startled by that information.

What may surprise you, however, is that the article you're reading now has nothing to do with the pandemic, the effects of the pandemic, our economic recovery or the under-employed workforce.

As marketing professionals in a highly PR-influenced world, we're charged with helping travel clients plan, execute and report in the form of annual marketing plans, public relations plans, quarterly reports, dashboards and customized forms of reporting. Without debating the difference between a goal and an objective, I would argue that our industry is often so caught up in the aspects of measurement and reporting that it becomes easy to lose sight of the importance of revenue in the mix.

Certainly, impressions, mentions, page views, engagement and impact on digital channels are critical to measuring public relations' performance. But, if you give a client a choice between a significant increase in website visits, or a 15 percent increase in bed tax collections or RevPar growth—or, even more valuable, the prospect of exceeding the projected budget for room nights or rooms-related revenue—they'll choose the numbers more closely aligned with the bottom line.

Today, data sciences play an important role in the entire spectrum of marketing and communications. Presumably, for good reason. I would argue, once again, that the real reason for this should still be associated with revenue. Gone are the days when having the ability to segment an audience by demographics, geography or lifestyle characteristics is differentiating.

Through individual data sources, we now have the ability to drill down in an effort to understand and identify the individuals that have the greatest propensity to spend dollars with hotels, resorts, cruise lines, rental car companies, destinations and literally

any company operating in the travel space. Why target adults ages 35-49 with a household income in excess of \$100,000 if fewer than 20 percent of that particular audience would ever consider spending money with you or your clients?

Measurement has evolved, so why not the truest measurable objective of our collective efforts? The majority of public relations firms utilize similar tools as a measuring stick of our efforts. If you take a few minutes to review the features and benefits of the leading providers, you'll find similar claims: benchmark versus the competition, capture content across all channels, share of voice, measure earned media, sentiment, reputation. They're all valid—and critically important-metrics to determine if public relations is performing. But, where's revenue in the measurement mix?

The truest measure of our collective efforts is our ability to generate room nights, meetings, reservations, ticket sales, bookings, visits, arrivals, bed tax, economic impact and any other form of measurement that has a dollar sign attached to it.

We must be diligent in our efforts to demonstrate there's a proving line that connects our efforts to revenue. It's not easy. And it's a question that's asked with growing frequency. But it can be done. This year, Omnicom introduced omniearnedID, the first analytics platform to connect earned media to sales. It's a powerful tool and a reflection that the industry understands the growing pressure to ensure there is a return on the public relations spend. Other holding companies—and public relations firms—will follow suit.

What role does the client play in this equation? We all believe that the success of marketing communications is a collaboration that requires equal participation by the client and the agency partner. In the travel category, the majority of clients have key performance indicators, budgeted goals or simply revenue metrics that must be met. Many of them have salaries or bonuses that are tied to their ability to make the numbers work. And many of them hold their public relations staff or agency partners accountable. But, once their goals are established, it's hard to argue that the same measurement and monitoring features that we require from the tools that have been established as industry standards are enough. That quandary is likely what led to Omnicom to develop their platform.

As new people come into the industry, or seasoned professionals carry on as they have for many years, there's an opportunity for a paradigm shift from accepted practices and a battle of technology to reengineering the relationship to connect goals. At the risk of sounding old school, at the center of the client's world is revenue. And, we must earn a seat at that table.

We're fortunate as an agency to have relationships that have lasted the test of time. And, while we have certainly performed to make those relationships endure, the truth is with each of those clients they have consistently achieved their goals for financial growth.



**Curtis Zimmerman** 

It's no secret that clients are more likely to seek a new agency partner when there are objectives that are not being met. Yes, some of those may be specific to the performance of their PR firm, more often than not the search for a new partner is associated with a decline in revenue, new competition or a need to refresh a brand—of course, to gain new revenue.

Yes, we need technology. Yes, we need incremental measurement of our efforts. Yes, we need to focus on the performance of our people, media, influencers and every channel that generates earned and owned media. But perhaps the biggest innovation we can introduce is a return to a focus on the same form of measurement that has existed since the beginning of the exchange of cash for services: revenue.

Curtis Zimmerman is Co-Founder of The Zimmerman Agency in Tallahassee, FL. O

#### PR news brief

#### One Nine Three Group backs Krispy Kreme's IPO

The One Nine Three Group is handling Krispy Kreme as the doughnut chain plans to return to public ownership by selling four million shares of stock priced in the \$21 to \$24 range.

Krispy, which aspires to be "the most loved sweet treat in the world," sold 1.3 billion doughnuts, 64 percent of which were of the original glazed variety, in 30 countries during fiscal 2020.

Despite selling a billion-plus doughnuts, Krispy could not turn a profit, losing \$64.3 million on \$1.1 billion sales. The red ink continued into fiscal 2121 as Krispy suffered a \$3.1 million loss on \$313 million revenues during Q1 ended April 4.

JAB Holding took Krispy private in 2016 after it bought the company for \$1.4 billion. Following Krispy's IPO, JAB will retain a 38.6 percent stake in the comIntelligence + passion + style + connections + class + reach + knowledge + likeability + honesty + creativity + sophistication + utter lack of bullshit = 26 years of outstanding results



# Travel network shows power of integrated marketing

The travel industry is throwing a party, and it's shaping up to be a blast. As we ponder the implictions of this "new normal," we should reflect on what lessons we learned from the pandemic.

By Virginia Sheridan

ravel is back, and visions of flying to exotic places, sailing on blue oceans and exploring magical places are dancing in our heads. I'm ready to join the revelry but wondering if we shouldn't listen to Bette Davis' famous words in "All About Eve": "fasten your seatbelts because it's going to be a bumpy night."

While consumers, the industry and the media are elated at the prospect of people traveling again, there are also considerations travel marketers need to keep in mind as they frame new marketing plans and ponder the best ways to re-stimulate business.

For many, the big question now is what comes after "we're open?"

At a recent strategy session for a large client, attendees were asked: "what worries you the most about post-pandemic marketing?" Of all the expected responses, one stood out: "desperation marketing." It's the bumpy night for travel.

We've all been there: desperation marketing is a product of anxiety in an effort to save the next travel season; it's putting price before quality; it ignores brand consideration and does little to build customer loyalty. In some instances, desperation marketing causes confusion and problems instead of solutions, such as over-tourism or the wrong image that takes years to correct.

As we ponder the "new normal," we should reflect on lessons learned from the pandemic. 2020 was a roller-coaster for sure, with relentless twists, turns and pivots. PR pros were pressed into keeping clients afloat in the absence of any form of travel. Even so, some great work was generated last year through virtual means, messaging that built customer confidence and trust and promotion of C-suite executives.

According to an airline communications executive, it's imperative "to engage consumers in the places where they are, and do it in a manner that is authentic, honest and strategic."

At FINN Travel & Lifestyle, we took the path of creating a Global Travel Recovery Network of agency and external experts in multiple disciplines. The network allowed us to bring together best-in-class specialists to craft programs with strategically focused messaging, research and issue trend reports, conduct influencer marketing campaigns with high ROI and develop platforms to increase client brand awareness in the areas of sustainability, reputation management and diversity.

Our efforts resulted in global coverage that illustrated marketing innovation and resiliency through nearly 5,000 placements and over 23 billion media impressions achieved in 2020. These results kept clients in front of critical audiences and laid a foundation for restarting far in advance of actual recovery.

Another Network benefit was the advancement of the agency's approach to IMC-in theory a common agency offering-but not always easy to deliver. There's almost always something that gets in the way of the seamless operation of integrated marketing communications programs, including contending with different workstyles and cultures, workflow management, cost containment and turf wars.

An example of how this all comes together can be seen with new agency client Visit Panama, where we have pulled in specialists across sectors to deliver results-driven campaigns that are aimed at moving the needle and influencing consumer travel decisions.

David Scowsill, FINN Partners Travel Advisory Board and Global Recovery Network member said, "The competition will be fierce. The winners will be those that find the right messaging—with family reunions, health protocols and sustainability top of the agenda—and the right balance between social, influencers, digital and traditional media."

FINN's "one P&L" approach serves as a gateway to growth, practice integration and client satisfaction. Typical agency swim lanes have been dissolved to enable seam-

less cross-office-crosspractice client servicing, and global practice leads watch over orbiting business units while project managers keep programs on track. Our specialists in research, digital, sustainability, health, CSR & social impact and Diversity & Virginia Sheridan



Inclusion are always at the ready to help clients in brand improvement and customer acquisition. And, as a truly integrated agency we can mobilize the best teams to work on client business regardless of geography or industry sector.

There are lessons of a lifetime coming out of the pandemic. Teams worked harder than ever and willingly had each other's backs and jobs, and clients were saved through technology that facilitated work from anywhere. Most importantly, we kept travel alive in the absence of actual travel.

Travel is back. Let's do the most for it with integrated approaches that make the act and thought of travel rewarding.

Virginia Sheridan is Travel and Lifestyle Managing Partner, USA Travel Lead at FINN Partners. O

# **Corporate branding drives consumer opinions**

alf of consumers said that corporate branding initiatives, such as advertisements about a company's values, affect their opinions of that business, according to recent findings released by Visual Objects.

The Visual Object survey, which sought to learn what kind of branding materials U.S. consumers encountered in the past year, found that 50 percent of respondents said that company branding, such as an advertisement promoting a business's values as opposed to its products, affected their opinion of that business, suggesting that brands may do well to follow the practice of aligning themselves with today's pressing political and social issues.

Nearly six in 10 (59 percent) additionally said that retail branding initiatives, such as in-person or virtual design and layout, also affect their opinion of the company, be it instore or on a company's website.

The survey discovered that consumers encounter some branding strategies more than others. According to the survey, the types of branding consumers were most likely to find in the past year included product branding (39 percent), retail branding (37 percent) and service branding (31 percent). Regardless of its apparent efficacy, however, less than a quarter (22 percent) of consumers reported encountering company branding-like an ad promoting a business's values—at some point in the past year.

The survey also discovered that word of mouth retains a lot of power in the branding world. More than a third of respondents (36 percent) said that hearing about a company's services from an acquaintance compelled them to pay for it. O

#### People in PR

# Kernahan named **Hotwire global CEO**

ech PR specialist Hotwire has promoted North America CEO Heather Kernahan to the

role of Global Chief Executive Officer.

Kernahan officially assumes the role on July 1. She succeeds Barbara Bates, who has held the Global CEO title since 2017. Bates now moves into a newly created senior advisory role with



Heather Kernahan

Hotwire's parent company, Australia-based marketing and communications network Enero Group, where she'll help facilitate Enero's M&A activities in North America.

Kernahan joined Hotwire in 2016. She was previously President of Eastwick Communications, a tech firm which maintained offices in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area. Enero acquired Eastwick in 2016 and Kernahan was charged with leading the agency's North American and Australian operations. She was promoted to North America Chief Executive Officer in 2019.

Earlier in her career, Kernahan was Global Marketing Director at Enphase Energy. Prior to that, she worked at Autodesk, where she was Senior Marketing Manager of Product and Industry Marketing. O

# BCW adds APCO's Gallagher

CW has recruited Matthew Gallagher as Executive VP-North America Corporate Practice

He has more than 20 years of communications experience, including a decade-long stint at APCO Worldwide. At APCO, Gallagher headed the Midwest and West region and served as North

America Energy Lead.

Leader.



Matthew Gallagher

Earlier, he led the issues and crisis practice of Cerrell Associates and served as legislative director to a member of the Los Angeles City Council.

During his career, Gallagher has counseled clients in the technology, sustainability, energy, manufacturing and infrastructure sectors on issues such as business transformation, change management, employee engagement and DE&I. O

### Fiske sails to Royal Caribbean

oval Caribbean Group has brought Rosanna Fiske as Chief Communications Offi-

Fiske comes to Royal Caribbean from Wells Fargo, where she was Senior Vice President and Corporate Communications Leader.



Rosanna Fiske

She has also served as Chair and CEO of the Public Relations Society of America.

At Royal Caribbean, Fiske will lead the company's global communications strategy and be responsible for developing and executing all communications with internal and external stakeholders. O

# **Ogilvy Health CEO** moves to Moderna

gilvy Health CEO Kate Cronin will join COVID-19 vaccine maker Moderna as Chief Brand Officer on July 12. She will report to CEO Stéphane Bancel. At Ogilvy, Cronin led PR, social, brand and digital campaigns for clients such as Pfizer, Merck, BMS and Boehringer Ingel-

Prior to assuming the top Ogilvy Health spot, Cronin was Global Managing Director of Ogilvy PR's New York outpost.

Cronin will move to Moderna after a 17year Ogilvy career and a 13-year stint at Porter Novelli, where she exited as Partner.



Kate Cronin

Powered by the sale of the COVID-19 vaccine, Moderna recorded \$1.9 billion in Q1 revenues vs. \$8 million for the year ago period. It earned \$1.3 billion in Q1 '21 compared to a \$124 million '20 Q1 loss. O

# **Guardian names** Wahl CMO

etna marketing executive Wendy Wahl has been named Chief Marketing Officer of mutual life insurance giant Guardian Life Insurance Company of America.

Wahl was previously Head of Enterprise Marketing at CVS Health insurance carrier Aetna. Prior to that, she was responsible for leading digital marketing efforts at the health insurer. She was previously Executive VP, North American



Wendy Wahl

Healthcare Practice Lead and Director of Client Services at marketing agency RAPP and also served as Marketing EVP at Publicis Modem. Earlier in her career, she was a VP and Account Director at Publicis unit Digitas. O

# **Celebrity Cruises** calls Schneider CMO

elebrity Cruises appoints Michael Scheiner Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, effective July

Scheiner comes to Celebrity Cruises from Tommy Hilfiger, where he served as Global

Chief Marketing Officer. Before that, he was a Senior VP and CMO at Abecrombie & Fitch. He is also an advisor to mobile app startup Lawzy. In his new post,



Michael Scheiner

Scheiner will oversee all aspects of driving customer acquisition,

brand loyalty and e-commerce globally. O

### Stipa becomes CG Life PR EVP

G Life has named Susan Stipa Executive VP of Public Relations. Justipa was previously President of Phil-

adelphia-based science communications agency McDay, which CG Life acquired in 2020. She has continued to lead the firm as a wholly owned subsidiary of CG Life since the acquisition. With her appointment as leader of the combined PR group at CG Life, the McDAY



Susan Stipa

brand will be retired and absorbed into CG Life. Before coming to McDay, she was SVP for Foster Wheeler's pharmaceutical division. O

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



Kimpton (an Allison+Partners client) launches first ever Chief Virtual Learning Officer.

#### **5W PUBLIC** RELATIONS

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Ronn D. Torossian, Founder & Dara Busch, President, Consumer Practice Matthew Caiola, President, Corporate & Technology Practice

Since 2003, New York Citybased 5W Public Relations (5WPR) has worked with widely known and emerging brands, corporations and high-profile individuals. Our practice areas include Consumer Products & Brands, Food & Beverage, Health & Wellness, Beauty, Apparel & Accessories, Home & Housewares, Travel & Hospitality, Entertainment & Sports, Corporate, Financial Communications, Technology, Public Affairs & Government Relations, Nonprofit, Crisis Communications, Events and Digital & Social Media. We have a 360-degree approach to PR, social media, branding and digital marketing that delivers game-changing results to our clients. Our 175+ tenacious and creative communications practitioners develop and execute creative campaigns that connect our clients with their target audiences in memorable ways. Every aspect of programming is designed to impact our clients'

bottom line, bringing leading businesses a resourceful, bold and results-driven approach to communi-

5WPR's notable clients include Sparkling ICE, SodaStream, GNC, It's a 10 Haircare, jane iredale, L'Oreal Professional, Santa Margherita, SAP NS2, VIZIO, The Trade Desk, EPICOR, Xaxis and Zeta Global. Our innovative work has been awarded PR Agency of the Year, PR Executive of the Year, Product Launch of the Year and Business to Business Program of the Year.

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Jeremy Rosenberg, President, Marketing Innovation Team, North America

Jordan Fischler, Managing Director, Consumer Technology Karyn Barr, Managing Director, B2B Technology

Michelle Webb, Managing Direc-

tor, Health

Travel brands are recognized less for the products and services they deliver, and more for the experiences they provide. Whether for a destination, airline, cruise ship, hotel, restaurant or concierge service, connecting with travelers requires artful storytelling that brings each experience to life. Our team of marketing specialists work with global travel brands to do just this, using an integrated communications approach to drive bookings, visits and sales. To learn more, visit: www.allisonpr.com.

#### CIIC PR

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Carolyn Izzo-Feldman, CEO & Founder Amy Sedeño, Executive Director Paola Cuevas, Senior Director

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 35+ years of combined experience from several of the country's top PR firms.

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary this year, CIIC has been dedicated to servicing the travel & tourism, hospitality and real estate development markets with top-tier public relations campaigns and award-winning results. CIIC has represented leading hotels and resorts as well as independent hotels and hospitality brands in both the US and internationally, including Marriott International, Hyatt, Hilton, Palladium Hotels & Resorts, The Norman Estates at Rancho San Lucas, Vivo Resorts, Aliz Hotel Times Square, The Savoy Miami, and Cala Luna Hotel in Costa Rica to name a few. As destination experts. CIIC's roster of tourism clients includes Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, The Mexican Caribbean (Quintana Roo), Surfside, FL and Barbados, among others.

CIIC's work is strategic, creative and results-driven, and has been recognized year after year with awards from PR Daily, PR News and HSMAI with 20+ awards. In addition, our team has been awarded 'Top Women in PR' and was recently recognized as a 'TOP 100 Agency' by PR News.

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.



The CIIC team on location in Barbados launching the destination's Annual Crop Over Festival.

#### **COYNE PUBLIC** RELATIONS

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1400 Broadway 36th and 37th Floors New York, NY 10018 212/938-0166

Thomas F. Coyne, CEO John Gogarty, President Jennifer Kamienski, Executive Vice President Lauren Mackiel. Senior Vice President

The travel industry has been greatly impacted by COVID-19 and, in response, Coyne Travel is helping clients from the east coast to the west coast-including the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism and Outrigger Hotels & Resorts—navigate this unprecedented situation with on-going creative and strategic counsel. From developing rebound travel road maps, crisis and issues management, and offering creative solutions that will inspire people to travel again, once it's safe—our team has a pulse on the future of the industry. And while the landscape already looks and feels different, the transformative power of travel will never leave us. As we look ahead, we believe people will rely and seek out travel experiences to help them heal, connect with others and more deeply understand the world around them. After all, it's not about the destination or hotelit's about who we are and who we can become along the way. With an understanding of the ever-changing consumer experience and critical needs within the travel/tourism and hospitality space, we invite you to come along for the journey.

#### **DECKER/ROYAL**

New York City and London 646/650-2180 www.deckerroyal.com @deckerroval

Cathleen Decker, Stacy Royal, Founding Partners

Award-winning Decker/Royal is a creative communications and marketing agency serving hospitality, travel, and tourism clients worldwide. Simply put, we grow brands in travel. Our innovative and often provocative ideas connect, engage, and influence travel audiences wherever they are, whenever they are and always with



D/R helped Sandals Resorts International, the Caribbean's leading luxury all-inclusive resort company, announce expansion plans in its homebase Jamaica. Later this year, the company will officially celebrate its 40th anniversary.

a singular purpose: measurable results.

Everything we do begins with a data-driven approach that inspires and informs our team of creative thinkers and ends with our love of travel and the moments that make life great. We call it "ideas that travel" and it reflects our style of storytelling designed for a new era, right now.

Clients: App in the Air; Beaches Resorts; Bowling Green, KY; Brendan Vacations: Contiki: Costsaver; Friendly Planet Travel; Fowl Cay Resort; Insight Vacations; Luxury Gold; Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa; Panorama; Reno Tahoe; Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa; Sandals Resorts; Trafalgar; Travel + Leisure Co.; U River Cruises; Uniworld Boutique River Cruises; Wyndham Destinations and Your Jamaican Villas.

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Karyl Leigh Barnes, President Daniella Middleton. Senior Vice President

Our passion is places. Established in 1960, Development Counsellors International (DCI), is focused on elevating the lives of people living. traveling and working in the places we serve by engaging our passions for travel, exploring new cultures, and doing good. During the last half century, we have worked with more than 500 cities, regions, states, provinces and countries to help them attract visitors, business investment (economic development) 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. We 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. The firm is globally connected through TAAN Worldwide, a network of 46 agencies in 29 countries. Over the years we have partnered with the world's strongest destination brands, from Visit California, Travel Texas and Visit Florida, to Tourism Australia, Prom Peru and South African Tourism.

#### **ELEVEN SIX PUBLIC RELATIONS**

25 West 39th Street New York, NY 10018 646/325-5894 info@elevensixpr.com

Katie Barr Cornish, Principal Emma Silverman, Vice President

Eleven Six prides itself on creating a new normal in the PR agency world. We are smart, responsive, passionate and engaging marketers who tell our clients' stories in a way that grabs the media's attention, with a proven track record and top-tier relationships. We nurture a culture of creativity and innovation, with an emphasis on client relationships. As a small company, we are nimble and flexible, trusted by both big and small brands. 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.

During a challenging 2020 and into 2021, we worked closely with our clients to keep them at the forefront of the media and consumers' minds, even when no one was traveling. We continuously pivoted our strategy throughout the pandemic, and led our clients through recoveries amidst shifting travel restrictions and into the emerging new normal. We executed innovative virtual events to spark inspiration and wanderlust, arranged virtual desksides to keep our clients top of mind, developed trend pieces our clients could speak to, arranged for our clients to be on speaking panels, podcast interviews and conferences, secured socially distanced media visits and broadcast segments, participated in sweepstakes with top outlets and executed creative partnerships. Our team opened five new hotels and a market hall in the past year, with successful opening coverage and buzz.

Eleven Six's clients include a mix of travel, hospitality, lifestyle and food & beverage, working with hotels and resorts such as Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya, Art of Living Retreat Center, Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa and Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort Spa & Casino, destinations including Visit Richmond, tour operators including Remote Lands and Red Savannah, and the Dairy Market market hall, among others. Over the last year, the agency signed on a variety of new clients as well including Hôtel Barrière Le Carl Gustaf, Pacific Whale Foundation, Hyatt Centric South Park Charlotte, Regent Phu Quoc, Marriott Owings Mills Metro Centre, The Opus, Westchester, The Ven Embassy Row and Stay One Degree.

#### **FAHLGREN MORTINE**

4030 Easton Station, Suite 300 Columbus, OH 43219 614/383-1500 Fahlgrenmortine.com

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

As an integrated communications company, Fahlgren Mortine represents dozens of countries, states, cities, food and beverage

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#### FAHLGREN MORTINE

Continued from page 29

companies, national attractions and local favorites, and is known 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 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 Discover Dominica Authority: Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce/CVB; Travel Nevada; Destination Panama City; Coastal Mississippi CVB; Airstream; Niagara USA; Monterey, CA CVB; Visit Sun Valley; North Dakota Department of Commerce/Tourism; and many other destinations, regions, hospitality properties and more.

#### **FINN PARTNERS**

301 East 57th Street New York, NY 10022 212/715-1646 www.finnpartners.com

Virginia M. Sheridan, Travel & Lifestyle Managing Partner, USA Travel Lead Debbie Flynn, Travel & Lifestyle Managing Partner, Global Lead

FINN Partners is one of the world's fastest growing independent marketing and communications firms with an international Travel & Lifestyle practice in three main hubs-United States, UK/ Europe and Asia. With 100 professionals, the team offers client excellence, fresh thinking, and integrated strategies with global and localized approaches to ensure client differentiation and market presence. As travel makes its recovery after COVID-19, FINN Partners' clients tap into our expertise in travel and lifestyle and also seek our guidance in repositioning and marketing themselves across tech, health, wellness, culinary, social responsibility and other sectors to diversify offerings in a changing world environment.

Supported by trend research, insights, digital and influencer marketing, our team is unrivaled for award-winning creativity and bottom-line results. Our deep industry knowledge and skill sets put us in a unique position to develop thoughtfully conceived strategies to elevate client brands for immediate recognition and long-term success.

The agency's global travel portfolio includes clients in lodging, destinations, airline and cruise, design, health and wellness, attractions and travel-related services. FINN's travel portfolio includes Allianz, Antigua, Dubai, New York State, Hong Kong, Italy, Jordan, Panama, South Africa, and Iceland and more. Hotels include Accor, Agriturismo Casetta, Fairmont, Kempinski, Mandarin Oriental, and Six Senses. Airlines include Air France-KLM. Turkish Airlines and VistaJet. Cruise services include Starboard Cruise Services (USA), Seatrade Cruise Services (USA) and Galataport Istanbul (USA).

In addition to communication strategies, FINN Travel & Lifestyle offers Trade Representation for clients such as Jordan, Taiwan, Belize, Dominica and St. Helena. The agency also specializes in Responsible Tourism, Cruise Marketing Services, Multi-Cultural Marketing and Economic Devel-

Our commitment to our clients is to be an extension of their brands -a true partner who works hard, plays nice, respects and encourages diversity and collaborates across global offices and practices.

#### **FISH CONSULTING**

117 NE 2nd St. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 954/893-9150 Ifisher@fish-consulting.com www.fish-consulting.com

Lorne Fisher, CFE, CEO / Managing Partner Jenna Kantrowitz, SVP / COO Lauren Simo, SVP Ashley Davidson, VP

Founded in 2004, Fish is a full-service, national communications firm specializing in franchise and multi-location public relations and marketing. Our clients span a variety of industries, including the travel, restaurant, retail, home services, fitness, beauty, and health/ wellness segments. In 2020, Fish formed a new Travel & Hospitality practice, anchored by our work as the global agency of record for Best Western Hotels & Resorts.

From brand building, national media relations, influencer marketing and FAM trips to local grand openings, crisis management and corporate communications, Fish's expertise in travel and hospitality runs deep and our creative, strategic approach to PR drives impactful results.

Our strategic media relations

campaigns consistently land our partners coverage in the most widely read and watched consumer and business outlets nationwide. We love developing creative ways to get media talking about the brands we work with—and getting customers talking about them, too.

Fish has received numerous awards for our work, including being named to Forbes' first annual list of America's Best PR Agencies in 2021. And we're honored to consistently be recognized as a best place to work in the industry from *Inc.* magazine, *PRWeek*, PRovoke, and PRNEWS.

Fish is based in Fort Lauderdale. Florida, with operations in Dallas, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Chicago, and London.

#### FRENCH/WEST/ **VAUGHAN**

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

Rick French, Chairman & CEO David Gwyn, President / Principal Natalie Best, Chief Operating Officer / Principal Leah Knepper, SVP, Travel & Tourism Practice

Founded in 1997, French/West/ Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, a distinction it has held since 2001. Its Travel & Tourism practice is ranked tenth in the country.

For more than two decades, FWV's dedicated T&T 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 sharable 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 more than 135 hotel properties across North America; the Wilmington and Beaches Con-

vention & Visitors Bureau (Wilmington, Carolina Beach, Kure Beach and Wrightsville Beach. N.C.); the Wilmington Convention Center: Visit Greenville. NC: Play Greenville, NC Sports and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, the state's most-visited attraction.

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; Dorothea Dix Park, a 308-acre destination park in Raleigh, N.C.; 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.).

Among FWV's operating divisions are: FWV Fetching, a pet and veterinary PR and marketing agency; AMP3 PR, a fashion, beauty, luxury and lifestyle PR firm based in New York City; CGPR, an active lifestyle, outdoor, ski, fashion, technology and travel PR and consumer brand marketing agency based in Greater Boston; and Prix Productions, the company's longform content feature and documentary film division, with offices in Raleigh and L.A. FWV employs more than 120 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C., headquarters and other offices around the country.

#### **HAWKINS** INTERNATIONAL **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

119 West 23rd St., #600 New York, NY 10011 212/255-6541 hipr@hawkpr.com www.hawkpr.com

Jennifer Hawkins, CEO, Founder

Founded in 2002 by Jennifer Hawkins, Hawkins International Public Relations is a bi-coastal, award-winning communications



Gstaad Palace, Gstaad, Switzerland (a Hawkins International client).

agency with offices in New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Hawkins International's creative, integrated and tailored approach to public relations and digital strategies, has earned numerous accolades from industry peers, media and clients around the world. The agency's strong domestic footprint, coupled with its global reach and varied cultural sensibilities have afforded it the opportunity to work with a variety of hospitality-affiliated companies specializing in sectors including travel and tourism, wellness, design, culinary, real estate and more.

Clients: 45 Park Lane, London, United Kingdom; Air Partner; The Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills, CA; Brookfield Properties; Bryte Bed: The Bushcamp Company: Carillon Miami Wellness Resort, Miami, FL; Circle Line Sightseeing Cruises; Coworth Park, Ascot, United Kingdom; Destin Fort-Walton Beach; Dolder Grand, Zurich, Switzerland; The Dorchester, London, United Kingdom; Dorchester Collection; EDSA; Gstaad Palace, Gstaad, Switzerland; Hilton Santa Monica, Santa Monica, CA: Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles, CA; Hotel Eden, Rome, Italy; Hotel Lungarno, Florence, Italy; Hotel Plaza Athénée, Paris, France; Hotel Principe di Savoia, Milan, Italy; Inspirato; JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa, Venice, Italy; Le Meurice, Paris, France; The Living Vehicle; The Loren at Pink Beach, Tucker's Town, Bermuda; Lovango Resort + Beach Club, St John, USVI; Montage Hotels & Resorts International; Mountain Lodges of Peru; Nomadic Expeditions; Onefinestay: Palmaïa. The House of AïA, Riviera Maya, Mexico; Pikaia Lodge, Galapagos, Equador; Seabourn Cruise Line; Sharecare; The SoNo Collection; Tradewind Aviation; The Tryall Club, Montego Bay, Jamaica; Westdrift, Manhattan Beach, CA; The Wigwam, Litchfield, AZ; Wilderness Safaris; and XV Beacon, Boston, MA.

#### **HEMSWORTH** COMMUNICATIONS

1510 SE 17th Street, Suite 200A Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316 954/716-7614 info@hemsworthcommunications.com www.hemsworthcommunications.com

Fort Lauderdale • New York • Atlanta • Charleston • Tampa

Samantha Jacobs, Founder & President Michael Jacobs, COO Kayla Atwater, Director of Travel & Tourism

Hemsworth Communications is a full-service global public relations agency that specializes in travel, tourism and hospitality. Capabilities include brand strategy, media relations, promotions, social media, event planning, thought leadership, crisis communications and more.

With an impressive global reach, Hemsworth leverages its Passion. Insight. Connections. to surpass client expectations at every turn. The agency has been hired by companies large and small because of its track record for delivering outstanding results with a distinctive-

ly personal touch. Under its innovative new 'PR Stimulus Program' launched in O2 2020 and extended into O2 2022. Hemsworth now—in addition to ongoing, retainer-based work—offers three levels of customized, affordable PR, social media and marketing support designed to specifically help those in the lodging, cruise, destination and hospitality sectors who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ranked one of the country's fastest-growing agencies for six years running, Hemsworth has received numerous accolades including HSMAI Adrian Awards, American Business Awards, "Best Places to Work" Awards and others. The agency has been recognized for its innovative, forward-thinking culture as a "Best Place to Work" and "Best Agency to Work For," specifically noting its flexible remote work policy, wellness credit, leadership retreat, Summer Friday program, two-year paid employee sabbatical, five-year electric car lease and other unique perks like having your birthday off as a paid holiday.

A sampling of clients within Hemsworth's tourism and hospitality practices include AmaWaterways, Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line, Banana Bay Resort & Marina, B Ocean Fort Lauderdale, B Ocean Resort (Orlando), Broadland Drinks, Cruise Barbados, Discover Dunwoody, Driftwood, Hillsboro Beach Resort, HomeToGo, I Heart Mac & Cheese, Kenefick Ranch Vinevard & Winery, Margaritaville Hollywood Beach Resort, Massanutten Resort, Performance Hospitality Management, Serena Hotel Aventura (Tapestry Collection by Hilton), Sheraton Riverwalk Tampa Hotel, Waters Edge Wineries and others.

# T GEORGIA SIGN BRINGS HOPE AMID COVID-19 OUTBREAK CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC NY DEATHS \_\_ MAJORITY OF CASES ARE TRAVELERS FROM EUROPE AND OTHER COUNTRIES, BUT HUMBE

During the pandemic, Hemsworth helped keep its tourism clients top-ofmind in innovative ways. One particularly successful campaign was the "Everything Will Be OK" initiative for Dunwoody, Georgia, a thriving "second city" destination just outside Atlanta. The program—which won an HSMAI Adrian Award and a variety of other accolades—garnered global media exposure, including numerous national TV news segments.

#### **IMAGINE PR**

262 W. 38th St., #703 New York, NY 10018 212/922-1961 info@imagine-team.com www.imagine-team.com

Gabriele Sappok, Partner Andreas Sappok, Managing Partner

IMAGINE PR is an award-winning hotel and travel public relations firm based in New York City with global reach. We are a creative communications agency with a modern approach to digital and traditional lifestyle & travel public relations. IMAGINE PR works with some of the most well-known hospitality, destination and travel brands. Our clients are leaders in high-end hospitality and experiential travel who value us for our ingenuity, love of travel and knowledge of the ever-shifting media & influencer landscape.

Clients include: Ellerman House, Cape Town; Maisons Pariente; Higashiyama Niseko Village, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve; Hotel Arts Barcelona, a Ritz-Carlton Company Hotel; Niarra Travel, Natural Selection Safaris; Quasar Expeditions; Fregate Island Private; Singita; The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, Thailand: The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: The Saxon Hotel; ThirdHome; Tschuggen Hotel Group; Tswalu and YTL Hotels.

#### J PUBLIC **RELATIONS**

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

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, Partners

A global communications agency with a specialization in public relations, social media, content creation and digital marketing. With 55+ team members across four U.S. offices including New York City, San Diego, Los Angeles and Nashville, two international offices in London and Toronto, plus a presence in Denver and Arizona, JPR is a trusted leader in integrated media relations, social media and brand strategy, trend forecasting, guest programming, brand partnerships, experiential activations, influencer engagement and crisis communications.

Established in 2005, JPR has

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#### J PUBLIC RELATIONS

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consistently risen as a leader in the travel and hospitality spaces. Today, the agency's growing portfolio spans many markets outside of travel and hospitality, with clients in lifestyle, culinary, real estate. and wellness. JPR's global roster includes more than 120+ hotels in the U.S., U.K. and throughout Europe, Mexico, Caribbean, Africa and more. JPR represents destinations such as North Carolina and Utah as well as flagship hospitality brands including Hilton Luxury Brands, Virgin Limited Edition, Relais & Châteaux, Vail Hospitality and Iconic Luxury Hotels.

JPR is continuously listed on the *Observer*'s 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 received a Five Star rating in Forbes inaugural list of "America's Best PR Agencies," in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success. An industry innovator, JPR became the first travel PR agency to launch a podcast in 2018, Priority Status.

Clients: Adare Manor-Co. Limerick, Ireland; Africa Adventure Consultants; Andronis Exclusive (multiple properties)—Santorini, Greece; Château du Grand-Luce -Loire Valley, France; Condado Vanderbilt-San Juan, PR; Curtain Bluff-Antigua; Eden Roc Cap Cana—Dominican Republic; Four Seasons Resort Lana'i - Lana'i, HI; Halepuna Waikiki by Halekulani-Honolulu, HI; Helena Bay-New Zealand; Hotel del Coronado - San Diego, CA; Iconic Luxury Hotels (multiple properties)—United Kingdom; InterContinental (multiple properties)—North America; MacArthur

Place Hotel & Spa —Sonoma, CA; Monarch Beach Resort-Dana toria Las Vegas; Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal; Washington School House—Park City, UT.

#### **LDPR**

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 / Owner Leslie Cohen, Executive Vice President / Owner

LDPR is an innovative travel and lifestyle PR agency headquartered in NYC with staff in California and Chicago. The firm has been at the forefront of integrated initiatives for destinations, international hotel companies, independent resorts, luxury tour operators and lifestyle products. Our highly creative and strategic programs for clients showcase the best of media relations, social media / influencer marketing, and collaborative brand

Point, CA; Old Edwards Resort & Spa-Highlands, NC; Pendry Hotels (multiple properties)—North America; Rancho La Puerta-Tecate, México; Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa-Rancho Santa Fe, CA; Relais & Châteaux; Rosendale Design-London, UK; Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort-Soufriere, St. Lucia; The Cloudveil—Jackson Hole, WY; The Goring—London, UK; The Ocean Club, A Four Seasons Resort—Bahamas: The Palms and The Shore Club-Turks & Caicos; The Ritz-Carlton (multiple properties)—North America: The Setai-Miami Beach—Miami, FL; The Stafford-London, UK: Vail Mountain Resorts; Vail Resorts Hospitality; Virgin Limited Edition; Visit North Carolina; Under Canvas-North America; Utah Office of Tourism: Waldorf As-

J Public Relations Partners Jamie Sigler O'Grady and Sarah Evans.

partnerships. In addition to numerous industry awards, LDPR was named "One of America's Best PR Agencies for 2021" by Forbes.

Our clients include Aman: Abercrombie & Kent; VisitScotland; Tahiti Tourisme; The Boca Raton, Florida; Aman New York; The Resort at Paws Up, Montana; The Ocean House, Watch Hill, Rhode Island; The Ritz Paris; Chatham Bars Inn, Cape Cod; The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara; Andaz Maui at Wailea Resort; Alila Napa Valley; Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino; 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 Presidents: Terence Gallagher, New York; Gina Stouffer, Charleston; Ivie Parker, Denver; Amanda Hansen, Houston

Lou Hammond Group (LHG) is a celebrated, integrated marketing communications firm with offices in New York, Atlanta, Charleston, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami and Tampa. LHG has built a legendary reputation over the past 37 years as the leading mid-sized agency serving the travel industry. A few things to know:

- Independent: known boundless creativity and enthusi-
- · Operates differently: no time sheets-clients get the attention they need when they need it
- · Founder of the PR World Network, 20-year organization, 22 global members
- Impressive client retention, serving partners over a decade; Charleston, Nassau Paradise Island, New Haven, Panama City Beach, Providence, Sonoma, Santa Fe and American Queen Steamboat Company; Norfolk 20+ years

Sampling of new travel clients: Jamaica Tourist Board; MSC Cruises; Jackson County, NC; Garden of The Gods, CO; Visit Hattiesburg; Sea Pines; Grand Hyatt Vail: Russell Lands on Lake Martin, AL; The Alida, GA and after competitive review, retained New Hampshire Div. of Travel & Tourism Development.

Key to success, results and creative outreach:

• Debuted Charleston hotel,



Laura Davidson and Leslie Cohen visit Hotel Viking in Newport, Rhode Island.

Emeline, during the height of COVID by implementing an aggressive, strategic media relations effort and a robust influencer awareness campaign garnering 3.2 million social media impressions. Secured placements in the *Travel* + Leisure IT List and Condé Nast Traveler Hot List as well as an HS-MAI Adrian Award for Influencer Marketing.

- · Christened and debuted American Queen Steamboat Company's newest vessel, the American Countess, securing over 480 million impressions and exceeding sales expectations, which led to the early release of 2022 and 2023 booking itineraries.
- · Leveraged "Travel with a Purpose" trend by showcasing Montgomery as a city offering social justice studies; developed awareness of 65th anniversary Bus Bovcott and promoted as an ideal destination for Black History Month. Achieved 600+ million reach in two months.
- Promoted Panama City Beach's outdoor activities and miles of sugar-white sand for social distancing in advance of important summer season; achieved 900+ million reach in nine months; visitation surpassed 2019 results.
- · Provided an integrated marketing approach, offering comprehensive social media services to elevate awareness for brands across all platforms and communications initiatives. From strategic consulting and content development, to

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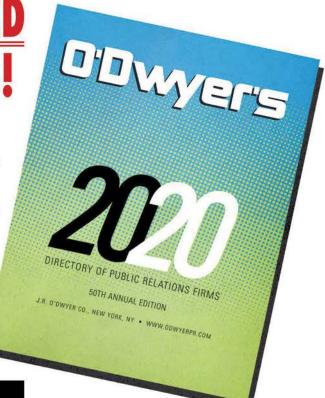
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"One of a kind resource for anyone involved in public relations—from clients to potential clients, from recent graduates to experienced practitioners—this is the directory to have close at hand."

—Fraser Seitel, PR consultant, author & New York University adjunct professor

"The O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms is the most trusted resource for PR firm profiles and a platform for their brands. I have been a very satisfied user for my 33 years in PR."

-Rick Gould, Gould+Partners

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

—Robert L. Dilenschneider, The Dilenschneider Group

"A phenomenal job-seeking aid."

—Marie Raperto, CIMSearch

"The most comprehensive PR industry reference tool for clients and agencies. The gold standard in PR industry reference materials."

—Henry P. Feintuch, Feintuch Communications

#### LOU HAMMOND GROUP

Continued from page 32

community management and paid social integration, LHG optimized organic and paid campaigns to increase audience engagement and client visibility.

- After reopening in July, LHG's campaign for Space Center Houston delivered record ticket sales. Repositioned the Center's holiday attraction with a safety emphasis, beating pre-pandemic attendance.
- Created integrated marketing campaign for Pearland Economic Development Corporation, Houston, that included public radio sponsorship and native content; digital, print and television advertising. All messaging aligned Pearland as a forward thinking, smart address resulting in some 9 million impressions and 27,000+ visits to Pearland websites.
- · Created highly successful "New Jersey in the House!" campaign during height of COVID. Activities included "TasteNJ" culinary videos featuring top NJ chefs along with "Dinner and a Movie" nights focusing on NJ movies while enioving takeout from local eateries. Reach 150+ million in first 30 days; increased web site traffic by 35 percent.
- · Launched educational webinar series for New Hampshire, Sonoma, Natchez, Santa Fe, Norfolk, Charleston, Montgomery and Paducah partners. Panel discussions with national outlets included trends and educational themes such as social media101, working with influencers, travel sentiment and more
- Promoted first-time partnership between Norfolk and Virginia Beach themed "Together at Last." The competing destinations worked iointly to create offers, accommodation packages and events. Campaign led to strong summer business despite ongoing pandemic. Reach 140+ million in one month.
- Through positioning The Gant Aspen as an intimate sanctuary amidst nature with private experiences authentic to the region, LHG garnered over 500M+ impressions including Wall Street Journal, Departures, Barron's Penta, Travel + Leisure, Smart Meetings, Business Insider, The Hollywood Reporter, Martha Stewart Weddings and more.

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



New Orleans—American Queen Steamboat Company sailed with Lou Hammond Group for the christening and debut of its newest paddlewheeler, the American Countess. The partnership secured over 480 million impressions and led to a nearly sold-out 2021 season for the cruise line.

#### **MAGRINO**

352 Park Avenue South, 6th Floor New York, NY 10010 212/957-3005 www.magrinopr.com

Susan Magrino, Chairman & CEO Allyn Magrino, President & CRO LeighAnn Ambrosi, EVP & CAO

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 is dedicated to maximizing the reach and power of earned media for our clients, putting 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. Our break-through strategies look beyond the silos of traditional PR and individual social channels; Magrino has a fluency in all mediums, understanding that each function serves as a launchpad for the other to shape perceptions and inspire change. That is the reason some of the world's most revered lifestyle brands turn to us-and return to us. www. magrinopr.com.

#### **MARDIKS PR**

388 Bridge Street Brooklyn, NY 11201 646/283-5273 www.mardikspr.com

Charles Mardiks, President/ Managing Director

At the intersection of creative and strategic, Mardiks PR is a market-

ing solution provider, specializing in travel and tourism. Our 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. This dynamic and flexible structure allows us to tap experts with specific expertise in a variety of disciplines from media relations, social media strategy and event planning to branding strategy, business-to-business marketing, partnership marketing and crisis communications. The dedicated Mardiks team is fueled by a love for travel, a nose for news and a scrappiness that gets the iob 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.

We orchestrated have brand-building public relations programs for longstanding clients across a broad spectrum of companies including airlines, cruise lines, car rental companies, credit cards/ payment systems, hotels and resorts, tour operators, travel agency consortia and destinations including: Athenaeum Hotel & Residences (London), Celestyal Cruises, Condor Airlines, "My Greek Table with Diane Kochilas," Park Royal Beach Resort (Cancun), Safari Pros, Visit Guernsey, and Visit Sarasota County.

#### MKR COMMUNICATIONS

408B Shasta Lane Santa Barbara, CA 93101 303/929-2711 www.mkrcommunications.com

#### Maureen Russell, Owner

MKR Communications is a boutique marketing and public relations agency that helps professional services firms strategize, elevate, and communicate their unique value. We provide all branding, public relations, and marketing services that are customized to our clients' needs. We work on projects large and small as well as enjoy teaming with like-minded communications firms. Reach out today and let's chat about your next project!

#### **MMGY NJF**

360 Lexington Ave., 10th Floor New York, NY 10017 212/228-1500 www.njfpr.com

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

At MMGY NJF 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. MMGY 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. We are the winners of the 2020 HSMAI Adrian Award Best of Show in PR for our work on the National World War II Museum's 75th Anniversary of D-Day campaign.

For those seeking senior level counsel, unwavering brand advocacy and unrivaled media savvy, MMGY NJF is a PR powerhouse and one-stop shop. Hundreds of hotel, destination, travel and lifestyle brands have entrusted their reputations to MMGY NJF whose "Leave No Stone Unturned" phi-



Celebrity Chef Curtis Stone delighted "Dreaming On in California" experience recipients enjoying their celebratory do-overs at a beachside dinner. To mark the state's official reopening for travel, MMGY NJF worked with client Visit California to design a series of once-in-a-lifetime experiences and launch the campaign which called upon locals and visitors to apply and share their stories of postponed dreams, skipped plans and canceled celebrations from 2020 for the opportunity to make those missed moments come true this year—California style.

Photo: Max Whittaker

losophy 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, MMGY NJF is the pioneer of Hotel Week NYC, and MMGY Global is the author of the widely acclaimed Portrait of American Travelers® annual research study. With offices in New York City, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Austin, London, Miami, Dubai, Van-couver 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, Aparium Hotel Group, Berkshire Hathaway Travel Protection, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, Breezes Resort & Spa, British Virgin Islands, Cheap Caribbean, Costa Rica Tourism, Etihad Airways, Eurail, Fitler Club, Greater Palm Springs CVB, Hamilton Princess, HEI Hotels, Hotel Vermont, Intrepid Travel, ITC Hotels, Karisma Hotels, LATAM Airlines, Leisure Pass Group, Meritage Resort Collection, Namron Hospitality Group, Oceania Cruises, Rhode Island Tourism, Sea Island, South Dakota Tourism, St. Petersburg/Clearwater, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, The James New York Nomad, The National World War II Museum, Travel Texas and Visit California.

#### PINEAPPLE PUBLIC RELATIONS

5238 Peachtree Road, Suite 150 Chamblee, GA 30341 404/237-3761, ext. 1001 dstone@pineapple-pr.com www.Pineapple-PR.com

#### Deborah Stone, President

Pineapple PR is an integrated communications company specializing in serving businesses and organizations in the tourism, hospitality and economic development industries. With a history of delivering a superior level of service and results-oriented, inspiring campaigns for destinations, properties and attractions, Pineapple PR provides strategic public relations, social media, content marketing and digital marketing services executed by an experienced team of professionals. From media events, publicity campaigns, familiarization trips, to organic and paid social media strategies and content marketing campaigns and more, we tell stories through a truly integrated approach to share and sell our clients' points of difference. For more than 20 years, we have made headlines across the country. Whether the approach is luxury, history and culture-based, nature-based, or culinary-oriented, inspired and dedicated service is synonymous with our work. Pineapple PR—Your story starts here!

#### REDPOINT MARKETING PR. INC.

85 Broad Street Suite 18-055 New York, NY 10004 212/229-0119 miranda@redpointspeaks.com www.redpointspeaks.com

Christina Miranda, Principal & Co-Founder Victoria Feldman de Falco, Principal & Co-Founder Ross Evans and Gina Dolecki, Vice Presidents

Founded in 2002, Redpoint is a full-service public relations agency with deep roots in travel, tourism, and hospitality. We seek, craft, and share compelling stories with media and social influencers to engage audiences that matter most to hotels, resorts, cruise lines, destinations, tour companies attractions, travel services, associations, and more.

We maintain stellar relationships

with top journalists and influencers, and our curiosity and imagination fuel the ideas we help clients create to catch (and hold) their attention. Several of our clients have been with us for more than 10 years, and they say the reason for this is simple: we bring fresh ideas to their business each year, we never get stale or fall into predictable patterns, and we never-ever-just do the minimum. From global cruise ship launches and high-profile hotel launches to revenue-generating seasonal programs and SEO-driven digital PR campaigns, our talented group of entrepreneurial, resourceful professionals have a passion for delivering meaningful results.

Clients we've represented include Tourism Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador Tourism, Tourism New Brunswick, Tourism Prince Edward Island. Princess Cruises, Cunard Line, MSC Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Tauck, Collette, Perillo Tours, Learning Journeys, United States Tour Operators Association, Student & Youth Travel Association, Loews Hotels, Affinia Hotels, Woodstock Inn & Resort, Kennebunkport Resort Collection, Topnotch Resort & Spa, Red Lion Inn, Porches Inn at MassMoCA, Brenton Hotel, Saint Lucia Tourist Board, Miramichi River Tourism Association, Taste of Nova Scotia, Briggs & Riley Travelware, Ensemble Travel Group, The Principality of Monaco, SBM Hotels & Resorts, New England Inns & Resorts Association, Ripley's Believe

Continued on page 36



Redpoint made Norman (the "Lambassador") a media and social media star in spring 2020 for Billings Farm & Museum. With the pandemic raging around the world, this pitch was perfectly timed to bring warm fuzzies and infuse joy into media stories. It got snapped up as "photo of the day" by numerous outlets.

#### REDPOINT

Continued from page 35

It or Not! Times Square, Morey's Piers & Beachfront Water Parks, Billings Farm & Museum, Offshore Sailing School, Swissotel Hotels & Resorts, Raffles Hotels & Resorts, Tropicana Resort & Casino, and many more.

#### **TURNER**

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

Christine Turner, President Angela Berardino, Chief Strategy Officer

TURNER is an industry-leading communications agency with a 20+ year history representing lifestyle, heritage, outdoor, spirits, travel and hospitality brands, skillfully blending public relations and social media strategy, delivering boundless creativity supported by data-driven knowledge.

What We Do: Our capabilities span the mixed marketing spectrum—earned media strategy, digital communications, experiential & entertainment marketing, social media and travel trade representation. We specialize in building brands. We are creators at heart, always finding fresh ways to craft the right narratives.

Who We Work With: Our travel and tourism portfolio spans destinations including Bermuda, Wisconsin, Houston and Toronto; hotels and resorts from major brands and independent stars; and innovative start-ups like Evolve. Our consumer portfolio ranges from emerging F&B brands like Tractor Beverage Co. and Stillhouse, to established heritage brands like Obermever. Duluth Trading Company and Red Wing Heritage. We also represent some of the biggest names in studio fitness and wellness: Mindbody, Pure Barre and Nuun.

Why We're Different: Boutique-minded with big agency resources, we deliver some of the best creative ideation anywhere. Authenticity is a core value for TURNER and we're proud to live the lifestyles we represent through our clients. Our bilingual team has helped us work with global brands in Latin America and our team's diverse backgrounds ensure we bring a worldly perspective to our work. Our Simply Give program encourages our team to get involved with volunteer efforts that will effect change in our world.

Where To Find Us: Our offices

are in New York, Denver, Chicago, Miami, and South Carolina, 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 Beth Levin, Assistant VP

Celebrating its 26th anniversary this year, WEILL specializes in promoting luxury, exclusive travel experiences and national tourist offices. We concentrate on across-the-spectrum communications, ensuring every client's messages are transmitted via all print, electronic, broadcast, digital, influencer and social media.

Of our 30+ clients, more than 40% have been with us for more than 5 years, and 25% for more than ten. Throughout 2020 and into 2021, while Covid-19 brought international travel to an unprecedented, screeching halt and most of the destinations in which our clients operate closed their borders, WEILL succeeded in retaining its entire portfolio of tourism boards, hotels/resorts, river cruises and tour operators-from the tourist office of Japan, where borders remain sealed to this day, to hotels around the world.

And over the past few months, we have added clients, including with the Ca' di Dio, the only 5-star hotel opening in Venice in 2021, designed by renowned Spanish architect Patricia Urquiola; French Affaires, purveyor of curated trips to France celebrating French culture, language and l'art de vivre; and Neos Air, Italy's second largest airline, launching service from JFK to Milan in the summer 2021. And building off of the success of our 17-year representation of the Hotel Hassler, managed by fourth-generation owner Robert Wirth, WEILL has been appointed to oversee media relations for Mr. Wirth's entire portfolio of hotel "gems," including the Hotel Vannucci and Borgo Bastia Creti in Umbria, and the Parco del Principe in Tuscany.

In addition to our long-term relationships with clients, we are immensely proud of our extremely low rate of staff turnover and the commitment of our employees to the company's continued growth. With staff members whose tenure with WEILL ranges from three to 14 to 25 years, we are gratified that we managed to keep our entire team employed throughout the pandemic and international travel lockdown.

# ZAPWATER COMMUNICATIONS

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1460 4th Street, Suite 306 Santa Monica, CA 90401 310/396-7851

331 Almeria Avenue Coral Gables, FL 33134 305/444-4033

David Zapata, CEO
Cheryl Andrews and Jennifer
Lake, Executive VPs
Jennifer Barry, Managing Director,
Los Angeles
Holly Zawyer, Managing Director,
Miami

**Stephanie Poquette**, VP, 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 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: Ethiopian Airlines, Visit Finland, Finnair, Grenada Tourism Authority, Tourisme Montréal, Travel Manitoba, Buenaventura Golf & Beach Resort, Cayo Espanto, Frangipani Beach Resort, Grand Residences Riviera Cancun, National Tourism Office of Serbia, La Paz Tourism, Baja Sur Tourism, Sofitel Mexico City Reforma, Fairmont Mayakoba, CASA Kimberly, Mount Cinnamon Resort. Ocean Clubs Resorts. Hawks Cay Resort, Hotel Zachary, Pacifica Hotels, The Santa Maria Hotel & Golf Resort Panama, and Coco Collection Resorts Maldives.

# THE ZIMMERMAN AGENCY

1821 Miccosukee Commons Tallahassee, FL 32308 850/668-2222 curtis@zimmerman.com zimmerman.com

Curtis Zimmerman, 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 full-service social media teams, a 360-degree approach to digital, and proprietary analytics. The Zimmerman Agency teams utilize Momentum® Planning a proprietary planning methodology to drive creativity, strategy and technology to deliver relevant and timely content and communications to generate results for clients. Hospitality/travel clients include: Belize Tourism Board, Norwegian Cruise Line, Hertz Rental Car Company, Timbers Resorts, Westgate Resorts, Kessler Collection of Luxury Resorts, Aimbridge Hospitality. Blue Diamond Resorts. Hard Rock All-Inclusive, Visit Park City, Discover The Palm Beaches, Visit Tallahassee, North Carolina's Crystal Coast, South Padre Island CVB, Little Palm Island, Mahekal Resort (Playa del Carmen), Margaritaville Nassau Resort, Ritz-Carlton Dallas, Marriott's Harbor Beach Resort, TPC Network (Corporate), Ritz-Carlton Destination Club, Streamsong Resort, Kartrite Resort, Brown Palace, Brazilian Court, Mansion on Forsyth Savannah, Canyon Ranch Woodside, JW Marriott Savannah Plant Riverside, Pelican Grand, Bungalows Key Largo, Beaver Creek Lodge and more. •

# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS TRAVEL AND TOURISM PR FIRMS

	Firm Ne	t Fees (2020)	Firm	Net Fees (2020)
1.	Edelman, New York, NY	\$28,919,000	24. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	\$352,000
2.	Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	12,000,000	25. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville,	TN <b>254,598</b>
3.	Finn Partners, New York, NY	10,409,000	<b>26. Inkhouse,</b> Waltham, MA	240,663
4.	Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI), New York, N	9,410,923	27. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	200,000
5.	J Public Relations, New York, NY	8,717,500	28. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago,	IL <b>188,334</b>
6.	MMGY NJF, New York, NY	8,203,073	29. Bellmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	164,145
7.	Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company, New York, N	Y <b>7,728,941</b>	30. Hodges Partnership, The, Richmond, VA	130,000
8.	Lou Hammond Group, New York, NY	7,350,509	<b>31. Fish Consulting,</b> Ft. Lauderdale, FL	116,800
9.	Zeno Group, New York, NY	6,753,013	32. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	116,059
10	. French I West I Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	4,505,341	33. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	114,344
11	. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations, New York, NY	2,991,360	34. Hunter, New York, NY	100,000
12	. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,800,000	35. FrazierHeiby, Columbus, OH	97,181
13	. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	2,379,630	<b>36. Gregory FCA,</b> Ardmore, PA	91,100
14	. MWWPR, New York, NY	1,781,726	<b>37. Brownstein Group,</b> Philadelphia, PA	87,408
15	. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	1,766,461	<b>38. BoardroomPR,</b> Ft. Lauderdale, FL	50,000
16	. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	1,635,372	39. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	31,500
17	. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,089,067	40. imre, LLC, Baltimore, MD	31,300
18	. Hemsworth Communications, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1,033,802	41. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	28,250
19	. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	1,000,000	<b>42. Standing Partnership,</b> St. Louis, MO	28,128
20	. <b>Kivvit,</b> Chicago, IL	742,735	43. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	21,650
21	. Singer Associates PR, Inc., San Francisco, CA	519,911	44. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	18,000
22	. <b>360PR+,</b> Boston, MA	419,304	<b>45. Champion Management Group,</b> Dallas, TX	5,000
23	. Berk Communications, New York, NY	374,400	46. Akrete, Evanston, IL	2,000

# Republican path to victory runs over Donald Trump

By Fraser Seitel

ere's what's likely to emerge from last month's historic showdown summit between Presidents Biden and Putin:

"Nothing" has become something of a



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.

watchword for the Biden Administration, which is stocked with bland political lifers long on promises and pronouncements and task forces but short on actual accomplishments.

And that's not all bad; in fact, doing less may be exactly what the nation needs after four years of daily bitterness, braggadocio and bombast. Unlike his predecessor, Joe Biden

seems a decent, dedicated, down-to-earth plodder, who will try his best to do no harm to the country he leads. And that's all good.

The President's problem, beyond his advanced age and not-ready-for-prime time Vice President, is his party.

The Democrats, and Biden among them, have been hijacked by a small group of "progressive" zealots who, if allowed to continue to steer the Democrat Party's direction and dominate their public relations narrative, will likely hand the House—and maybe the Senate—back to the Republicans in the 2022 elections.

At this point, in fact, the only thing standing in the way of a Republican reemergence is a strange, orange-tufted beach creature lurking in the sands of Mar-a-Lago.

And if Republicans choose to return to a slavish devotion to Donald Trump, they'll find themselves upending the entire Republican comeback applecart.

Betting against Trump a few years ago was a bad idea, but this time it's different. After refusing to acknowledge his successor's legitimacy, bad-mouthing his most loyal subordinate Mike Pence, and getting caught knee-deep in the Capitol riots, Trump has lost his political mojo with most of those who voted for him-from moderates to business leaders to Mitch McConnell. His only strength now lies with fraidy-cat Republicans, who fear they'll lose Trump's face painted, horn-headed right wing loyalists in next year's elections.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that having alienated most of the people who voted for him once, there's no way Trump can win the presidency again in 2024. Which brings us to today's Democrats.

As much as Trump may be reviled by those who once supported him, so too are the so-called "progressives" who are forcing Biden and his party's leaders into an untenable corner, out of which they're unlikely to

And while you'd never know it watching MSNBC or reading The New York Times, Democrat elders are petrified that Republicans will win with a public relations platform based on three wrongheaded notions that misguided "progressives" have handed

#### First, don't defund the police

The progressive position to "defund the police," which grew out of post-George Floyd protests, has already proved disas-

Clueless city councils in many cities have been unable to translate the anti-police battle cry into any meaningful action. As politicians bungle their way through "defunding," police forces in left-wing cities have been decimated. Police retirements nearly doubled in New York City and Seattle, quintupled in Portland, and in Minneapolis, where the actions of one sadistic cop led to George Floyd's death, applications to join the police force have been cut in half.

Meanwhile, of course, the people who will continue to suffer most from diminished policing are poorer people who live in high crime urban areas; in other words, the very people that protestors set out to

Like it or not, Democrats are associated with this catastrophic anti-police movement, and Republicans won't let them for-

#### Second, don't politicize education

Equally calamitous for Democrats is the widespread shift to focus childhood education more directly on race and gender.

The spate of African American deaths in the custody of police has triggered a national dialogue on race. Such dialogue to improve racial harmony is a good thing. But one outgrowth that hasn't been helpful is the progressive push to introduce controversial "critical race theory" into the curricula of America's elementary, junior high and high schools.

Technically, critical race theory is a 40-year-old academic concept that suggests racism is embedded in the system's legal practices and business policies; for example, red-lining in mortgage lending leading to segregated housing.

The controversy surrounding critical race theory, like many other issues today, lies in how it's perceived. Left-leaning advocates hail it as shining a light on systemic racism, while right-leaning critics condemn it for dividing people into "oppressors" and "oppressed.'

What isn't debatable is that most Americans believe that coming out of a largely lost academic year, the last thing the nation's students need is yet another "political controversy" to distract teachers and administrators from fulfilling their primary academic mission of teaching.

The same is true with the heightened focus among public and private schools on gender issues. Progressive advocates argue that it's important for children to have an understanding of various genders at an early age, to learn to be accepting of others and not to pre-judge. Conservative critics argue that such studies are age-inappropriate, unscientific and clearly political. Which side is right? Take your pick.

Once again, what's indisputable is that Democrats are associated with this push toward early gender studies, and that most Americans—including, importantly, moderate voters who can influence next year's elections—are opposed to force-feeding the gender agenda into their children's or grandchildren's early education.

#### Third, don't knock capitalism

The reason Trump was palatable to many who found him personally odious was that he was an unabashed pro-business capital-

Democrats, fairly or unfairly, are perceived as neutral, at best, in terms of supporting business and socialist at worst. Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, for example, readily identify as "democratic socialists." And it's true that in recent years American opinions about capitalism, particularly among Millennials, have deteriorated.

Accordingly, the concept of "free enterprise" needs to be reinvigorated and inequities in the system need to be repaired. But the reality is that most Americans still believe in big business, working to earn as much as you can and the merits of free enterprise. And most Democrats don't.

All of which bodes well for Republicans winning back the House in next year's elections—just as long as they stay away from embracing the poisonous Trump. •

# The ingredients of failed leadership

By Jim Lukaszewski

ore unethical decisions are made during a crisis than almost any other scenario in management.

Although few crises reach "explosive vis-



Lukaszewski is President of The Lukaszewski Group. His latest book, co-authored with Steve Harrison, is "The Decency Code: The Leader's Path to Building Integrity and

ibility" levels, all produce victims. Mishandling victims presents an enormous threat to senior executive reputation and survival.

The choice of how any crisis is managed is determined by the surviving leadership. Empathy and apology are two of the most crucial response ingredients. The quality of the response determines the level of reputation damage

or enhancement. A flawless technical response is possible, but fumble, stumble and bungle empathy and apology and that's how your response will be remembered.

After more than 40 years in the trenches, I've learned that all questionable, inappropriate, unethical, immoral, predatory, improper, victim-producing and criminal behaviors are intentional. Adults and most teenagers consciously make decisions or permit actions they know are wrong. All ethical, moral, compassionate, decent, civil and lawful behaviors are intentional. The choice is always obvious.

Mismanagement typically comes in three categories. The first is what I call "invincibility," an attitude of power that long-serving executives and younger, hotshot executives acquire. Over time, an environment of cultural numbness and justified neglect of ethical behavior is created.

The second category is the organizational failure to respond to or challenge invincibility. Risky leadership decisions are silently understood and sometimes, specifically ordered. Examples range from silence to denial that a crisis exists, to the reluctance to apologize or worse, maligning victims and those who represent them.

The third category is how manageable problems explode into crisis through intentional inaction.

#### From misbehavior to failed leadership

Most misbehaviors begin in small ways but grow as they're allowed to proceed, of-

ten to the surprise of the perpetrator. When that misbehavior is met with silence, the perpetrator is encouraged to try it again on a larger scale. Many sources express concern at the increasing number of misbehaviors occurring in businesses and organizations of all types, even though the actual range of misbehaviors is relatively narrow. The elements of failed leadership are obvious but they survive because they're unmentioned

The real value of this list is to alert leaders and those around them. Those who witness negative or risky circumstances need to inform leadership immediately. Time and again, leaders excuse their misbehavior, shifting the blame for their intentional mistakes to those around them. Leaders who become perpetrators are prepared and practiced at shifting blame, if exposed or caught. There are recognizable events that signal existing or pending misbehaviors. Look for them.

#### Warning signs and misbehaviors

A management-imposed emergency or attitude of urgency that goes unchallenged. The phrase, "do whatever it takes," is among the most prevalent of excuses for breaking, changing or ignoring rules. This phrase is taken as an order and an authorization to ignore all rules and constraints to achieve whatever the objective happens

A sense of ongoing top management pressure to "get on the program," without challenge or without reporting through compliance channels. Too often, goals are taken as permissions, authorization or orders to ignore the rules. Those in charge through their own behaviors and stated or implied expectations—change the rules or establish new ones unilaterally outside of normal compliance channels. Crises rarely start, "in the mail room," or by "a bunch of rogue employees." Crisis behaviors and attitudes start at a much higher level.

Established values and cultural systems and norms are gradually ignored, neutralized or displaced by questionable behav-

Early warning signs are ignored, deferred or actively defended. Who wants to be the first to point a finger or to vocalize something negative about the boss?

An atmosphere of invincibility that overshadows or simply blinds participants to infractions, questionable decisions and stuff that should work but doesn't.

Corner cutting. One of the most common starting places for leadership failure to

Increasing resistance to or minimiz-

ing compliance and oversight. There's a natural tendency to resist compliance and oversight. The greatest resistance generally comes from organizations' sales and marketing sectors and that resistance is often induced by the pressure to perform, the pressure to succeed, the pressure to beat the competition and the pressure to beat peer organizations.

Decreasing responsiveness to regulatory requirements. Once an organizational culture moves away from responsiveness to regulatory requirements and begins selectively ignoring or degrading the importance of these requirements, the pattern of failure grows and self-perpetuates.

Persistent, rigid, disciplined silence. The implied or direct order to remain silent is powerful and toxic.

Continuously making ever larger compromises to accommodate or cover up previous intentional misbehaviors. Once a manager makes the conscious decision to cross a line, they become a perpetrator. Surprised that there's no real reaction, the tendency is to cross another line to see if that works, too. Surprise, surprise, it's also ignored. All too often, when an autopsy is done on failed leadership, a crucial element in the pathology sounds like, "It's their fault for not catching me and warning me or turning me in that all these bad things happened."

#### **Risk addiction**

Some experts have described "risk addiction" very much like the behavior of drug addicts, gamblers, smokers and sex offenders. These individuals know how devastating and damaging their behavior is but continue anyway. In risk addiction, the intoxicant is power and the willingness of colleagues, victims, witnesses, compliance officials and/or board members to succumb to that power. By failing to oppose, disclose or expose it, leaders are immersed in a culture that says "yes" all the time, and they increasingly act without waiting for a "yes" or a "no."

The management tools for detecting, deterring, and defeating risk addiction are disclosure, behavior labeling and aggressive but constructive exposure. If you witness intentional crisis mismanagement, my advice is clear: speak up. Silence is the greatest enabler and validator of misbehavior. Those who observe this, are injured or affected by it or who know how many others will suffer, must speak up despite the risks. Otherwise, executive misbehavior tends to grow and become more clever, audacious, novel and damaging. Invariably, once the perpetrator is caught or exposed, they'll immediately blame those around them. In truth, we have only ourselves to blame. O

### **H+K hires Fauci's former press** secretary

ill+Knowlton Strategies has appointed Mary Jane Walker, who served as Dr. Anthony Fauci's press secretary from 1986 to 1997, as

U.S. Head of Healthcare.

Walker joins H+K from The Social Architects, where she was Partner and Chief Communications and Strategy Officer. She has also served as Executive VP, Corporate Healthcare at Weber Shandwick.

In her new post, Walker will lead teams that support healthcare communications for pharmaceutical, biotechnology and other healthcare companies.



Mary Jane Walker

"Mary Jane brings deep subject matter expertise and an impressive track record as a leader, trusted advisor, collaborator, and growth driver," said H+K Global President and CEO Richard Millar. O



ESG solutions for public and private companies will be a tremendous asset to our firm and clients." O

# Mercury adds sanctions pro Kucik

eter Kucik, a seven-year veteran of the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, has joined Mercury as Managing Director in D.C.

He will help clients deal with sanctions policies, as well as litigation, compliance and regulatory matters.

During the Obama administration, Kucik helped craft U.S. sanctions on Libya and Myanmar. He also handled the easing of travel and remittances restrictions to Cuba.



Peter Kucik

At OFAC, Kucik coordinated its work with the National Security Council and the Departments of State and Commerce.

Toby Moffett, Mercury co-Chair, said Kucik's "track record of success in navigating the most complex regulatory landscapes makes him a natural fit for our team as governments around the globe are reassessing how to treat each other's large companies."

Omnicom owns Mercury. •

### FTI Consulting hires Cornerstone's **ESG** head

lanna Fishman, who was responsible for ESG and social investment programs at Cornerstone Public Affairs, has joined FTI Consulting's strategic communications unit as Managing Director.

She reports to Rodolfo Araujo, head of the corporate governance and activism team.

Prior to her two-and-a-half-year stint in Cornerstone's Denver office, Fishman was Director of Policy and Social Responsibility at HBW Resources energy-focused consulting firm.



Alanna Fishman

She also was Global Business Analyst at Newmont Mining Corp., the world's largest gold miner, handling change management and stakeholder communications issues.

Araujo said Fishman's "expertise in developing tailored, holistic

# **DOE recruits SKDK's Bartol**

he Department of Energy names Bridget Bartol Deputy Director of its Office of Public Affairs.

Bartol was most recently a Vice President of Public Affairs at SKDKnickerbocker, where she specialized in strategic communications, stakeholder engagement, and media relations for corporate, nonprofit, advocacy and crisis clients.

Before she joined SKDK, Bartol was Media Relations Manager at Securing America's Future Energy and she was previously Deputy Press Secretary at DOE during the Obama Administration. O



**Bridget Bartol** 

# Advocacy group retains lobbying firm to stop flu deaths

oalition to Stop Flu, an advocacy group dedicated to stopping flu deaths, has retained government relations firm LKB Strategies to lobby Capitol Hill on healthcare- and budget-related

Led by former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, Coalition to Stop Flu advocates for proactive federal policies and increased funding in an effort to raise awareness among policymakers about the threat of seasonal and pandemic influenza and to stop flu-related deaths in our lifetime.

LKB will lobby on behalf of the Coalition on "Federal funding and policy issues related to seasonal and pandemic influenza," according to lobbying registration documents filed with Congress in

LKB President and Founder Lisa Bernhardt manages the account. Bernhardt was previously a staffer to the U.S. Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Sub-

Coalition to Stop Flu has spent \$60,000 in lobbying efforts so far this year, according to data from the Senate Office of Public Records. O

### **Public Policy Group pilots Norse Altantic Aiways**

rime Policy Group has signed Norway's Norse Atlantic Airways, which launched in February and plans to offer U.S. service by the end of this year.

NAA will position itself as a low-fare, low-cost carrier flying Boeing 787 Dreamliners.

Based in Oslo, NAA has targeted New York, London, Miami, London and Paris as initial destinations.

The company in May inked an agreement with the Association of Flight Attendants. It plans to hire a minimum of 700 AFA mem-

PPG represents NAA on aviation matters, including U.S. market access.

CEO Stefan Bailey and President Emeritus Scott Pastrick lead the five-person lobbying team.

WPP owns PPG. O

# Teneo tallies up more UAE riches

eneo has extended its contract with the Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation for an additional four months to July 31, adding another \$1.8 million in fees to the New York firm's

The Foundation is headed by the wife of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE armed forces.

The bulk of the additional fees (\$940,000) is for "transformation" services, which cover "organizational visioning and articulation of outcomes, diagnostic analysis of the current state, and design of a roadmap to bring about transformation objectives."

Teneo also will get \$590,000 for its communications strategy and planning for the UAE Pavilion at Expo2020 and \$390,000 for anniversary fees connected to the UAE's "golden jubilee." O

# H+K puts PR shine on India's gems

ill+Knowlton Strategies is working with India's Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council on a communications program to bolster the sale of the county's gold, diamonds and gemstones in the U.S.

The WPP unit has a \$135,000, nine-month contract that runs through the end of the year. Its services include creation of a content hub, media relations and account management.

H+K also will be responsible for an influencer program, which includes outreach, coordination of loaning and managing pay-

India accounts for 5.8 percent of the global export market. Its top markets are the U.S., Hong Kong and United Arab Emirates.

GJEPC reported June 15 that overall gross exports rose four percent to \$6.3 billion during the first two months (April & May) of its fiscal year compared to the pre-pandemic 2019 period.

In May, India's gem and jewelry exports slipped into negative territory due to the severe disruption of manufacturing activity as the second wave of COVID-19 rocked the Subcontinent.

That second wave also triggered another exodus of goldsmiths and artisans fleeing to their hometowns, according to GJEPC.

Colin Shah, GJEPC Chairman, is hopeful that government support and increased trade show activity will "further enhance the morale of India's manufacturers and traders and boost their export activity." O

#### **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.

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, New York, NY registered May 25, 2021 for Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, United Mexican States, Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico, regarding providing state and federal government affairs advice and consulting services with respect to proposed sovereign debt restructuring legislation.

The Daschle Group, Washington, DC, registered May 12, 2021 for Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO), Washington, DC, regarding providing strategic consulting services to TECRO in connection with political and policy issues before the United States government impacting TECRO's interests.

Delahunt Group International LLC, Quincy, MA, registered June 16, 2021 for OOO NPP Kerson Machine-Building Plant, Kerson, Ukraine, regarding assisting the client with U.S. Congressional outreach to Members and experts in agricultural legislative matters and in accessing U.S. agriculture sector experts in the renewable fuels industries.

#### **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.

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP, Washington, DC, registered June 18, 2021 for Highly Innovative Fuels, Houston, TX, regarding issues related to renewable energy.

Holland & Knight LLP, Washington, DC, registered June 21, 2021 for The Western Union Company, Denver, CO, regarding tax reform and related international tax issues.

Husch Blackwell Strategies, Washington, DC, registered June 19, 2021 for Coalition of Hope Foundation, Palm Beach, FL, regarding humanitarian assistance and disaster emergency relief preparedness.

Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, Wash., DC, registered June 21, 2021 for Tidelands Health, Murrells Inlet, SC, regarding healthcare legislation.

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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: 56. Founded: 2005.

#### **Agency Statement:**

A global communications agency with a specialization in public relations, social media, content creation and digital marketing. With 55+ team members across four U.S. offices including New York City, San Diego, Los Angeles and Nashville, two international offices in London and Toronto, plus a presence in Denver and Arizona, JPR is a trusted leader in integrated media relations, social media and brand strategy, trend forecasting, guest programming, brand partnerships, experiential activations, influencer engagement and crisis communications.

Established in 2005, JPR has consistently risen as a leader in the travel and hospitality spaces. Today, the agency's growing portfolio spans many markets outside of travel and hospitality, with clients in lifestyle, culinary, real estate, and wellness. JPR's global roster includes more than 120+ hotels in the U.S., U.K. and throughout Europe, Mexico, Caribbean, Africa and more. JPR represents destinations such as North Carolina and Utah as well as flagship hospitality brands including Hilton Luxury Brands, Virgin Limited Edition, Relais & Châteaux, Vail Hospitality and Iconic Luxury Hotels.

JPR is continuously listed on the Observer's 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 received a Five Star rating in Forbes inaugural list of "America's Best PR Agencies," in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success. An industry innovator, JPR became the first travel PR agency to launch a podcast in 2018, Priority Status.

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

#### Office Locations:

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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

123 Buckingham Palace Rd. Victoria, London SW1W 9SH, UK +44 (020) 3890 5838

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Jamie Sigler O'Grady. Sarah Evans, partners

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