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THE TRAVEL ISSUE



Using PR to create a quality hotel experience
Travel tips for a post-pandemic landscape
When hotels become the destination
Global travel trends for 2022

Why travel's return isn't what we expected
Adapting to constant change in travel
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The GOP should move on from Trump in 2024

Looks like we're already talking about a Trump White House again. Rumor has it that the former President has allegedly told his inner circle he's considering officially announcing a second run for the commander-in-chief spot soon, possibly as early as this month. Well, that was a short break. Did you enjoy it?

As the rumor goes, Trump's advisers initially wanted the announcement of his latest presidential bid to happen sometime around the November midterms, presumably as a means of greasing the skids for a GOP-favored win, but apparently, that idea has been scrapped. As it turns out, a summer White House announcement gives Trump a chance to pivot from the damaging revelations unearthed during the House Select Committee's series of public hearings on the deadly Jan. 6, 2021 assault on the Capitol. It also temporarily draws attention away from up-and-comers such as Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who's easily Trump's biggest threat in a primary. And, of course, it takes advantage of a slumping Biden presidency that's leaking public support by the day.

At the expense of stating the obvious, Trump's entry into a second term in office won't be smooth sailing. Nearly half of Americans (48 percent) want the former President criminally charged for his role in the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll. The bombshell Congressional Committee testimony from former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson, who claimed the former President physically struggled with his security detail after they refused to let him participate in the Jan. 6 riot and pressured staff to relax security checks that day even though he knew the crowd was armed, followed testimony from Justice Department officials who detailed Trump's involvement in a weeks-long plot to overturn the election, even allegedly claiming VP Mike Pence deserved to be executed for refusing to go along with Trump's plan to meddle with the state-vote certification.

While it remains to be seen if there's enough evidence to indict Trump for seditious conspiracy in his role in the Jan. 6 insurrection, the Associated Press-NORC poll showed a majority (58 percent) of Americans blame him for the uprising. Additional polling also shows the die-hard Trump base appears to be shrinking, with a growing number of Republicans distancing themselves from the former President, suggesting many conservative voters are ready to leave him behind and effectively give other party candidates their first shot at being contenders since 2015. The easy reading is that Trump is damaged goods.

While the Jan. 6 hearings have made Trump's path to the presidency difficult, it would be ridiculous to assume the House panel's revelations have given the Democratic Party an automatic in for 2024. The Dems are hoping that voter rage—particularly among moderate women, a key demo—in response to a series of decisions passed by the Supreme Court's conservative majority—namely, the shocking repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, not to mention neutering the EPA's ability to fight climate-warming pollution as well as preventing liberal cities from barring citizens from carrying concealed firearms—will galvanize voter turnout in the 2022 midterms, where the Democrats are expected to face tough headwinds. Let's face it: It's a pipe dream to think these issues will be enough to tilt the scales in the Dem's favor. Americans are hurting financially, and you can bet economic issues such as inflation and gas prices, fairly or not, will always supersede whatever manifold criticisms we have of Trump. Until the Dems actually give Americans compelling candidates to rally around, the "vote harder" mantra ain't going to cut it.

Complicating this problem is the fact that no one's jazzed about a Biden second term, including members of his own party. Seven in 10 Americans don't think Biden should run for reelection, compared to six in 10 who don't think Trump should run. You could make the case that both are unfit for office: Trump due to legal and ethical concerns, Biden due to his age and sheer incompetency. Biden is plagued by a host of external economic challenges, but his base is also frustrated by his inaction on the issues he campaigned on—such as the environment—or for failing to codify *Roe* in Congress or his head-scratching decision to nominate an anti-abortion lawyer to federal judgeship. Trump could be betting his shortcomings aren't as bad as Biden's. It just might work.

A safer bet would be for conservatives to get behind a formidable alternative with less baggage. Trump has the name and brand recognition, but his grip on the Republican party is slipping and the Jan. 6 hearings might be the death knell to his previously bulletproof tactic of reinterpreting reality whenever it suits his needs. A recent poll shows Governor DeSantis now leading Trump among New Hampshire Republican primary voters. (The same poll shows Biden beating Trump in a hypothetical 2024 New Hampshire general election, but also shows DeSantis beating Biden.) The 2024 election remains the GOP's to lose. So, now they've got a choice to make: move on with an emerging-force candidate as the party's next presidential nominee or take a gamble with a hat trick that's growing older by the day. It's time for the GOP to move on. ○

—Jon Gingerich

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Americans remain divided on 'cancel culture'

Americans disagree on what role “cancel culture” plays in our public discourse, but an increasing number of Democrats now side with Republicans in the belief that calling others out on social media is ineffective at holding people accountable and is more likely to punish people who don't deserve it.

By Jon Gingerich

The term “cancel culture” has become incredibly popular—and increasingly politicized—in recent years. The phrase—loosely defined as the practice of publicly shaming people on social media for posting opinions or content that might be considered offensive—is now common fodder for politicians and an easy topic for coverage among both traditional and digital media outlets. Unfortunately, many of us fail to agree on what the concept actually means.

According to a recent study released by the Pew Research Center, while more Americans are now aware of what cancel culture is, a partisan divide exists on what role it plays: namely, whether calling people out for the things they say on social media is a means of holding them accountable or if it's a form of unjust punishment.

According to Pew's survey, nearly two-thirds of Americans (61 percent) said they're aware of the phrase “cancel culture,” a 17-percentage point increase compared to the less than half (44 percent) who said the same when asked about the term during a previous Pew survey a year ago.

Overall, slightly more than half (51 percent) of Americans said they believe calling people out publicly is more likely to hold them accountable for the things they say

online, while 45 percent think the practice is more likely to punish people who don't deserve it.



When broken out by party affiliation, Democrats are nearly twice as likely to see “cancel culture” as a means of holding people accountable for posting content that might be considered offensive (65 percent), compared to only about a third (34 percent) of Republicans who agree. Republicans, conversely, are generally more likely to view the practice as a form of punishing people who don't deserve it (62 percent), compared to less than a third (32 percent) of Democrats who hold this view.

Overall, the share of adults who now be-

lieve this type of behavior is effective at holding people accountable has decreased by seven percentage points since 2020, while the share who say calling people out is more likely to unjustly punish those who didn't deserve it has gone up by seven percentage points.

Interestingly, the number of Democrats who now see this practice as unjust punishment has risen by 10 points. Meanwhile, the number of Republicans who view calling out others on social media as a form of unnecessary punishment has increased by six percent.

The Pew study found that women are more likely than men to view the practice of calling out people on social media as a means of holding them accountable (56 percent vs. 45 percent), while men are more likely to say this behavior unfairly punishes people (52 percent vs. 38 percent). A majority of white Americans polled said they believe this behavior generally punishes people who don't deserve it (51 percent), while Black Americans (71 percent), Hispanics (61 percent) and Asians (61 percent) largely see it as a form of accountability.

Research for Pew's study was based on a survey of an undisclosed number of U.S. adults and was conducted between April 25 and May 1. ○

Political polarization top concern for Americans

Almost three in 10 Americans said polarization and political extremism are among the worst issues facing the country today, according to a new FiveThirtyEight/Ipsos poll.

By Jon Gingerich

How bad is the state of political division in America? Here's an indication: According to a recent FiveThirtyEight/Ipsos poll, political polarization is now ranked as one of the worst issues facing the nation today.

Americans named “political extremism or polarization” as the third-most important issue facing the country, beating out fears related to immigration, racism, climate change, economic inequality, healthcare, COVID-19, taxes, terrorism and 10 other issues.

Only “inflation/increasing costs” and “crime or gun violence” beat polarization as issues most Americans are worried about.

Respondents identifying as Democrat were the most likely to name polarization or extremism as a top worry, at 33 percent, but Republicans weren't far behind, at 23 percent.

As for the cause for our current climate of divisiveness, an overwhelming 84 percent of Americans blamed politicians and political leaders. More than three-quarters (79 percent) also blamed wealthy political donors for America's polarization, and the same number (79 percent) blamed social media companies, followed by mainstream media companies (78 percent).

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) said they believe conservative media outlets have

had a “major” or “significant” impact on our current political division (81 percent of Democrats backed this statement, but so did a surprising 48 percent of Republicans).

Nearly two-thirds of Americans (62 percent) said they want the U.S. to actively work to reduce political polarization. Only nine percent said they're fine with the way things are.

The FiveThirtyEight/Ipsos poll surveyed approx. 1,700 adults between late May and early June. Respondents were weighted to match the general population. The survey was conducted using Ipsos's opinion research unit KnowledgePanel. ○

PR agency profitability up in 2021

PR agencies saw 2021 operating profits on the upswing following 2020 and even besting pre-COVID levels, according to an annual industry report from Gould+Partners.

By Jon Gingerich

Profitability was up last year for North American PR agencies, according to an annual industry survey conducted by PR merger and acquisition advisory firm Gould+Partners.

Gould+Partners' latest Benchmarking report, which analyzes key factors affecting PR firm profitability, found that North American PR agencies witnessed operating profits averaging 19.7 percent of net revenues (calculated as fee billings plus mark-ups) in 2021, up from 18.2 percent in 2020 and a 2.3 percent increase from pre-COVID 2019's 17.4 percent.

"19.7 percent average operating profit is an incredible comeback for the PR industry," Gould+Partners' Managing Partner Rick Gould told O'Dwyer's.

The survey's findings discovered that profitability was especially high at the large-

est firms: PR agencies with revenues in excess of \$25 million netted average operating profits of 21.3 percent in 2021—up from 20.2 percent in 2020—indicating both increased organic growth as well as growth via acquisition. Firms with between \$10 million and \$25 million in revenues netted 20.1 percent profitability last year, up from 17 percent in 2020. Firms accounting for between \$3 million and \$10 million in revenues netted profitability of 19.5 percent profitability, up from 18.1 percent, while the smallest firms—those with under \$3 million in revenues—netted the smallest profitability, 15.8 percent, flat from 2020.

When broken out by region, the report found that PR firms located in the U.S. Southeast boasted the highest average operating profits in 2021 (25.3 percent), followed by firms in Canada (25 percent), California

(24.8 percent), the Wash. D.C. metro area (21.4 percent) and the Midwest (19 percent). Among the least profitable were firms located in the Southwest (15.9 percent), firms located in the Northeast (15.4 percent) and the New York City metro area (14.4 percent).

Gould additionally said that staff turnover for the year averaged 25.4 percent in 2021—up from 18 percent in 2020—with some firms experiencing turnover of more than 50 percent.

"Turnover equates to increased costs for search firms, training, bonuses, raises, all impacting the bottom line," Gould told O'Dwyer's.

On the other hand, the report also found that revenue per professional staff member averaged \$257,732 last year, slightly up from \$255,409 in 2020. Total overhead, meanwhile, was virtually flat, averaging 23.4 percent of net revenues, compared to 23.6 percent in 2020.

Gould+Partners' Benchmarking Survey Report was based on responses from 40 participating North American PR agencies. Responses were collected in May. ○

Cost concerns shaping Americans' shopping habits

90 percent of Americans said they've changed their purchasing habits at the grocery store due to rising prices.

By Jon Gingerich

Concerns surrounding inflation and rising prices are having an effect on consumers' shopping habits, according to insights from data science and media company 84.51°.

84.51°'s latest Consumer Digest report, which analyzes consumer sentiment and shopping trends, found that nearly three-quarters of Americans (73 percent) said they're currently "extremely concerned" about inflation, with more than two-thirds (68 percent) additionally claiming they believe things will get "much worse" in the coming six months.

A whopping 90 percent of consumers also reported that they've changed their shopping behaviors—up from 88 percent last month—and 42 percent said they're now buying fewer items at the grocery store.

When it comes to the specific ways in which consumers are coping with rising prices, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) said they've been on the lookout for sales, deals or coupons. More than half (57 percent) said they're purchasing fewer non-essential items, 39 percent said they're purchasing more shelf-stable items and 33 percent said they're purchasing less meat and fish.

More Americans also reported cooking from home (31 percent), buying smaller

sizes/amounts (28 percent) and purchasing more items in bulk (26 percent).

Americans reported seeing rising prices in categories such as dairy (83 percent), deli/meat/fish (79 percent), produce (74 percent), frozen food (68 percent), paper products (68 percent), drinks (63 percent), household cleaning products (61 percent), and canned

goods and pasta (58 percent).

More than a third of respondents (38 percent) said they're having a hard time finding coupons/deals for the items they usually buy and 53 percent said they've noticed fewer items being on sale.

Nearly half (46 percent) of consumers said they're currently feeling anxiety about their personal finances.

84.51°'s June Consumer Digest report was based on a series of surveys in June. ○

Brands boost social togetherness

By Steve Barnes

Brand are in a key position to foster social togetherness, according to a FleishmanHillard study.

The study, which was made in partnership with Harvard professor Robert J. Waldinger and futurologist Martin Raymond, surveyed 2,000 adults in the U.S. and UK between March and April. It found that 61 percent of respondents feel that "brands have an important role to play when it comes to fostering togetherness in society."

That sentiment has a direct connection to the bottom line, with 70 percent of U.S. respondents claiming that they would be more likely to buy a product if its brand promoted togetherness. That number was not quite as high in the UK, where 54 percent of respon-

dents said a brand's stance on social togetherness would influence their purchasing decisions.

Equal representation across social groups in marketing and communications was seen as a central concern for many consumers. 86 percent of U.S. respondents and 78 percent of those in the UK indicated that they want to see brand advertisements "accurately represent the make-up of society."

But brands appear to be coming up short in meeting the desire for messaging that promotes social togetherness. Almost half (45 percent) agreed that the way brands currently market themselves actively contributes to societal division.

Fashion, healthcare and beauty were seen as the sectors that most often contribute to social division. ○

The state of the FAM trip

Travel writers and influencers in the consumer travel and lifestyle space offer their insights on best practices to consider when planning a familiarization press trip.

By Lauren Mackiel

One of the most trusted and proven public relations tactics leveraged across consumer travel, hospitality and lifestyle industries is the familiarization press trip, aka the “FAM trip.” A FAM is an immersive experience organized by a destination or brand—e.g., property, product or service—for traditional and social media influencers, as well as other key stakeholders, to better understand the offering. Ask any journalist or influencer and they’ll tell you there’s no substitute for experiencing it first-hand to paint an extensive picture for their readers or followers.

As the world opens back up, regulations are lifted and COVID travel guidelines are relaxed, the general consumer travel industry is eager to get traditional and social media influencers back on-site, immersed in all they have to offer. In fact, right now “revenge travel” is in full effect and doesn’t seem to be slowing down.

“Revenge travel is a media buzzword that originated in 2021 when the world began to reopen, and people decided to make up for lost time,” said Erika Richter, Vice President of the American Society of Travel Advisors.

Knowing vacation/travel is booming, we interviewed top freelancers, staff journalists and key influencers in the consumer travel and lifestyle space to see how FAMs have evolved, what works—and what doesn’t—and best practices to consider as part of your travel PR strategy. The individuals we interviewed collectively have taken hundreds of FAM trips over the last decade and have all hit the skies since 2021.

The following is a summary of key tips and considerations that every destination/brand should know before they plan their next FAM:

Smaller groups, please

Whether it’s a four-to-five-day local/regional or international trip or a one-day/overnight experience, media and influencers are recommending—and often highly preferring—a smaller group experience (two to three media attendees, or even solo, versus a larger group). Why? For some, they feel they can connect more informally and naturally with a smaller group than in a larger setting. One consideration for smaller FAMs is extending an invite to one media member and asking them to recommend like-minded reporters/influencers who might fit in well together. It makes the entire immersion that much smoother.

Of course, there will be destination/industry FAMs that need to be larger given traditional practices and expectations. However, in general, our feedback suggests a smaller group FAM lends itself to a greater experience, which absolutely impacts the final product (i.e., coverage).

Off the agenda

Whether it’s a destination FAM or visiting journalist program, any PR professional familiar with the process has undoubtedly heard the need to build in “down time” or “free time” if the itinerary exceeds more than one day (i.e., the longer the FAM, the more free time included). Our interviewees resoundingly expressed a need for more off time in any multi-day itinerary. A general rule of thumb is up to five hours per day of down time—the ideal—with recreational activities, such as zip-lining, excursions or group dinners optional.

They went on to share that often the unscheduled time—exploring and decompressing—allows for casual encounters that are crucial to their reporting/coverage. While interviewing key partners, meet and greets and touring properties are must-haves, but building in time for the unexpected—running into locals, having a meal in town—provided them with an insight that often became the lead for their piece/post, which resulted in a richer story all around.



Seaside bliss at Cayman Kai on Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands.

Credit: Cayman Islands Department of Tourism (CIDOT)

Free time is a misnomer

The media continues to consolidate both from an overall outlet perspective and the number of reporters in any given newsroom or publishing house. Reality check: Journalists are working on five or more assignments at any given time; some are juggling seven to 10 stories a week, FAM or no

FAM. Influencers? Typically, two to three, maybe more. PR pros should be sensitive to and understand the time challenges they face and spend extra attention building and providing a FAM experience that is truly exceptional and worthwhile.

Plus one

Another insight shared was the opportunity for media to bring a “plus one”: in most cases, someone they know who has never been to the destination or location. Seeing a new place and experiencing it through another’s eyes



Lauren Mackiel

can be more impactful than seeing it for themselves. The benefits of exploring that world with a “newbie” provide a true benefit to the writer, but more importantly, to the reader, they’re a built-in audience for the reporter as they determine their angle. For influencers, the same goes, but they often want a trusted photographer to tag along to make sure all assets are captured professionally.

Media and influencers are important

Bottom line, journalists and social media influencers are crucial to telling any brand story, piquing consumer interests and breaking through to new targets. However, their needs during a FAM can differ. Mixing writers and influencers with varying processes can be tough but not impossible. While influencers might require the most scenic/untapped locations to capture the perfect picture and supporting post, like journalists, they also seek an itinerary that makes sense for their following. They both suggest that FAMs include the “hot spots” but are also interested in the lesser-known areas that perhaps are under the radar. For traditional media, they need more access/time for interviews and expert insights. If your FAM plans don’t include a mix of media/influencers, you might want to reconsider this; they’re imperative to generating awareness on behalf of a destination/brand, but their itineraries should look a bit different and be flexible enough so they can split up to get their jobs done.

Another area that arose through our interviews was the ability to personalize FAM trip offerings—going back to tip number

— Continued on next page

The struggle of adapting to constant change

The staggering speed at which things change today is now faster than anything we've witnessed in history, leaving us to constantly ponder this paradox: What happens after what comes next?

By Curtis Zimmerman

It's the wild west out there. Just when you think you've grasped—and perhaps mastered with more than a reasonable amount of certainty—the latest innovation, technical revolution, platform, app, digital breakthrough or content activation, there's something new waiting for you as you attack a new day. It's not like things haven't been moving fast for the past decade. But this is different.

In the 1980s, there was a popular futurist named Faith Popcorn. At the time, her theories and projections were met with some consternation and more than a little well-oiled doubt. She predicted a time when the world would exist through an effect she coined as “cocooning,” a sort of hyper-nesting where people could work remote, live in an insulated environment, avoid others or anything and control their own lives. It's hard to believe it's been forty years since her book “The Popcorn Report” was quoted in every marketing presentation. She was followed by another futurist named Watts Wacker—odd names for futurists were evidently a thing at the time—who wrote a book based on the name of this article: “The 500 Year Delta: What Happens After What Comes Next?” where he outlined strategies for companies to reset their course toward an unpredictable future, offering new models to accommodate the chaos caused by increasing change and splintering of social, political and economic organizations.

There's a reason Faith Popcorn and Watts Wacker were called “futurists.” And, in hindsight their indisputable accuracy is astounding. So, where does that leave us as public relations and marketing communications professionals?

Cocooning is real. Ms. Popcorn certainly predicted the onset of the remote workplace, Amazon and Netflix. And, the subsequent chaos caused by increasing change is something we have to deal with in our industry every day.

As we consider the road forward for our clients or our organizations, we may not have time to evaluate the true impact of all this change. Because there's more coming—and it's coming fast.

Who would've predicted that the QR code would have a reversal of fortunes and become the popular go-to for a contemporary call-to-action? Five years ago, if you had suggested a QR code to a client they would've thought you'd lost touch. The QR code appeared to come, go and be forgotten with the likes of virtual reality, direct mail, variable printing and, oh wait ... those are all in vogue again too.

Not only is virtual reality a real thing, but it's also opening doors that aren't all that virtual. Despite the not-so-trend-setting goggles, Marriott's wedding experience in New York was awesome. And, the promise of destination experiences brought to “life” through virtual reality around the world is truly mind-blowing. And, now Navitaire, the Amadeus company, is introducing the world's first virtual travel search and booking experience.

Virtual reality has the potential to change the way we communicate and how we operate as marketing professionals. It was not long ago when the idea of VR as a tool or concept was dismissed as one more innovation that sounded great but had no place in the real world. Truly an idea whose time has come and may well create a paradigm shift for the world of communications.

Consider bitcoin and cryptocurrency in general. It wasn't long ago that Expedia was embracing cryptocurrency as a way to pay for travel. The number of sites and collateral that highlighted the acceptance of crypto was increasing daily. And, hotels and travel companies looked at this new form of currency as a dealmaking launching pad for brands and their guests. The fast and unkind downfall of bitcoin has been covered by every information source from CNN

to “Saturday Night Live” and criticized by business leaders from Elon Musk to Bill Gates. Not surprisingly, you can no longer use crypto to pay for your trip on Expedia.

Like QR codes and VR, perhaps we'll be looking back five years from now as blockchain technology and the world of Web 3.0 opens the world to crypto as a primary source of currency. It's not easy to counsel clients on speculation.

And, if that's not enough, the world of NFT's is worth more time and consideration than simply explaining—or trying to explain—what's fungible and what's non-fungible. Marriott once again jumped to the forefront of innovative technology embracing an NFT collection as a form of reward through Marriott Bonvoy that was introduced at Art Basel. And destinations like Belize are using NFTs in partnership with renowned artists to help express and expose the audience to experiences that await them. It has yet to be seen if NFTs are worth the hype and return the value, but we must give them consideration, nonetheless.

While we're considering three-letter acronyms, the world of college athletics has been changed considerably with the introduction of NIL, or Name Image and Likeness. An athlete can't be paid for their performance, and absolutely can't be paid by the institution. So, NIL must rely on “collectives” and corporate sponsors or organizations that believe they'll gain influence and positive exposure through association with the athlete. There's a women's collegiate basketball player that has had her influence valued at more than \$65,000 per tweet. But it takes a partner willing to pay to make that happen. And, it takes a public relations or marketing professional to make the recommendation.

If all of this doesn't make your head spin, get prepared for Web 3.0. The only thing that can slow it down is the lack of 3.0 developers. But, when it gains steam it will provide the ability to process and apply data at a much larger, much faster and considerably safer capacity. Content will be created in 3D and virtual. Your mobile device will become a powerful data center through edge computing. And, the user experience will be extraordinarily personal. The speed of change will be faster than anything we have seen in history. Not even Popcorn could have predicted what will happen next.

Curtis Zimmerman is Co-Founder of The Zimmerman Agency. ○



Curtis Zimmerman

COVID PROGRAMS INSPIRE TRAVELERS

— Continued from page 10

one—smaller groups may lend to more personalization where reporters and influencers can choose itinerary experiences that help build the story they feel will best highlight the destination or brand to their audiences.

As industry PR professionals, we have an opportunity to help improve and build better FAM experiences for our media and influencer partners, which will not only foster new and strengthen existing relationships with them but will ultimately generate greater awareness and richer storytelling for our clients.

Lauren Mackiel is SVP at Coyne PR. ○

Harnessing the power of PR in the new age of travel

How PR can help travel clients position themselves for success amid a shifting landscape.

By Kayla Atwater

We're at the threshold of a new age of travel. With travel restrictions and COVID-19 testing requirements continuing to ease, we're at a pivotal moment in time where travelers can more freely satisfy their pent-up wanderlust to traverse the globe and seek out new experiences.

This provides travel and tourism brands—as well as the public relations professionals who represent them—a timely opportunity to capitalize on the renewed interest in travel, which is being driven by greater peace of mind and ease of access to destinations.

According to recent research from Global Data, the global travel industry is expected to make a full recovery by 2025. The study found that by 2025, global travel is expected to reach 101 percent of 2019 levels, with a projected 1.5 billion international departures. However, the industry may never return to “normal” as we know it. Therefore, we must adapt to changing consumer expectations.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, travelers' preferences and demands have shifted significantly, bringing on several short-term and long-term trends that are important to keep top-of-mind. Here are a few key ways that PR can help travel companies stand out amid the shifting landscape and position themselves for success.

Tell stories the media want to hear

Before approaching a journalist with any pitch, it's critical to take a step back and remember their bottom line. Journalists aren't just responsible for delivering news but are also tasked with driving engagement to attract a larger audience.

In an effort to make their jobs easier, and build more beneficial relationships, it's in our best interest as public relations professionals to ensure that we're providing targeted, relevant stories that will stand out in the never-ending news cycle.

Travelers look to their favorite news sources as a resource to help them plan dream trips where they can cross off long-awaited experiences from their bucket lists. At the height of the pandemic, our core campaigns sought to provide inspiration to travelers for their future trips, and now we are seeing journalists covering the best destinations to visit post-pandemic.

In addition, to appeal to travelers' rising desire for authentic and unique travel experiences, journalists are keen to dive deep into their travel subjects by discovering under-the-radar spots, hidden gem destinations, unique—beyond the run-of-the-mill—programming and more. Every travel company has a compelling story waiting to be told, and finding the best media hook is a public relations professional's area of specialty.

Another progressively popular topic as of late has been affordable travel, especially amidst the current economy. With travelers eager to make up for lost time yet wary of rising costs, they'll be taking an even closer look during their trip planning process to drill down on how best to stretch their vacation budget. With that in mind, it's more important than ever for travel companies to provide a clear and compelling value proposition that communicates the differentiating benefits of their offering and why it's not-to-miss.

Leverage key leaders as trusted travel experts

In today's uncertain times, travelers are relying on advice and tips from trusted resources to help them make their important travel decisions. This is where a travel company's leadership team—who are already experts in their respective areas of ownership—can naturally insert themselves to build trust and showcase how their company's offerings are a perfect fit for what travelers are looking for.

These experts can be in virtually any department whether it's the director of operations discussing the guest experience, the chief marketing officer showcasing a first-of-its-kind promotion or the executive chef providing tips on sustainable food choices. The media are hungry to interview valuable resources for their stories who can provide fresh perspectives on today's hot topics.

For example, one of Hemsworth's clients, vacation rental marketplace HomeToGo, taps into its extensive internal database of the search behavior of its users to analyze travel trends. To further strengthen the brand's position at the forefront of the industry, we'll often connect our media contacts with their leadership team to provide interesting, insightful content on trending destinations, booking behaviors, annual

search trends and more, which gives us countless compelling stories to tell.

Tap into industry trends in a thoughtful and creative manner

When it comes to leveraging trends, it's important to focus on quality over quantity. You know the age-old saying, you can't be “everything to everyone.” Travel companies should be laser-focused on what resonates most with their target audience and carve out something unique that will make the biggest, long-lasting impact on their business. As public relations professionals, we consistently work with our clients to develop creative, out-of-the-box ideas that will capture the media's attention in the competitive landscape and provide our clients the opportunity to shine.

There's an array of significant travel trends that we believe are here to stay and are key to embrace to remain relevant in the future. Notably, one such example is an increased emphasis on local experiences. This is providing travelers the stay-like-a-local angle in which they can immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of the destination.

Hotels, resorts, vacation rentals and other accommodation types can meet this demand by incorporating local products and experiences into their offerings—such as spotlighting locally sourced food on the restaurant's menu, crafting a tour that takes guests through underrated spots around town or bringing in a local expert to host a unique class.

With the pandemic changing the travel industry as we once knew it, an innovative and thoughtful public relations strategy is vital to capture the attention—and business—of today's savvy travelers. Now's the time to seize the opportunity before us and help travelers as they seek to catch up on the trips they have missed over the past couple of years. A potential full recovery by 2025 gives the travel and tourism industry good reason to be optimistic about what lies ahead.

Kayla Atwater is Director of the Travel & Tourism division at Hemsworth Communications. ○



Kayla Atwater

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Going granular and grand

Why communications agencies need to diversify their offerings and travel PR strategies for a crowded marketplace and a changing media landscape.

By Jennifer Hawkins

With the travel industry now back in gear—and even roaring back in most cases domestically—the focus for PR pros in the travel industry has now shifted from keeping clients afloat to helping them stand out in a crowded marketplace. The past two years have also brought a lot of change to the media landscape. So, how should PR agencies move forward and advise clients in the ever-evolving travel industry? With a two-pronged strategy that's both granular and grand yet always grounded in flexibility and creativity.

We've recently seen a lot of changes for those who focus their coverage on the travel and lifestyle sphere. On the ground across NYC and LA, there's never been such fierce competition for the attention of editors, staff writers, freelancers and influencers. Freed by video conferencing as well as the seismic reconsideration of the office workplace, the media—like all corporate America—has gone virtual or hybrid, and they're no longer tied to a publisher's headquarters. This “work from anywhere” mentality has reduced the convenience of desk-side visits, those long-cherished means of spreading news, building relationships and putting clients face-to-face with editors and tastemakers.

While desk sides are still effective, PR reps must be prepared to meet editorial folks where and when they desire. They must also be sure their clients have the goods—impressive news, innovative and genuinely creative programming and industry-shaking trends—that will encourage the media to say “yes” to getting together in the first place.

There's a similar challenge with hosting PR-driven events. In April 2019, our team hosted a Spring Hospitality Showcase to dazzle editors with a “one-stop-shop” of client news. Our teams offered news-driven interactive features from clients, from learning to pour a Guinness from the bartender flown in from The Shelbourne in Dublin to Mongolian vodka tastings accompanied by a renowned morin khuur fiddler and a cutting-edge “wellness bed” allowing media to actually test out the trailblazing sleep technology.

From the moment it ended, we couldn't wait for our next Showcase, but now we must seriously reconsider it altogether. Client events have become risky propositions, with competition high and guest lists prone to shedding. What's more, many publica-

tions are now relying on freelancers who've dispersed geographically and diversified to cover myriad topics. Result? With travel now back on the table, travel writers want to experience Guinness in Dublin, which is one of the best—although sometimes costly—ways to showcase your hotel or resort.

Competition is also fierce for securing press trip attendees. It seems every key writer and outlet is being invited to go everywhere! We've counseled our clients on creating stand-out itineraries that go beyond the hotel and offer one-of-a-kind access to events, restaurants and cultural happenings, often recommending they partner with other like-minded brands, chefs or operators in the destination to maximize not only the enjoyment of the traveling journalist but also the depth of the resulting coverage.

Meanwhile, with so many travel journalists working freelance, jam-packed press trip itineraries are passé. It's better to offer at least a little wiggle room in the schedule for them to pursue additional and more in-depth stories. Similarly, flexibility is now necessary for assignments, as many freelancers don't pitch editors until after they've returned home. Clients should be aligned on these new truths with conversations before the trip so there are no surprises or disappointments onsite. But it's always up the PR representative to navigate these transparent conversations with the journalist and the client alike upfront.

While traditional PR pitches and strategies will continue to deliver results in their own way, we see the future of travel PR through a highly integrated marketing and communications lens. FINN Partners brings together full-service capabilities, specialized expertise and national and global footprint to serve clients across the spectrum, from the start-ups, boutique properties and multinational luxury hotel groups we know so well, to lifestyle brands and large destinations.

Our agency takes a 360-degree approach to developing our clients' strategies. Simply put, we're reaching beyond appealing to traditional media outlets by leveraging social media, influencer relations and the development of creative content, like photography and video, to weave their stories together on owned and earned channels. Our communications plans now embrace a diversified range of services to provide connectivity for clients across as many channels as possible.

Take social media: Every PR firm knows its importance, but few are actually positioned to develop and institute social media strategies for clients. Most rely instead on third parties to craft a social strategy that, they hope, aligns with client messaging. Building an in-house social media studio—a team of social media content developers and community experts—has been a much more effective tactic for our team as it enables us to keep costs sensible while putting our creativity and resourcefulness on display.

Now, in addition to PR experts, our agency has an in-house team dedicated to content creation and comprised of bright young talents who are both fluent in social media and thrilled with opportunities to put their personal passions for everything from photography and videography to graphic design and copywriting into practice. By tailoring our own social media services, our agency can shape messaging to resonate with clients' customers and create personality-driven content via photos and videos that bring the luxuries and experiences they offer to life.

Our social media work also keeps our talent on their toes and engaged in something they enjoy, giving us expertise to leverage, new angles to develop and services to offer that keep us ahead of the curve. Big pluses all around, especially as we pursue new clients and hires.

Keeping fingers on the pulse of social media and other communications strategies is a lot of work, of course. But as our expertise grows, it opens the door for us to better lavish clients with services including copywriting, influencer relations and content development, as well as to build brand followers by promoting clients as thought leaders. Even given our growth, we still approach client services like the boutique firm we started out as decades ago, enabling us to flexibly maneuver for clients, as well as price services right for brands large and small. And, with so many changes afoot, the travel industry that we love so much can use all the guidance we can give.

Jennifer Hawkins is Managing Partner and NY Travel Practice Leader, Finn Partners. ○



Jennifer Hawkins

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Is travel sustainable in a post-pandemic world?

As the world leaves the grip of the coronavirus lockdown, how has the consumer mindset changed toward travel habits and is this change transitory or permanent?

By Debbie Flynn

Travelers are making more conscious decisions about their travel experiences in a post-pandemic world, which includes their preferred mode of transport and where they stay. Writers are mulling over the trends they're seeing, wondering whether everything will return to normal or whether they're witnessing a permanent and accelerating change in behavior. Companies are looking deeply into how and whether they need to pivot their business models, to accelerate their path toward sustainability. Destinations are both frightened by the volumes of tourists now returning and grateful to be once again receiving the dollars that drive economic growth and jobs.

The world isn't exiting the pandemic lockdown in a uniform manner. Political leaders are making different choices. China is still closed, taking a zero-tolerance policy toward the virus. Before the pandemic, tourism and travel accounted for more than 10 percent of global gross domestic product, and no country sent more travelers abroad than China. In 2019, the Chinese took 154 million foreign trips, compared with Americans, who took just under 100 million trips. COVID completely disrupted the travel boom and in 2021, a mere 8.5 million outbound travelers left China, down more than 95 percent from the pre-pandemic position. The \$255 billion those Chinese tourists spent abroad in 2019 has largely disappeared, leaving Asian tourism-dependent economies with a large economic hole. Those visitors and their money transformed entire destinations. In 2021, Thailand, which relied on tourism for around 20 percent of its GDP before COVID, experienced its largest economic contraction since the Asian financial crisis of 1997.

So, what are we to make of the impact of COVID on the sustainability of travel and tourism?

Sustainable travel means so much more than "greenwashing" by hanging your towels up in the hotel room, as consumers become more conscious about waste and recycling. Travelers are becoming more sensitive to local communities, to the environment and to the impact that their footprint is having on the planet. More people are seeking authentic cultural experiences to enrich their vacations but crucially also give back to local communities, whilst actively avoiding overcrowded destinations.

The Travel Foundation describes sustain-

able tourism: "By its very nature, tourism values the things that are most precious in our world: stunning landscapes, wildlife, history, culture, and people. Tourism can be a catalyst for growth in the local economy, providing good quality jobs, opportunities for enterprise and funds for conservation. But if it's not managed well, tourism can have negative impacts on local communities and environments, creating long-term problems for residents, which can ultimately lead to the decline of tourism in the destination."

Whatever the broad definition, sustainable travel means traveling in a way that minimizes our negative impact on the planet and does not harm the destination's cultural and natural environments for the long-term. This definition is often tied with responsible travel, green travel and eco-tourism, where tourists are more conscious of how their decisions affect the local people in destinations. As the climate crisis deepens and global awareness increases, people are becoming more focused on traveling more thoughtfully and creatively.

So, what are we to make of the changing consumer mindset toward travel habits?

The pandemic has driven some key changes in behavior, with more consumers wanting to holiday closer to home, to avoid crowded spaces and airport lines, to find a blend of work and leisure by staying away from offices, to spend more quality time with family and friends, to experience nature and support local businesses and, importantly, to reflect on what's truly important in life.

The area that epitomizes all this change of focus and mindset is the trend toward "slow travel."

Travel blogger Charlie Marchant defines slow travel as "a conscious decision to travel at your own pace. When you travel slow, you decide not to rush around. Slow travel focuses on a deeper travel experience of understanding of local culture and lifestyle. Slow travel is inextricably linked to sustainable travel as it focuses on meeting and supporting local people. Because of this, slow travel is often considered low impact and opposite to mass tourism."

Despite the return to the skies witnessed during the last few months, there are many people for whom aviation is truly an unsustainable form of travel and who actively choose rail or car travel as short trip alterna-

tives. Just as Uber and Airbnb were born in the financial crisis years, other travel businesses have launched in the middle of the COVID crisis to take advantage of this new trend.

"I set Byway up the week we went into lockdown in March, so I got a lot of skeptical looks," said Founder and CEO Cat Jones, who left her job with an investment company to do so. "But I think this is the perfect time. People are looking for a different way to travel than they were pre-COVID. Sustainability is really driving people's decisions now, and travel needs to change."

Byway will focus on slow travel, often multi-stop journeys featuring family-run, independent accommodations in off-the-beaten-track places.

So, as the world comes out of the grip of the coronavirus lockdown, has the consumer mindset toward travel really changed? For some, it has changed on a permanent basis, creating a new target for the marketers, but for the vast majority the memory is short and life will return to normal.

This broader range of flexible consumers presents an opportunity for destinations to build messaging around a more sustainable kind of tourism "that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry the environment and host communities." It's no longer acceptable to hide behind the generic messaging of "Tourism is a Force for Good."

Travel: Sustainable or unsustainable? That's still the question in this post-pandemic world.

Debbie Flynn is Managing Partner, Global Travel Practice Leader, at FINN Partners. ○



Debbie Flynn

PR news brief

Kekst works Lucid Energy deal

Kekst CNC handles Lucid Energy Group as it agrees to be acquired by Targa Resources in a cash deal worth \$3.6 billion.

Lucid's New Mexico footprint overlays one of North America's most economic crude oil and natural gas producing acreage.

Targa is a provider of services to the energy sector and ranks as a top midstream infrastructure, Lucid is owned by Goldman Sachs Asset Management and Riverstone Holdings.

Riverstone Partner Baran Tekkora said the transaction with Targa "will position Lucid for its next stage of growth, while creating enhanced opportunities for its employees, customers and communities."



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Tips for standing out in a post-pandemic landscape

Despite rising gas prices and increasing economic concerns, Americans are still planning to travel this year.

By Julie Freeman

One of the most valuable lessons the pandemic has taught us is how to pivot quickly as the travel recovery landscape shifts. In fact, in the midst of writing this article, huge news was announced that the U.S. has lifted the COVID-19 testing mandate that had been required for all international travelers entering the country by air. While most PR efforts had already restarted during the past several months, the latest travel data and restriction eliminations have given us further direction to hone our PR strategies. Our goal remains unwavering: to help travel brands stand out and create the most effective strategies to generate earned coverage in today's post-pandemic media landscape.

MMGY Global's 2022 Portrait of American Travelers "Summer Edition" survey revealed that COVID-19 concerns have faded, and even inflation, rising gas prices and other global events seem to be no match for the allure of a vacation. Highlights of the survey include:

- 65 percent of U.S. travelers intend to take a leisure trip in the next six months despite obstacles present in today's travel environment.

- Among those who plan to travel in the next 12 months, intended travel spend is the highest reported in more than a year—more than \$600 greater than a year ago—and Boomers are expected to spend the most on leisure travel during the next 12 months.

- The rising cost of travel is now the most significant barrier, eclipsing COVID-19 concerns for the first time. The survey concluded that gas prices will impact travel for nearly eight in 10 active leisure travelers. However, it's not expected that Americans will cancel their trips—they're just more likely to travel closer to home (48 percent), decrease their spending on entertainment/shopping (35 percent) or make meals instead of eating out (30 percent).

- The perception of safety continues to improve domestically and internationally. According to the survey, the perceived safety of domestic travel is up seven points from one year ago, while international travel is up

12 points year-over-year.

- Road trips continue to rise in popularity. Despite higher gas prices, 76 percent of active travelers plan to take a road trip during the next 12 months, a steady increase upward from 60 percent of travelers who had the same intention in 2018. The ability to be spontaneous and explore multiple places on one trip—3.2 on average—are primary motivators for road tripping.

International travel has come roaring back in recent months, and we'll continue to see a surge now that restrictions have lifted.

- 78 percent of active leisure travelers are interested in traveling internationally during the next two years. Younger travelers, travelers with children and travelers with incomes of more than \$100,000 are more interested in traveling internationally.

- Europe and the Caribbean are the most popular destinations of interest.

- Following the federal announcement, MMGY Travel Intelligence's research showed that a third of Americans say they're more likely to travel internationally now that the U.S. has lifted its COVID-19 testing entry requirement.



While COVID-19 concerns are clearly fading as a deterrent to travel, rising costs are now impacting travel decisions, including how far people will go and how they will spend their travel budgets, particularly for younger and less affluent travelers. Creative and targeted promotional offers may be important to help drive volume and will be an important component of our messaging and media outreach. It will be important to market to diverse travel audiences by em-

bracing different perspectives and working hand in hand with media and influencers who truly represent all American travelers.

So, how does all this translate into effective PR programs that result in earned media coverage?

Relationships are everything

Significant changes in the media landscape throughout the pandemic impacted the way that we—as PR professionals—interact with the media in order to tell our clients' stories. These changes have resulted in our role as connectors being elevated, and as a result, we've evolved our tried-and-true ways of communicating these messages effectively to the media.

As the connective tissue between travel brands and the media, our job is to serve as the go-between for these two critically important travel audiences: We investigate, liaise, package and deliver travel's best stories; bring visitors to overlooked and undiscovered destinations; and shed new light on well-known ones. Transactionally, it's about connecting travel brands with credible journalists and platforms that help them reach new customers. However, the most important thing we can offer is more foundational—our relationships, which are more critical now than ever before.

Stretched thin with fewer resources, our contacts are wearing several more hats than they were two years ago. As communicators, we can make their jobs easier and lighten the load by identifying trends, sourcing key spokespeople and locating visuals. If we work to maintain our position as both an extension of the brand and of the newsroom, we'll all come out

ahead.

Back to firsthand experiences

One of the most effective ways of telling our clients' stories is by providing firsthand experiences. We believe seeing is believing, so as soon as press and influencers became comfortable traveling again, we began lining up personalized visits, leading to feature story results. While interest is high, time has been an issue with many editors,



Julie Freeman

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PR techniques for standing out

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noting that their go-to freelancers are so heavily booked, assignments they want to give out are going uncovered. With restrictions lifted, the floodgates will really open, and it will be critical that we create strategic itineraries and memorable experiences in order to compete for the media's and influencers' time to travel on behalf of our clients.

While travel journalists and influencers are on the road again, it's still important to gauge the comfort levels of potential attendees and provide contingency plans around potential issues. For example, what's the cancellation policy should the attendee contract COVID-19 before traveling? What's the plan if someone contracts COVID-19 while on a press trip and needs to quarantine in-destination?

We've learned other valuable insights while planning press visits during and after the pandemic that we think will be beneficial to others in the industry.

Attending a press visit or event with someone they're connected to helps journalists feel more comfortable and enhances their overall experience while still garnering the same stellar coverage that a firsthand experience delivers. It's important to build in additional free time and create space for flexibility on press trips. Overwhelmingly, journalists and influencers have requested that hosts do away with overpacked, restricted itineraries that lead to burnout. Engaging attendees at the outset about which experiences align most with their expertise gives them a more active role in creating content. In addition, providing free time allows them to catch up with other work, rejuvenate and immerse themselves in their surroundings organically. Finally, go off the beaten path whenever possible. Interest in undiscovered, hidden or exclusive activities is more important now than ever. Showing journalists more of the authentic culture and less of the "touristy" spots

will help drive deeper destination stories that will set your brand apart.

Honesty continues to be the best policy, and transparency is essential. Press trip attendees trust us to know the latest entry and exit requirements, and health and safety precautions at the destination. Additionally, topics such as coverage expectations and the type of trip should be noted at the beginning of the invitation process. While we're back to planning both group and individual press trips, individual trips have become the preferred method for many journalists, as well as the travel brands hosting them.



Interactive and engaging experiences

Finally, something that we didn't predict coming back as fast as it has is large-scale consumer activations, which have historically been a strong component of a successful PR campaign. Even though we believed events would start out smaller and build over time, we know that consumers have been starved for interaction with others throughout the pandemic and are very ea-



ger to experience the world again.

Research shows that 76 percent of adults value experiences more than material possessions, and 72 percent agree the memories they make on vacations are more valuable than any material item purchased in the last year. This reinforces that a noteworthy event in a key market can be a smart use of budget to capture the attention of time-starved media, influencers and prospective travelers. These days, journalists' inboxes are overflowing with messages; but a creative and engaging event is a powerful tool to stand out to those who are reserving their in-person calendar for bigger-picture, meaningful and memorable experiences.

With consumers craving these experiences, the team at MMGY NJF was quick to respond, developing creative activations and executing multiple large-scale consumer events over the past three months. We've interacted with thousands of potential travelers at each event, engaging them directly with standout elements of the destinations. Here are a few highlights:

Base Camp California

This spring, MMGY NJF and Visit California worked to bring a dose of Golden State sunshine to frosty New York City through a partnership with CAMP, a leading family experience brand. CAMP's Fifth Avenue flagship location was transformed into Base Camp California, an immersive mini-getaway activation featuring iconic scenery, including a redwood forest and skate park, branded surfboards and California culinary delights plus an appearance by celebrity chef Jet Tila at the opening event. This two-month-long activation leveraged the opportunity for earned media and content while inspiring more than 50,000 consumers who visited to plan a California family getaway. The inventive program, also timed around CAMP's West Coast launch in Los Angeles, generated 3.8 million digital impressions and 28 million earned media impressions including Cheddar News, Mommy Poppins and the *Los Angeles Business Journal*. Attendees who visited the store had the opportunity to be entered in a sweepstakes to win a dream trip for four

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The return of travel isn't what we expected

A look at how the hospitality industry has changed now that travel is finally returning to pre-pandemic levels.

By Amy Sedeño

On June 12, 2022, the CDC announced that airline passengers traveling from a foreign country into the United States were no longer required to show a negative COVID-19 test. Earlier in April, a Florida judge struck down the U.S. Federal Transportation Mask Mandate, and all major U.S. airlines lifted masked requirements for domestic flights. After a 15-month standstill, the cruise industry made a comeback, and despite the rising gas prices, Americans were set to break road trip records for July 4. Experts anticipate that international travel in 2022 will meet and possibly exceed pre-pandemic levels.

There's no doubt that travel is back, but is it back as we once knew it? And what does this mean for travel and hospitality public relations practitioners and our clients?

Understanding consumer behavior

Data is more critical than ever, and understanding consumer behavior is key to developing impactful PR strategies. With more consumers having an online presence, there's an opportunity for brands to personalize offers and experiences like never before. Tools like Brandwatch, Brand24 and Mention can track relevant keywords and media mentions and assist PR professionals in analyzing trends and competitors, giving brands a front-row seat to un-

derstanding what makes their consumers tick—and click.

The media landscape has shifted

Press trips are now more competitive than ever, with destinations and hotels rolling out the red carpet to garner media attention. While group trips were once preferred, the media are now opting for individual experiences and choosing trips with flexible add-ons like flight insurance and extended stay options.

In-person vs. virtual

While the power of in-person meetings can't be matched, the media have grown accustomed to virtual meetings and are reassessing the value of leaving the comfort of their offices or homes when they no longer have to. The key is to make these gatherings personalized and experiential. Think virtual happy hour for a hotel or destination or a tutorial for skincare brands. These meetings must add value to be successful. Think about delivering a clever media mailer with curated/branded gifts prior to the interview to entice engagement and make the meeting more tangible.

Influencer marketing

Influencers are here to stay, but with more screen time, consumers have become wearier of influencer marketing tactics and seek more authentic, relatable content. This

is why nano and micro-influencers are a brand's secret weapon. They are enthusiastic about the products and experiences and speak to a niche audience.

Internal comms are here to stay

During the pandemic, many brands realized their need for strategic internal communications to provide timely messages to stakeholders and consumers and boost employee morale. Company leaders became valuable spokespersons and social responsibility campaigns took center stage as consumers began expecting their favorite brands to speak out about topics like diversity and sustainability.



Amy Sedeño

With hotels and destinations managing staff shortages, improved sanitation protocols, increased travel demand and more contactless technology, PR teams can be excellent allies for the industry's recovery. By providing clients with insightful intel, trendspotting and a deep understanding of the new consumer and media landscape, PR pros can keep hotels and destinations top of mind and quickly mitigate any unforeseen turn in the pandemic.

Amy Sedeño is Vice President and Partner at Carolyn Izzo Integrated Communications / CIIC PR. ●

PR techniques for standing out

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to explore California, and there were more than 4,800 sweepstakes entries with 77 percent email opt-in.

The stars shine brighter in Texas

To celebrate Texas' participation in the International Dark Sky Places conservation program and the state's wide-open spaces, we created an immersive experience for our client Travel Texas at Santa Monica Place in Southern California to surprise and delight consumers with a two-minute night sky moment. As visitors stepped inside the custom-made portable space with a projection dome, they heard the sounds of local wildlife, smelled a mesquite wood campfire and felt what it's like to stand beneath a vast dark sky full of stars, enticing them to book a trip to see the state's designated Dark Sky Parks and Sanctuaries for themselves. More than 1,860 people saw Texas' stars with total event impressions of

65,000; our media outreach resulted in an article in *Condé Nast Traveler*; and the experience garnered more than 13,000 social engagements and more than 1.3 million potential impressions.

Let's Do London

Recently, London landed in Times Square, thanks to an event we conceptualized and spearheaded on behalf of London & Partners. In collaboration with the office of the Mayor of London, this Times Square takeover marked the launch of the #LetsDoLondon campaign, a multimillion-dollar tourism program aimed at attracting U.S. travelers back to the home of Big Ben during the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The event featured a performance from the Tony Award-winning musical "Six," a demonstration by London's iconic Coldstream Guards, and appearances from London's Mayor Khan and London & Partners CEO Laura Citron. In addition to a packed audience, MMGY NJF secured attendance from AP News and every major broadcast affiliate in New York City.

The takeover garnered a massive 1.7 billion impressions online, 17 million broadcast views and an additional 141 million online impressions in the UK media.

As we emerge from the pandemic, executing a successful press trip, activation or pitch requires unparalleled communication skills and extraordinary attention to detail. A strong, proactive and targeted media relations program is critical to securing coverage, driving consumer buzz and getting clicks, calls and bookings. We need to encourage our clients to think big, embrace flexibility and trust our expertise. In addition, it's our responsibility to advocate for media and influencers and ensure they have all the tools they need to create their best and most impactful work. As we approach new challenges as opportunities for innovation, our North Star remains unwavering: PR is the key figure in supporting brand messages and deploying stories to the right audiences at the right times.

Julie Freeman is EVP & Managing Director at MMGY NJF. ●

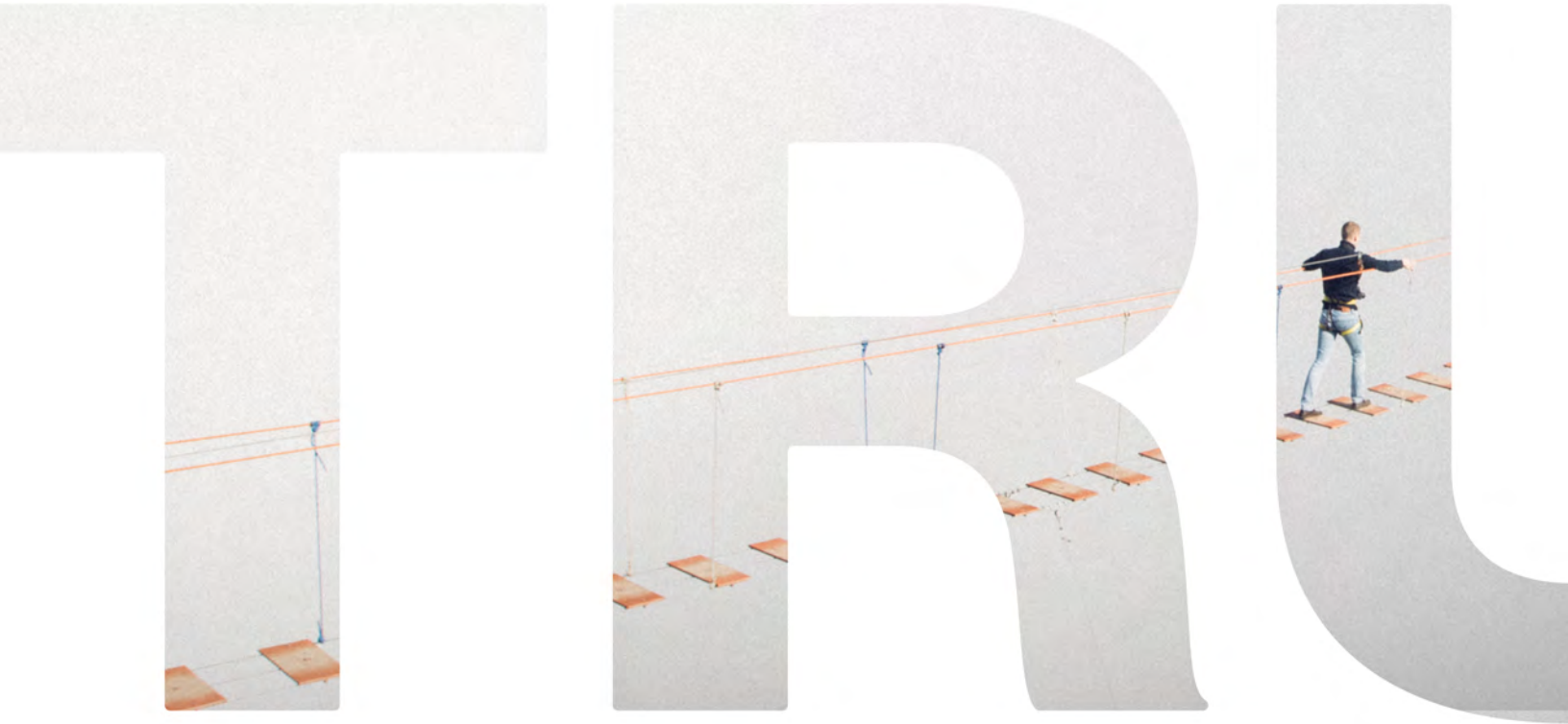


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When hotels become the destination

A growing number of hotels are now leveraging community-driven hospitality as a means of enriching guests' experiences.

By Allyn Magrino

The evolution of hotels and their purpose has greatly evolved from simply offering a place to sleep and get a bite to eat in a city where one was doing business or visiting family. No longer are people visiting cities just to see the famous landmarks or "check a destination off their list," with the hotel being secondary. Oftentimes, the hotel itself is the reason for the trip, but increasingly travelers are looking for hotels that truly reflect and support the destination's community.

This could be as simple as a hotel using honey from a local beekeeper or other purveyors, or on a greater scale having a commitment to hiring local and pledging a percentage of profits to community charities. Travelers have increasingly realized that to truly experience a destination, they need to support hotels that reflect and support its local community.

With this evolution, hotel management teams have realized the responsibility they have to support their communities. Not only is the community a source of business for them, it's also the home of their employees and their families, their local craftsmen and vendors and, most crucially, a key component in their property's DNA. Hotels that don't attempt to engage with their local communities miss out not only on key resources, but also on enriching their guests' experiences.

In the age of conscious consumerism, travelers are increasingly looking to support brands that prioritize community. As a result, the hotels and hospitality groups that are built on a foundation of uplifting their communities are those that will continue to lead in the industry. Whether it's local partnerships, charitable alignments or hiring practices, a community focus rooted in authenticity will be increasingly recognized and deservedly celebrated.

Charitable alignments with local organizations are an important focus for a growing number of hotels such as Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, which contributes to the local Maldivian community through local outreach programs. The hotel's initiatives provide career and learning opportunities for local youth through its Young Girls Apprenticeship Program and hydroponics project promoting sustainable farming. Supporting the community through youth programs is also a priority for The Central

Romana Corporation, the parent company of Casa de Campo Resort and Villas, which supports three major charities in neighboring La Romana including The Hogar del Niño, a children's daycare and educational center for more than 1,500 local children.

Balancing strategic expansion and organic growth is a key consideration for brands whose foundations are grounded in being an asset to their communities. With a growing number of hotels popping up in some of the Northeast's most sought-after destinations, Main Street Hospitality achieves this balance through its uniquely diverse yet consistently local-centric portfolio of independent hotels, which range from historic properties such as the Red Lion Inn to new builds and restorations including the soon-to-open Canoe Place in Hampton Bays. Showcasing a steadfast commitment to "building things that last, and preserving things that matter," the group prioritizes authentic development over aggressive expansion, ensuring each new project isn't only beneficial to its community, but deeply integrated within it.

According to American Express Travel's 2022 Global Travel Trends report, beyond seeing dollars go back into local communities, an overwhelming majority of tourists are driven by finding a connection to local culture within the destinations they visit. For new hotels such as The Morrow, opening in Washington D.C.'s NoMa neighborhood this fall, connecting guests with the new 3rd Street District means showcasing its history while redefining its future. Located in an area known for its rich industrial history and artistic innovation, the hotel's offerings are rooted in its surroundings.

For many hotels such as The Morrow, considering the bond between guests and local culture begins with design. For newly constructed properties and those that prioritize this connection, locally-inspired design is a strong focus and is prevalent across some of this year's top openings. Opened earlier this year, the Conrad Tulum Riviera Maya features a design that's shaped by local artisans, with hand-crafted art installations and design details throughout the hotel, and soon-to-open in Manhattan, the Ritz-Carlton New York, NoMad's design is inspired by the area's colorful history as the Floral District, with floral expressions represented throughout public spaces and guestrooms.



Allyn Magrino

Hospitality, like public relations, is a business built around the pursuit of connection to the people and places that give rise to culture. Amplifying the cultural catalysts shaping the places we travel to, and doing so consistently, is a shared practice across hotels that have become synonymous with culture itself. Crucial in doing so, in many cases, is championing local artists. At Hammetts Hotel, the Sarah Langley gallery presents the work of artists with ties to Newport, showcasing local work through Newport Curates. Hammetts Hotel and Main Street Hospitality place a strong focus on arts & culture and support of community arts initiatives, inviting artists, musicians, performers, filmmakers and creatives to call the hotel home base, partnering with organizations including NewportFilm and Newport Jazz & Folk Festival to host creatives throughout the season.

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

Ukraine military armed with media support

Daniel Rice, who is working on a doctoral dissertation on Ukrainian military leadership, is now repping the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

He serves as a special advisor to commander-in-chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi and provides guidance on war fighting.

Rice has written articles and made media appearances to boost awareness of the military situation in Ukraine.

His "The Untold Story of the Battle for

Kyiv" in "Small Wars Journal" argued that the U.S. should provide different weapons systems to Ukraine.

Rice spoke at the Ukrainian Institute of America on June 1 and then was interviewed by the Voice of America. The resulting article was translated into Russian.

He also made an appearance on CNN's "Erin Burnett OutFront" to talk about Ukraine.

Rice is not compensated for his work. ○

Using PR to create a quality hotel experience

The role marketing and brand professionals play in boosting hotel bookings and improving the overall hotel experience.

By Lindsey Carnett

Many are keen to return to a vacation following two years of lockdown's travel restrictions. Reconnecting with friends and family, exploring new destinations or revisiting old favorites, lots of travelers are looking forward to boarding a plane, train or boat and escaping from the return to everyday life.

Lockdown had a profound effect on the global travel and tourism industry. Stats published earlier this year paint the stark reality of the pandemic's impact: Global revenue for the industry is estimated to be \$396 billion, a decrease of around 42.1 percent from 2019. It's also significantly lower than the original 2020 forecast of around \$712 billion.

McKinsey reports that traveling is the second-most desired activity, and passengers are returning to air travel once more. Hotel reservations and rental car bookings are also increasing.

To capitalize on the return to travel, the hospitality industry—and hotels in particular—know that they must invest in good communications advice. From print, digital and broadcast campaigns to working with influencers and collating recommendations, the whole process of communications and strategic thinking is vital to creating a good quality hotel experience.

The price that hotels pay for and expect from branding professionals is rightly one of high quality. For them to offer a good service, they expect a good service from their communications professionals. Guest personalization is of particular focus for hotels and the hospitality industry. As travelers ourselves, we can all recall the trips and stays at hotels where we received personalized attention and a memorable stay.

But this high standard and expectation is under threat with the changes to the hospitality industry. It's estimated that roughly 62 million people lost their jobs in the global travel and tourism sector in 2020, and with many more deciding that the global pandemic has necessitated a career change, large amounts of corporate memory and thousands of dollars of training and experience are leaving the industry and walking out of the door.

While this problem can't be solved by communications alone, marketing and brand professionals do have a role in helping to shore up retention and in turn, create a good quality hotel experience.

How can they do this and use communi-

cations to provide a good quality hotel experience?

Resist the urge to oversell the experience. Trying to make up for lost ground can encourage the urge to oversell or overhype what a customer will receive. Media familiarization trips are a positive way to get the press on-side as well as introduce them to the full experience. "Keeping it real," such as providing an immersive trial of facilities, rooms and hospitality, providing exactly what guests will receive can help brands to avoid overpromising and under-delivering.

Invest in special training. As hotels begin to fully open and offer their complete range of services once more, now is perhaps more important than ever to invest in special training for staff. From a communications perspective, it's a good way to show how to engage with members of the press and social media influencers, providing examples and insights into what questions they will ask, what content they like to create and what you should and shouldn't say.

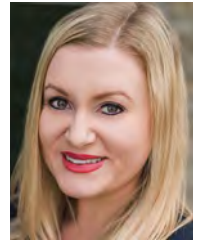
Reflect the core messages accurately: staff training should also be used to reflect the messaging integral to what the brand is promising as part of the guest experience. This starts right at the door: from check-in, bellmen interaction, elevator maintenance,

room amenities, room service, dining and culinary service, spa, pool and gym and service, concierge assistance, checkout experience and interactions with the house-keeping staff. The whole process matters and can make a huge difference to a positive or a bad stay.

Download the knowledge. There will inevitably be staff who will leave the hospitality sector; it's the cyclical nature of the industry. But it's important for communications staff to work with their departing colleagues to get their feedback and any information that would be useful. This could be how they dealt with a bad customer experience: turning it into a good one. Or perhaps listening to their ideas on how the hotel or venue can improve. Whatever the situation, conducting an exit chat is a good and productive one for both parties.

Following these steps and utilizing the opportunities that communications can offer can help to improve the hotel industry as we move towards a new way of travel and vacation post the pandemic.

Lindsey Carnett is CEO and President of Marketing Maven. ○



Lindsey Carnetta

SEC cracks down on misleading press releases

The Securities and Exchange Commission on May 31 charged SCWorx Corp and its former CEO Mark Schessel with making false and misleading claims on an April 13 press release about the New York company's plan to distribute COVID-19 rapid test kits.

The complaint alleges that SCWorx falsely stated that it had a committed purchase order for two million kits.

The order, according to the release, had "a provision for additional weekly orders of two million units for 23 weeks, valued at \$35 million per week."

Following the issuance of the release, SCWorx's stock surged 425 percent from the prior trading day on volume of 96.2 million shares, which was more than 900 times the prior three-month average daily volume, according to the SEC.

The SEC alleges that Schessel and SCWorx issued the release despite having neither a legitimate supplier of COVID-19 test kits nor an executed purchase agree-

ment with a buyer.

The complaint also alleges that Schessel and SCWorx publicly repeated the false and misleading statements about the distribution of COVID-19 rapid test kits over the course of April 2020.

"We allege that the defendants engaged in an age-old fraud—lying about their business prospects—to capitalize opportunistically on the COVID pandemic," SEC Chair Gary Gensler said in a statement. "As the challenges from the pandemic continue, investors should be vigilant about COVID-related claims. The SEC will continue to root out fraud and prosecute those who attempt to use the surge of uncertainty from the pandemic to defraud the investing public."

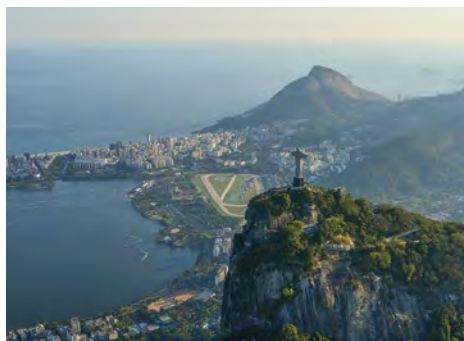
SCWorx has agreed to a settlement, subject to court approval, that includes permanent injunctions, the payment of a \$125,000 penalty, and disgorgement of \$471,000 with prejudgment interest of \$32,761.56. ○

Value has significant impact on 2022–2023 travel plans

The world's largest survey of travel intentions, from Travel Lifestyle Network, shows that nearly half of those interviewed seek value-for-money or a relaxing experience when planning a vacation.

Zapwater Communications, in partnership with the Travel Lifestyle Network, is excited to announce the network will release the world's largest survey of travel intentions on July 25th.

The Global Travel Trends Report was compiled for TLN by travel think tank Thrive and market intelligence firm AudienceNet. It includes both qualitative interviews conducted by Thrive and the analysis, by AudienceNet, of survey responses from 179,446 people in 28 countries around the world during the first quarter of 2022, conducted by Global Web Index. Zapwater is TLN's exclusive member for the United States.



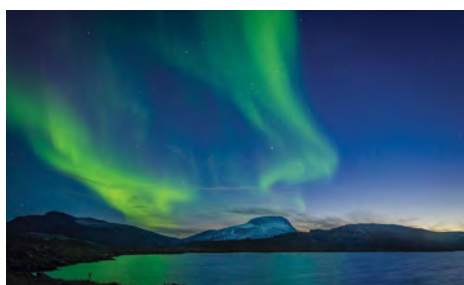
Global travel trends

With COVID restrictions having now been lifted in the majority of the 28 countries detailed in the report, almost 25 percent of all adults said they're planning domestic vacations while an additional 13 percent reported having plans to travel internationally.

Overall, the survey discovered that wanderlust abounds with a strong desire to seize the experiences that travel offers in the post-COVID climate. When asked if they were "someone who likes to explore the world," consumers were highly positive in all regions: the Middle East and Africa (60 percent); North America (51 percent); Europe (49 percent); Asia-Pacific (44 percent); and Latin America (43 percent).

Consumer views on the state of travel

When consumers were asked what factors tended to influence their decision regarding where they plan to travel, value-for-money



emerged as the number-one consideration (26 percent). Other considerations included having a relaxing experience (21 percent), the weather/time of the year (20 percent), a cultural experience (15 percent), a once-in-a-lifetime experience (15 percent), being able to visit friends/family (13 percent) and good facilities for children/families (12 percent).

With inflation rates soaring in many countries, the travel industry needs to contend with those consumer concerns relating to the current price of travel. With value-for-money at the top of potential travelers' lists, affordability seems almost certain to have a significant impact on travel-related purchasing in the second half of 2022 and into 2023.



United States travel insights

According to the survey, 49 percent of North America respondents have a high interest in traveling, with a current preference of domestic destinations over international.

In fact, one-fifth of North American travelers are planning to purchase a domestic vacation in 2022, with domestic long weekends and road trips particularly popular in the U.S.

Country/rural escapes (33 percent), road trips (33 percent), and long weekend domestic getaways (32 percent) are the most likely travel to be booked in 2022 in the U.S.

Vacations abroad, on the other hand, are less popular, given the diversity of travel experiences available to both sets of residents in their own countries. This finding implies that international destinations, hotels, airlines and resorts will need to take great



strides to lure travelers abroad, with an emphasis on value, relaxation and connectivity to friends and family.

A survey conducted by GWI* in the US and UK in Q2 2020 identified the aspects of travel and vacations that the public missed the most. The top factor was exploring new places (40 percent) followed closely by a change of scenery (37 percent) and spending time with loved ones (32 percent).

Based on this data, U.S. travel companies should place close attention to offering unique local experiences that bring groups together to experience new sights.

However, the main takeaway from the survey remains that rising costs are influencing every travel decision made today. This global survey highlights how an increasing number of consumers are putting value first when booking their leisure trips. So, price—and not necessarily quality—is going to be a key differentiator in order to attract consumer spending in the remainder of 2022 and in early 2023.

For a more in-depth look at the survey or to receive a copy, email davidz@zapwater.com. ○



Bonitatibus replaces Rafferty at Wells Fargo

Embattled Wells Fargo has named Amy Bonitatibus CCO and Brand Officer effective Sept. 12.

She will report to Vice Chairman Bill Daley and handle duties once held by former Ketchum CEO Barri Rafferty, who was hired in June 2020.

Bonitatibus joins Wells Fargo from JP-Morgan's Chase retail unit, where she served as Chief Communications Officer.

She joined Chase in 2012 and held various marketing and communications posts, including CMO for the home lending business.

Prior to Chase, Bonitatibus was Senior Director at Fannie Mae, where she managed executive communications and media relations.

She also was Deputy Press Secretary for Senator Hillary Clinton. ○



Amy Bonitatibus

Hamp returns to Toyota

Julie Hamp, who resigned her position as Chief Communications Officer of Toyota in 2015 after being arrested in Japan on suspicion of drug charges, has returned to the automaker.

Japanese officials said Hamp allegedly had her father mail her more than 50 oxycodone pills to her hotel in Tokyo after she arrived to take the top PR spot at Toyota's headquarters.

The painkiller is tightly controlled in Japan. The package was labeled as containing a necklace.

That arrest came two weeks after Hamp was named the first woman to lead Toyota's worldwide communications.



Julie Hamp

Previously, she headed Toyota's North America PR operations and served as Senior VP-CCO at PepsiCo and VP-Communications in Europe for General Motors.

She rebounds to Toyota North America to support CEO Akio Toyoda and advise the company on global media relations, sustainability and governance issues.

In a statement to the Associated Press, Toyota noted that Hamp was never prosecuted and believes the "incident in 2015 will not hinder her career going forward." ○

Brunswick Group adds healthcare veteran

Brunswick Group has hired Tanisha Carino, who has more than 20 years of healthcare and life sciences experience, as a Partner in its Washington office.

She served as Executive VP and Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Alexion Pharmaceuticals, which was an independent *Fortune* 500 biotechnology company focused on rare diseases.

Carino handled global PR, policy and alliance development at Alexion. She also guided the company's communications through its acquisition by AstraZeneca.

Earlier, she was Executive Director of the Milken Institute's FasterCure operation, VP-US Public Policy at GlaxoSmithKline and head of life sciences strategic advisory services at Avalere Health.

Most recently, Carino was a visiting fellow at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, working in the area of pandemic preparedness. ○



Tanisha Carino

WPP names first U.S. president

WPP has named Grey Global CEO Michael Houston its first U.S. President. He will oversee about 20,000 staffers in the U.S. and \$6 billion in annual revenues.

In making the announcement, CEO Mark Read noted that the U.S. is the UK-based ad/PR combine's biggest market and home to many of its most important clients.

Houston took the Grey CEO title in 2017 after serving as New York Managing Director and North America CEO. Earlier, he worked at KB+P, Landon and Y&R.

As WPP U.S. President, he will promote WPP offerings and collective capabilities, support agency heads, shape its campus strategy and attract/retain talent.

He also will serve as WPP's executive sponsor for its substantial P&G account.

BCW, Hill+Knowlton Strategies, Ogilvy and FGS Global are WPP's PR shops. ○



Michael Houston

Suder joins FGS Global

Katrin Suder, who spent almost 15 years as a McKinsey consultant, has joined FGS Global, which was formerly known as Finsbury Glover Hering, as a Senior Advisor in its corporate reputation practice. She is based in Germany.

Suder counseled McKinsey's information technology companies on strategy projects.

She exited the management consultant in 2014 for the State Secretary post in Germany's Ministry of Defense and chaired the ten-member digital council of the German government under Angela Merkel. ○



Katrin Suder

McCook returns to Rubenstein PR

John McCook, who worked 17 years at Rubenstein Public Relations in two different stints, has returned to the New York shop as VP and head of its consumer practice.

He exited RPR in 2018 to teach special education classes at PS 89 and Metropolitan High School in the South Bronx.

McCook also saw PR duty at Hill+Knowlton Strategies, Burson-Marsteller and Porter Novelli. ○



John McCook

Levinson Group recruits Dechert's Zaki

Saira Zaki has moved to The Levinson Group as Senior Managing Director in its new London office.

She joins TLG from Dechert LLP, where she was Group Director of Communications for a nearly five-year stint.

Zaki was based in London for Philadelphia-headquartered Dechert. Prior to Dechert, she had a 14-year run as European head of marketing and communications at Skadden Arps. ○



Saira Zaki

O'Dwyer's guide to TRAVEL AND TOURISM PR



20Two Studio President Lauren Knudsen.

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Lauren Knudsen, President

20Two Studio is a new agency built by some of the industry's most creative storytellers to introduce an inspired identity and ethos. Backed by the globally-recognized and award-winning industry powerhouse J/PR, The Studio harnesses the knowledge of its pedigree to service the industry through integrated media relations, social media and brand strategy, trend forecasting, guest programming, brand partnerships, experiential activations, influencer engagement and crisis communications. Lauren Knudsen, a 15-year veteran of J/PR, leads the agency as President.

Established in 2020 with footprints in New York City, Los Angeles, San Diego and Tampa, The Studio's fast-growing client portfolio touts nearly 2 dozen impressive hotel brands, celebrated resorts and boutique properties from coast to coast, including L'Auberge Del Mar, W New York-Times Square, The Roundtree, Amagansett, Kingston Resorts, Red Jacket Resorts, The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park, Kona Kai Resort & Spa, and its most recent addition taking this agency international, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island.

Owned and led by partners Jamie O'Grady and Sarah Evans, J/PR is

at the forefront of the communications industry in continued innovation, client relations and retention, and award-winning PR and social media campaigns on behalf of some of the world's leading luxury travel, hospitality and lifestyle brands.

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Scott Pansky, Co-Founder

Matthew Della Croce, Global Pres. Worldwide Client Services

Cathy Planchard, Global Pres., Marketing Innovation Team + Health

At Allison+Partners, we believe that brands must live at the intersection of culture and commerce. It's a noisy world. For brands to stay relevant, they must be authentic. Have meaningful stories to tell that consumers care deeply about. Price, quality, it's all good, but people want to know, what do you stand for? Whose side are you on? Do your core values mirror mine? That's more than chiming in with everyone else. It's starting the talk

track.

To be awake as a brand means owning a larger cultural truth. And putting everything you have behind it. Our team was behind the social experiment for Kimpton Hotels that rained down #brandlove and introduced the hotel's first ever Chief Virtual Learning Officer to support families traveling with kids during the pandemic. Creating cultural moments. Surfacing meaningful brand truths. That's what we do.

Hospitality brands are recognized less for the products and services they deliver, and more for the experiences they provide. Connecting with today's consumers requires artful storytelling that can bring a brand experience to life. Allison+Partners team of hospitality marketing specialists have worked with top global brands to do just that, using an integrated communications approach to help drive sales.

CIIC PR

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Carolyn Izzo-Feldman, CEO & Founder

Amy Sedeño, Vice President & Partner

CIIC PR 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.

With over 25 years in business, 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, Crescent Hotels & Resorts, Palladium Hotels & Resorts, Curator Hotel & Resort Collection, The Norman Estates at Rancho San Lucas, Vivo Resorts & Residences, Aliz Hotel Times Square, voco NYC, The Savoy Miami, Mexico Grand Hotels & Residences and Cala Luna Hotel in Costa Rica to name a few. As destination experts, CIIC's roster of tourism clients has included: Nevis, Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, The Mexican Caribbean (Quintana Roo), Surfside, FL and Barbados, among others.

CIIC's work is strategic, creative



CIIC PR on the scene at WTM Latin America in Brazil.

and results-driven, and has been recognized year after year with awards from PR Daily, *PR News* and HSMIA 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* for the second consecutive year.

With offices in New York and Miami, CIIC is an esteemed member of LATAM PR and is a Certified Women's Business Enterprise by WBENC.

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

The travel industry is in the midst of a boom. Some experts are even calling it the Golden Age of Travel 2.0. Coyne Travel is helping clients from the east coast to the west coast to around the globe—including the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism and Outrigger Hotels & Resorts—be on the forefront of these unprecedented times with on-going creative and strategic counsel. From uncovering insights on what motivates and



For years, *Countdown to Christmas* viewers have dreamed of living inside a Hallmark Channel holiday movie. D/R helped turn that dream into a reality, orchestrating the partnership between client Club Wyndham and Hallmark Channel which earned an HSMIA Platinum Award.

inspires travelers to developing rebound travel road maps, crisis and issues management, 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 hotel—it'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.

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Cathleen Decker, Stacy Royal,
Founding Partners
Devyn Barker, Senior Vice President

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 a sin-

gular 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: Adventure World Travel; App in the Air; Beaches Resorts, Bowling Green, KY; Brendan Vacations; Contiki; Costsaver; Friendly Planet Travel; Fowl Cay Resort; Holland America Line; Insight Vacations; Luxury Gold; Le Barthelemy 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 VP

Our passion is places. Estab-

Continued on page 30



Development Counsellors International led national media coverage efforts for A Great Day in the Stokes, an inaugural gathering for Black surfers in Huntington Beach, Calif. The firm has committed to amplifying diverse voices and stories through its destination marketing efforts.

DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLORS INT'L

— Continued from page 29

lished 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 and talent. Our Tourism Practice partners with destinations to increase sustainable leisure, corporate and association arrivals and spending which helps create and sustain jobs for local residents. 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 tourism results that advance communities. The firm is globally connected in 24 countries through TAAN Worldwide. We have a strong record of successfully partnering with the world's strongest destination brands—Florida, San Francisco, Abu Dhabi, Barbados, Belize, Monaco, Peru and Thailand; as well as unsung heroes—Armenia, Tunisia, Gilbert and Jackson.

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Edelman is a global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations. Our 6,000 people in more than 60 offices deliver communications strategies that give our clients the confidence to lead and act with certainty, earning the trust of their stakeholders. Our honors include the Cannes Lions Grand Prix for PR; *Advertising Age's* 2019 A-List; the *Holmes Report's* 2018 Global Digital Agency of the Year; and, five times, Glassdoor's Best Places to Work. Since our founding in 1952, we have remained an independent, family-run business. Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle).

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Eleven Six prides itself on creating a new normal in the communications agency world. We are smart, responsive, passionate and engaging marketers who tell our clients' stories in a way that grabs the media's and consumers' 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 boutique firm, we are nimble and flexible, trusted by both big and small brands throughout the world. With a focus that goes beyond just public relations and includes marketing, social media and content creation, we are driven not only by how much press and likes we can secure for our clients but rather how we can positively impact their bottom lines by driving revenue and sales. The marketing and social media tactics we employ are creative, cost-effective, and realistic to execute.

Eleven Six's clients include a mix of travel, hospitality, lifestyle and food & beverage, working with hotels and resorts such as Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya, Andaz West Hollywood, Art of Living Retreat Center, Atlantis Paradise Island, Hôtel Barrière Le Carl Gustaf, Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa, Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort Spa & Casino, Kimpton Hotel Eventi, Regent Phu Quoc, Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas and The Opus, Westchester. Other clients include destinations, tour operators and non-profits including Visit Richmond, Pacific Whale Foundation, Remote Lands, and Red Savannah. Over the last year, the agency has signed on a variety of new clients as well including NoMo SoHo, Royaltown Park Avenue, The Elms Hotel & Spa, and VisitorsCoverage.

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David Harrison, Executive Vice President
Michelle Kelly, Vice President,
Travel & Lifestyle Division
Pamela Pincow, Vice President,
Food, Wine & Spirits Division

Evins believes hospitality goes beyond an industry. It is an ethos based upon embracing, engaging and inspiring transcendent experiences and memorable moments. The Evins PR+ approach makes a consequential business difference for clients by transforming market data and intelligence into actionable insights and programming strategy.

Founded in 1987, Evins has been consistently recognized for its superlative creativity, strategic planning and tactical execution for a number of the world's most iconic hospitality, travel and tourism brands, destinations and properties. Over the years, Evins has forged enduring and successful partnerships with many industry stalwarts, including Arlo Hotels, Chenot Palace Weggis, CORE Club, Exclusive Resorts, Flâneur Hospitality / The Fifth Avenue Hotel, Hotels & Resorts of Halekulani, Inspirato, Jet Linx Aviation, The Knickerbocker Hotel, The Lanesborough, The Lowell and Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection amongst many others. Most recently, Evins was named agency-of-record for the prestigious *Forbes Travel Guide* and for Hotel The Mitsui Kyoto. The Evins philosophy of public relations is based upon garnering market awareness and visibility, enhancing brand conversation and resonance, as well as catalyzing brand engagement and advocacy, tangibly and meaningfully impacting a client's business, velocity and trajectory. Evins also provides clients with strategic business counsel, corporate and executive reputation management, as well as issues and crisis management.

Chairman Mathew Evins serves on several travel and hospitality industry boards, including Luxury Travel Exchange International, ULTRA Luxury Exchange, International Hotel Investment Forum and International Luxury Hotel Association (ILHA). Led by an outstanding team of travel and hospitality industry public relations specialists with extensive commu-

nications and social media experience, Evins excels at contributing to the development, growth and success of hospitality, travel and tourism brands, destinations and properties.

FAHLGREN MORTINE

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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 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

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Jennifer Hawkins, Managing Partner, NY Travel Practice Leader
Debbie Flynn, Managing Partner, Global Travel Practice Leader

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 200+ professionals, the team offers client excellence, fresh thinking, and integrated strategies with global and localized approaches to ensure client differentiation and market presence.

ence. 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. Destinations include: Antigua & Barbuda, Dubai Tourism, I Love New York, Hong Kong Tourism, Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Michigan Economic Development Corporation/Pure Michigan, Panama, Colonial Williamsburg, Travel Alberta, Iceland and more. Hotels include: The Ned Hotel, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, The Dorchester Collection, St. Regis Aspen, Mandarin Oriental, Montage Hotels & Resorts, Six Senses, Agriturismo Casetta, Carillon Wellness Resort, Dolder Grand, Gstaad Palace, Kempinski, Mountain Lodges of Peru, and Turtle Bay in Fiji. Airlines include: Air France-KLM, Turkish Airlines and Korean Air. Private Aviation includes: Air Partners and VistaJet. Cruise services include Seabourn, Starboard Cruise Services (USA), Seatrade Cruise Services (USA) and Galataport Istanbul (USA). Travel Services include: Allianz Insurance, ARDA, and Avis Budget Group. Tour Operators include: Nomadic Expeditions and Wilderness Safaris. Luxury travel brands include: Inspirato, onefinestay, Royce & Rocket luggage. In addition to communication strategies, FINN Travel & Lifestyle offers Trade Representation for clients such as Abu Dhabi, Belize, Dominica, St. Helena, Washington DC and Legacy Hotels in Africa. The agency also specializes in Responsible Tourism, Cruise Marketing Services, Multi-Cultural Marketing and Economic Development.

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.

FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN

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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 10th 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 development and management company for more than 140 hotel properties across North America; the Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau (Wilmington, Carolina Beach, Kure Beach and Wrightsville Beach, N.C.); the Wilmington Convention Center; Visit Greenville, NC; and Play Greenville, NC Sports.

Prior travel and tourism work includes campaigns for America's Historic Triangle (Williamsburg, Va.); cooperative marketing campaigns for the tourism organizations of Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, St. Croix (U.S.V.I. Dept. of Tourism) and St. Maarten; Branson, Mo.; Cabarrus County, N.C., home to NASCAR's Lowe's Motor Speedway; Divi Resorts and its nine Caribbean properties; Dorthea Dix Park, a 308-acre destination park in Raleigh, N.C.; the Dude Ranchers' Association; Gat-

linburg, Tenn.; the Greater Raleigh CVB (N.C.); the National Cowboy Hall of Fame & Western Heritage Center; the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, the state's most-visited attraction; Oakland County, Mich.; Old Salem Moravian Village (N.C.); the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame + Museum; Trailways Transportation System (Fairfax, Va.); Tweetsie Railroad (N.C.); and the Washington Tourism Development Authority (N.C.).

Among its partners and affiliates are: FWV Fetching, a pet and animal health PR and marketing agency; AMP3 PR, a fashion, beauty, luxury and lifestyle PR firm (New York City); CGPR, an active lifestyle, outdoor, ski, fashion, technology and travel PR and consumer brand marketing agency (Greater Boston); Big Picture PR, a lifestyle, consumer technology and influencer marketing agency (San Francisco) and Prix Productions, the company's longform content feature and documentary film division, with offices in Raleigh and L.A. FWV employs more than 130 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C., headquarters and offices around the country.

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Cathy Hayes, Associate VP
Lacey Outten, Director, Food/Wine/Spirits
Kayla Atwater, Director, Travel/Hospitality

Hemsworth is a top-ranked public relations and communications firm with locations in Atlanta, Charleston, Fort Lauderdale, New York City and Tampa, as well as a network of top freelancers in various other top media markets. The agency specializes in branding, corporate communications and strategic promotion within the travel/tourism and food/wine/spirits sectors, as well as crafting global B2B and B2C PR programs for both emerging and renowned franchise systems. A boutique-sized

firm with an impressive background, Hemsworth combines unprecedented passion, insight and connections to surpass client expectations, offering personal service and powerful results.

Clients include: AirAnswers/Inspirotec, AmaWaterways, ATL Airport District, Banana Bay Resort, B Ocean Fort Lauderdale Resort, B Orlando, Resort & Spa, City of Dunwoody, Corendon Hotels & Resorts, Cruise Barbados, Discover Dunwoody, Driftwood Hospitality, Explore Gwinnett, First American Bank, Gateway Center Arena, Georgia International Convention Center, Hampton Inn Miami Mid-Beach, Holiday Inn & Suites Universal, HomeToGo, Kenefick Ranch Winery, LiveTrends Design Group, Macon, Georgia, Mangrove Beach Corendon Curacao Resort, Margaritaville at Sea, Massanutten Resort, Performance Hospitality Management, PuroClean, Rental Escapes, Your CBD Store, VIKAND and Waters Edge Wineries.

IMAGINE PR

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Gabriele Sappok, Partner
Andrew Sappok, Managing Partner

IMAGINE PR is an award-winning hospitality and travel public relations firm based in New York City with global reach. We are a creative agency with a modern approach to digital and traditional lifestyle & travel public relations. Our clients are leaders in luxury hospitality and experiential travel who value us for our ingenuity, love of travel and our in-depth understanding of the changing media landscape. Many have been with us for a decade or longer.

Clients include: Ellerman House, South Africa; Fregate Island Private, Seychelles; Higashiyama, a Ritz Carlton Reserve, Japan; Maisons Pariente, France; Natural Selection, Africa; Niarra Travel, Worldwide; Pangkor Laut Resort, Malaysia; Quasar Expeditions, South America; Saxon Hotel Villas & Spa, South Africa; Singita, Africa; Swiss Deluxe Hotels, Switzerland; The Broadway Collection, USA; The Principal Madrid; The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, Thailand; The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; The Singular

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IMAGINE PR

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Hotels, Chile; ThirdHome, World-wide; Trans Bhutan Trail; Tswalu, South Africa; YTL Hotels, Asia & Europe.

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Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

A global communications agency with a specialization in public relations, social media, content creation, partnerships, and digital marketing. With 81 employees 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, J/PR 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, J/PR 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. J/PR's global roster includes more than 135+ hotels in the U.S., UK and throughout Europe, Mexico, Caribbean, Africa and more. J/PR represents destinations such as North Carolina and Utah as well as flagship hospitality brands including Hilton Luxury Brands, Virgin Limited Edition, Shangri-La, Relais & Châteaux & Châteaux, Vail Hospitality, Pendry Hotels & Resorts, Under Canvas, and Iconic Luxury Hotels. In addition, J/PR has continued to expand its portfolio with the addition of Hawaiian Airlines, California Olive Ranch, Geneo, Palazzo Ricci, and more consumer and real estate



J/PR Partners Jamie Sigler O'Grady and Sarah Evans.

brands.

J/PR is continuously listed on the *Observer's* annual "PR Power 50" as one of the country's most powerful PR firms and *Crains'* "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, J/PR became the first travel PR agency to launch a podcast in 2018, Priority Status.

LDPR

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Laura Davidson, CEO / Owner
Leslie Cohen, President / Owner



The LDPR leadership team.

LDPR is a leading voice in travel and lifestyle public relations headquartered in NYC with staff in California and Chicago. The agency has been at the forefront of integrated initiatives for destinations, international hotel companies, independent resorts, luxury tour operators and lifestyle products. Agile, intelligent, and strategic, the agency achieves remarkable results by listening to clients, the marketplace, and the media. Using that knowledge, LDPR goes far beyond the boundaries of traditional PR, calibrating the precise mix of digital, print, partnerships, and broadcast to tell stories that move the world. In addition to numerous industry awards, LDPR was named "One of America's Best PR Agencies for 2021" by *Forbes* and Great Places to Work certified in 2022.

Our clients include Aman; Abercrombie & Kent; VisitScotland; Tahiti Tourisme; Travel Portland; The Boca Raton, Florida; Aman, New York; The Resort at Paws

Up, Montana; The Ocean House, Watch Hill, Rhode Island; The Ritz Paris; Hotel Viking, Rhode Island; Chatham Bars Inn, Cape Cod; The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara; Andaz Maui at Wailea Resort; Alila Napa Valley; Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino; The Langham, Chicago; Charleston Place; Ani Private Resorts; Briggs & Riley, among others.

LOU HAMMOND GROUP

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Lou Hammond, Founder/Chairman
Stephen Hammond, CEO

Lou Hammond Group (LHG) is a celebrated, integrated marketing communications firm with offices in New York, Atlanta, Charleston, Denver, Houston, and Tampa. LHG has built a legendary reputation over the past 38 years as the leading mid-sized agency serving the travel industry. A few things to know:

- Independent: known for boundless creativity and enthusiasm
- Operates differently: no time sheets—clients get the attention they need when they need it
- Founder of the PR World Network, 21-year organization, 22 global members
- Impressive client retention, serving partners over a decade; Charleston, Nassau Paradise Island, Panama City Beach, Providence, Santa Fe and New Hampshire; Norfolk 20+ years

Sampling of new travel accounts—States: Mississippi, South Dakota; Counties/Cities: Cabarrus County NC, Cheyenne WY, Athens GA; Hospitality: Hotel Haya, The Ryder Hotel, Preserve Sporting Club, Vintage Hospitality; Product: SquareMouth travel insurance. After a competitive review, retained the city of Santa Fe.

Key to success, results and creative outreach:

- Maximized star power of iconic cinema star Sophia Loren to steer grand media acclaim for the christening of MSC Cruises' newest ship, the MSC Seashore. Leveraging Loren's role as honorary Godmother, LHG hosted 40 media on board debut sailing, including 16 broadcast segments. Efforts earned 2.7 billion media impressions, \$20 million media value.
- Developed news hijacking for

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ORDER THE ONLY PRINTED DIRECTORY OF PR FIRMS!

O'Dwyer's is the #1 source for researching public relations firms and outside PR counsel. We've been connecting clients and PR firms for 50 years through our Directory of PR Firms.

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- ✓ *Leaders ranked in 19 specialized categories: agriculture, automotive/transportation, beauty/fashion/lifestyle, education, energy, entertainment/cultural, environmental/sustainability/greentech/PA, financial PR/IR, food & beverage, healthcare, home furnishings, industrial, non-profits, professional services, purpose/CSR, real estate finance & development, sports, technology, travel & economic development.*

"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

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SquareMouth, a travel insurance company with a media relations plan to strategically target key cruise media and identify relevant trends and newsjacking opportunities, by capitalizing on Seatrade Cruise Global, a leading annual event for the cruise industry. Leveraged SquareMouth's unique intelligence capabilities generating a data-based press release on 2022 cruise trends, conducting timely outreach to media and conference attendees. Earned media coverage reach 200+ million, with mentions across top national publications including MSN, *Condé Nast Traveler* and *TravelPulse*.

- As the desire for in-person events increased, LHG jumped at the opportunity to host desk-side missions and media events in key markets. In the first six months of 2022, the team secured more than 120 media across 12 expertly curated events in New York, Dallas, Miami, Chicago, and Toronto. Immediate results included the Wall Street Journal, CNN, Marketwatch, FOX News, and more.

- Guided PR recovery efforts for Jamaica's return from COVID-19 travel restrictions. Positioned destination as an innovative industry leader with its "Jamaica Cares" health and safety program while hosting more than two dozen journalists, influencers, and broadcast crews in months after re-opening. Efforts drove cumulative reach of more than 3.5 billion media impressions with \$40 million media value. Jamaica has attracted more than 2 million visitors in the past 12 months.

- Perpetuated acclaim for two of South Carolina's most prestigious tourism attractions – Brookgreen Gardens and the Gibbes Museum of Art. Earned 1.4+ billion media impressions for Brookgreen Gardens, America's first public sculpture garden, including inclusion on NBC's Today Show, leading to record-breaking ticket sales for their largest annual event. Continued support for the Gibbes Museum of Art returning visitation numbers to pre-pandemic levels through an earned media program that generated 350+ million annual media impressions.

- Proposed an innovative, fully integrated campaign to highlight accessible travel resources throughout Panama City Beach, launching the "Fun.For.All" initiative in strategic alignment with National Mobility Awareness Month



Iconic cinema star Sophia Loren served as Godmother for the November christening of the MSC Seashore, celebrating 16 such inaugurations for the world's third largest and fastest growing cruise line. It garnered some 2.5 billion launch-specific media impressions in North America with an estimated media value of \$18.5 million. Lou Hammond Group was the agency of record.

and VISIT FLORIDA's "Limitless Florida" campaign. In less than 30 days, achieved UMW: 8,906,976.

- Executed influencer campaigns on behalf of Kentucky Department of Tourism in new and emerging markets, including LGBTQ+ and African American, securing total 1.3 million impressions.

- Concepted and produced the Moon2Mars Festival for Space Center Houston, official visitor center for NASA's Johnson Space Center. The festival highlighted cutting-edge space technologies, innovative exhibits, and live famed band performances. It celebrated NASA's program establishing a sustainable human presence on the moon, mars and beyond. The multi-day festival generated print, broadcast, and online coverage, plus thousands of visitors daily to firmly establish the annual event for future years.

- Leveraged Paducah, Kentucky's rich arts and culture scene as a driver for tourism. Earned 430+ million annual impressions in national publications including a two-page spread in *Garden & Gun* magazine that supported the city's travel industry's economic impact of \$200+ million.

- Created awareness and excitement for The Gant Aspen's creation of the city's only rooftop Diamond Dome that paid homage to Aspen Mountain's 75th anniversary. Through targeted media relations and press/influencer hosting some 888M+ impressions were secured along with the hosting of numerous guests during the winter celebration period.

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.

MAGRINO

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

Magrino unlocks your brand story and amplifies it in every relevant media channel to not only reach but move your audience. We know how to maximize the earned media landscape to drive results for our clients and have been doing so for some of the most world-renowned brands since its founding in 1992.

Today, Magrino continues to be run by its Chairman & CEO Susan Magrino and President and Chief Revenue Officer Allyn Magrino, along with a diverse team of communications experts focused on staying ahead of the ever-evolving media ecosystem. With expertise in brand development, creative, social-media strategy, social-content creation, experiential design & events, and media relations, we are the ultimate communications firm.

This expertise, combined with our unrivaled access, is why Magrino has consistently been named one of "The 50 Most Powerful PR Firms in America" by *Observer*, and appeared on *Forbes'* list of "America's Best PR Agencies." Visit us at www.magrinoopr.com.

MARDIKS PR

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Charles Mardiks, President/
Managing Director

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

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

Clients include: Celestyal Cruises, Condor Airlines and Transcend Cruises.

MMGY NJF

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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



MMGY NJF launched American Queen Voyages' first expedition ship, Ocean Victory in May, hosting several top writers on board and securing extensive coverage for the brand's inaugural Alaska season, making waves with feature stories in *Travel + Leisure*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Points Guy*, *Travel Weekly*, *Cruise Critic* and more. By the maiden voyage, AQV's Alaska season was astoundingly over 70 percent sold, with a large percent of the bookings directly attributed to our strategic PR efforts.

engagement and crisis communications. We are the winners of the 2020 HSMIA 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" philosophy has catapulted the firm to the top. Our integrated PR and social media team prides itself on long-standing client relationships and an innate ability to move within many spheres: tapping media and industry influencers, forging creative partnerships, uncovering strategic advantages, and providing global perspective. Our campaigns are rooted in research and insights, and we are master storytellers and content creators who know how to make news out of simple concepts or large-scale programs. We forge an emotional connection to reach our audiences where they live, work and play.

Industry innovators and thought leaders, 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, Detroit, Dubai, Vancouver and Washington, D.C. and an international partner network, MMGY Global Travel Marketing Collective, 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, American Queen Voyages, Aurora Expeditions, Berkshire Hathaway Travel Protection, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, British Virgin Islands, Cheap Caribbean, City Experiences, Costa Rica Tourism, Etihad Airways, Eurail, Explore Worldwide, Fittler Club, Greater Palm Springs CVB, Go City, HEI Hotels, Hotel Vermont, LATAM Airlines, London & Partners, Marriott Marquis, Meet AC, Montauk Chamber of Commerce, Oceania Cruises, Pod Hotels, Presidio Tunnel Tops, St. Petersburg/Clearwater, The Algonquin Hotel, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, The National World War II Museum, Travel Texas, Visit California, Visit Dallas, Visit KC, Visit Grand Rapids, Visit Newport, Visit Santa Barbara and Wheel the World.

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Deborah Stone, President

Pineapple PR is an integrated communications company spe-

cializing 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!

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Victoria Feldman de Falco, Principal & Co-Founder

Ross Evans, Vice President

Gina Dolecki, Vice President

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 has a passion for delivering meaningful results.

Clients we've represented include Tourism Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador Tourism, Tourism New Brunswick, Tourism Prince Edward Island, First Hospitality, Princess Cruises, Cunard Line, MSC Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Tauck, Collette, Perillo Tours, Learning Journeys, United States Tour Operators Associa-

— Continued on page 36



After helping the four provinces of Atlantic Canada navigate 18 months of PR with closed borders during the pandemic, Redpoint orchestrated a comprehensive "Now Open: Atlantic Canada" social influencer & PR campaign that reached millions in the US, celebrating the joyous occasion across multiple TV, radio, print, online, and social channels.

REDPOINT

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tion, 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 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

A Fahlgren Mortine company

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Christine Turner, President
Angela Berardino, Chief Strategy Officer
Melanie Dennig, Executive Vice President

TURNER represents the world's best luxury resorts, destinations, spirits, wellness, and outdoor brands. Our tenured teams in New York, Chicago, Denver, Charleston, Portland, and Miami, have unmatched industry experience and deliver nimble, innovative marketing communications strategies, helping brands connect and engage in a smarter, more relevant manner.

We're a boutique-minded crew with big agency resources, infinitely nimble and constantly problem-solving in unexpected ways. Our coast-to-coast footprint integrates seamlessly with global brands, whether it's a fitness startup, a boutique hotel, or an estab-



Zapwater helped turn La Paz Baja Sur into one of Mexico's hottest destinations.

lished outdoor brand looking for its next generation. We craft iconic ideas for heritage brands, emotional experiences for travel destinations, and unexpected stories in the wellness ecosystem. We know when to push the envelope, while ensuring brand priorities are at the forefront. We value our team above all else; we are consistently ranked as a "best place to work," diversity and inclusivity are our strengths, and giving back is in our DNA.

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Holly Zawyer, Managing Director, Miami
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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 250+ 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:

Airlines—COPA Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, Finnair; **Destinations**—Discover Baja Sur, Discover Dominica Authority, Jungfrau, National Tourism Board of Serbia, Tourism La Paz, Tourism Montreal, Travel Manitoba, Visit Finland; **Hotels & Resorts**—Borgo San Vincenzo, Buenaventura Golf

& Beach Resort, Casa Kimberly, Cayo Espanto, Coco Collection, Fairmont Chicago, Fairmont Mayakoba, Frangipani Beach Resorts, Grupo Xcaret, Hawks Cay Resort, Hilton Sandestin, Hotel Zachary, Hyatt Regency Salt Lake City, Hotel Belmar, Hotel La Compania, Marriott International, Mount Cinnamon Resort, Saba Rock Resort, Sofitel Chicago, Swissotel Chicago, The Chedi Muscat, The Chedi Al Bait; **Entertainment & Attractions**—Grupo Xcaret, Museum of Illusions, Skydeck Chicago, Tiquets

THE ZIMMERMAN AGENCY

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Curtis Zimmerman, Kerry Anne Watson, Andy Jorishie, Principals

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, Visit Rhode Island, Visit Park City, Discover The Palm Beaches, Visit Tallahassee, North Carolina's Crystal Coast, South Padre Island CVB, Visit Laredo, Hertz Rental Car Company, Timbers Resorts, Westgate Resorts, Kessler Collection of Luxury Resorts, Karisma Hotels and Resorts, Blue Diamond Resorts, Henderson Beach Resort, Little Palm Island, Mahekal Resort (Playa del Carmen), Margaritaville Mexico, The Madison Hotel, 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, Ocean Key Resort, Bungalows Key Largo, Beaver Creek Lodge, Wild Dunes and more. ○

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

TRAVEL AND TOURISM PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2021)	Firm	Net Fees (2021)
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$44,640,000	22. Singer Associates PR , San Francisco, CA	\$366,051
2. Finn Partners , New York, NY	20,650,000	23. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	366,000
3. Zimmerman Agency , Tallahassee, FL	15,000,000	24. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	301,665
4. J Public Relations , New York, NY	11,673,000	25. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	273,800
5. Turner , a Fahlgren Mortine company , New York, NY	10,126,609	26. MP&F Strategic Comms , Nashville, TN	252,654
6. MMGY NJF , New York, NY	8,993,878	27. Ehrhardt Group, The , New Orleans, LA	213,420
7. Lou Hammond Group , New York, NY	8,558,240	28. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	200,000
8. Zeno Group , New York, NY	6,220,971	29. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	133,660
9. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	5,900,000	30. Slide Nine Agency , Columbus, OH	125,096
10. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	5,198,071	31. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	118,375
11. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	2,802,859	32. Marketing Maven PR , Camarillo, CA	100,473
12. Zapwater Comms, Inc. , Chicago, IL	2,174,451	33. Inspire PR Group , Westerville, OH	75,237
13. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	2,000,000	34. Otter PR , St. Petersburg, FL	70,930
14. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	1,766,620	35. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	66,962
15. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	1,569,855	36. Bellmont Partners , Minneapolis, MN	66,479
16. Lansons , New York, NY	1,059,438	37. Judge Public Relations , Tampa, FL	44,474
17. Hemsworth Comm , Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,004,800	38. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	37,800
18. Pineapple PR , Chamblee, GA	987,945	39. O'Malley Hansen Comms , Chicago, IL	35,000
19. Violet PR , Montclair, NJ	666,213	40. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	31,500
20. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	436,603	41. Milk & Honey PR , New York, NY	13,000
21. Berk Communications , New York, NY	374,333		

NY Times' fabricated union 'trend' story

By Fraser Seitel

In April, after being named the 10th executive editor in *New York Times* history, *Times* veteran Joseph Kahn proclaimed that “in a time of polarization and partisanship,” among his top priorities was “securing the public’s trust in independent journalism.” Sorry, Joe, that train already left the station.



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*.

The New York Times, once a bastion of independent neutrality, is today, inarguably, a left-leaning protagonist, pushing a not-so-subtle agenda in its daily news columns to shift the status quo toward a more progressive, egalitarian, anti-business direction. Ironically,

more often than not, the world’s most influential newspaper takes dead aim at some of the nation’s most liberal, progressive and socially-just companies.

Consider, for example, the *Times*’ recent tortuous process to contrive a fictitious trend that American corporate workers are rushing to form labor unions. Here’s how the *Times* has breathed life into a movement that might charitably be characterized as “tepid” at best.

First, create a dubious “national issue.”

To be clear, we’re not talking about bone fide “national issues” like gun control or abortion or crime, where the *Times* has a real duty to keep the subject foremost in the national conscience. Rather, we’re referring to the *Times* inventing an issue that it seeks to jam into the public agenda. Such is the case with the misguided notion that a growing groundswell of corporate employees wants to join labor unions. The facts say they don’t.

Even the most ardent union organizer would agree that time hasn’t been kind to the labor movement. The national unionization rate has drifted down for decades. Today, about 10 percent of working Americans are union members, about half of what it was in 1983. And even though union membership ticked up in the coronavirus-plagued economy of 2020—it has since fallen back—the total number of union members actually dropped by 321,000 individuals.

This declining trend is especially the case

in the private sector, where union membership has fallen to six percent, compared with 34 percent among government employees and teachers. To be fair, some public-sector unions have been positive forces. But most private-sector workers have shown little interest in organizing. Now, why do you think that is?

For one, big companies today are more “enlightened.” They pay higher wages, provide more benefits and are often run by executives who not only are more supportive than their predecessors of employees’ social and political views but also largely vote Democrat: think Disney, Apple, Google, Salesforce and countless others.

For another, organized labor—fairly or not—has developed a reputation for being obstructionist, adversarial and greedy. To wit, the response from American Federation of Labor founder Samuel Gompers, when asked what he wanted, famously answered, “More!” U.S. companies in the 21st century—even those run by liberals, especially those run by liberals!—simply don’t trust organized labor to be a force for positive change.

So, the stark reality is that in today’s America, in terms of labor unions, most companies and corporate employees don’t need ‘em and don’t want ‘em.

Nonetheless, in January 2021, newly-elected Joe Biden vowed to be “the most pro-union president leading the most pro-union administration in American history.” And voila. *The New York Times* had discovered its next, if highly questionable, “national issue”: resuscitating America’s flagging organized labor movement.

Second, pretend the issue is of “growing national concern.”

As every public relations professional understands, the quickest way to put an issue on the map is to build attention and support by singling out a few easy-to-despise villains. And so, after receiving the incoming president’s call to arms, the *Times* focused on two of America’s biggest and most profitable enterprises, both created by billionaires and neither of which welcomed labor unions. Starbucks and Amazon became the anti-worker face of private-sector union busters.

Starbucks, with 400,000 employees and 31,000 stores, is one of the world’s most innovative, socially-conscious, employee-friendly companies. Unlike most other firms, Starbucks offers full healthcare, stock options, mental health benefits and myriad other perks to full-time as well as part-time employees.

Starbucks’ record on social justice is second to no other private sector employer:

- It was one of the first retail companies to request customers not to carry firearms, even in “open carry” states.
- It leads the food service industry in environmental changes, from expanding plant-based menu items to shifting to reusable packaging to investing in water conservation and reforestation practices.
- It even attempted a “Race Together” social justice program to encourage in-store conversations about inequality. (It was a disaster!)
- And Starbucks Founder Howard Schultz once ran for President as a liberal Democrat.

Amazon, meanwhile, pays employees an average of \$18 an hour—more than twice the federal minimum wage—and spends more than \$1 billion in free continuing education and skills training for its workers. Most recently, in anticipation of a Supreme Court reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, Amazon and Starbucks both announced they would reimburse employee travel costs for elective abortions.

So, you can’t find two more progressive, socially-active corporations than Starbucks or Amazon. That isn’t to say that either is a perfect employer. Their hours are long, the work is hard and the nature of the job isn’t ideal. But neither of these socially-conscious companies deserves to be singled out for mistreating their employees.

But “singled out” they have been by the revered *Times*. And to carry out its inquisition, the *Times* assigned former *National Republic* writer Noam Scheiber to serve as torch-bearer to apply pro-union pressure to Starbucks and Amazon. And for the better part of the last year, Scheiber and assorted colleagues have waged an unrelenting campaign against Starbucks and Amazon in *Times* news columns to ...

Third, declare an imaginary “trend” that’s sweeping the nation.

For the better part of the Biden Administration, the *Times* has provided Scheiber unlimited space to fan the flames of what it infers is a rising tide of unionization at Starbucks and Amazon.

No story is too small, no election too insignificant for the *Times* to blast out Scheiber’s reporting of this emerging “national trend.” The *Times* threw down the gauntlet last December with Scheiber’s groundbreaking scoop headlined, “Starbucks workers at a Buffalo store unionize in a big symbolic

— Continued on page 41

When it's time to outsource

By Dominic Rovano

The current competitive labor market, coupled with the highest inflation rate we've seen in decades and the subsequent and inevitable rise in salaries, has placed unique pressures on employers to recruit and retain quality talent while attempting to keep costs low.



Dominic Rovano, CPA, is a Co-Partner in Charge of Janover LLC's New York City office. He leads the Professional Services group, and helps its clients satisfy their financial-reporting requirements successfully by providing assurance, tax and other advisory services.

Inflation rates soared to 8.6 percent in May, while the labor shortage continues to challenge employers across all sectors. For marketing, PR and advertising agencies, your largest cost consists of wages paid to employees. Most firms have a long list of job openings

and continue to struggle to fill them timely. How do you fill this gap? If you haven't already taken a close look at your internal processes, it's time to evaluate and analyze your operations for the long-term health of your business—and it may be time to consider outsourcing some functions.

The emergence and reliability of cloud-based technology and shifting workplace models have opened the door to outsourcing tasks to specialty firms and remote contractors. Many agencies have traditionally relied on administrative personnel to perform several internal business tasks, including payroll, recruiting, scheduling, billing and even marketing. This model may not be the most efficient, productive or sustainable for the long-term growth of your agency in the current economic climate.

As all agencies aren't the same, many outsourcing firms will tailor their services to fit your unique needs. The right outsourcing services will complement your internal capabilities and support your core business function. Outsourcing can relieve burdens, reduce overhead costs and increase productivity, among other benefits. Let's dive into six reasons why outsourcing may be the right path for your business.

Why outsource?

Many marketing, PR and advertising agencies are lean, tight-knit and focused on drumming up new business or develop-

ing innovative creative projects rather than perfecting internal business processes. This creates space to outsource certain roles you would typically find in larger operations. Outsourcing presents several benefits, including:

Talent: With the current labor challenges, it can be difficult to find experienced employees satisfied with performing more manual or highly repetitive tasks. Working with an outsourcing firm or organization can eliminate time spent recruiting and onboarding from within the limited talent pool.

Training: Training can expend valuable time, energy and resources, especially if your organization is struggling with a high turnover rate. Instead of spending time onboarding and training an employee—who might choose to leave your organization for another opportunity—it can be easier to control the timing and outcome through outsourcing.

Cost: With remote work accessibility increasing, some organizations choose to outsource to markets with a lower cost of living, either in the U.S. or overseas. The employer also doesn't need to cover certain employee expenses when outsourcing, including health and dental insurance, 401(k) contributions and equipment for the employee.

Expertise: When you outsource to a specific firm, they're typically trained for precisely the role you need. They're experts in their fields, whether that be IT or accounting. You don't need to spend extra time and resources training employees on new processes; you're getting some of the best and most efficient talent available.

Agility and flexibility: In a constantly evolving market, it's important to respond to changes and updates quickly and intelligently. If your staff is bogged down with completing menial tasks, it can be difficult for them to produce quality and strategic work. Many choose to outsource because it allows for more agility and flexibility. Outsourcing frees up your internal team so they can focus on producing quality work.

Access to sophisticated tools and processes: When outsourcing, you're paying for the technologically advanced tools, processes, workflows and RPAs the outsourcing company has invested in, in addition to labor. If a company only outsources video recording and editing, you can assume they have access to the finest equipment and software. If you have hired a firm to research a new target market you are looking to expand into, you can assume they're utilizing quality data collection tools.

Areas to consider outsourcing

It's not uncommon for people to wear multiple hats and be responsible for various administrative areas. However, this model can be challenging to sustain as your business grows. If your agency is of a smaller size and you don't have the resources to hire individuals dedicated to these roles internally, consider outsourcing the following functions:

- **HR and payroll:** There are many companies that can provide outsourced HR and payroll services. These organizations can provide several aspects of the HR function, including benefits administration, recruitment, employee support, payroll and employee data management.

- **IT:** IT is another important function, especially with rising security threats and data breaches. Many agencies choose to outsource IT to manage data and security, software and internal technology support.

- **Client administration:** Agencies can benefit from outsourcing to a client administration company to manage client-facing tasks including managing contracts, agreements, required documentation, scheduling and even the proposal process.

- **Accounting:** By outsourcing the accounting and finance function, you can receive day-to-day transactional support including bill pay and invoicing, accounting assistance with complex GAAP matters, financial advice on contracts and agreements, forecasting, budgeting, KPI analysis and more.

Implementing an outsourcing process

To maximize the potential of your outsourcing operation, it's important to first develop a plan. Here are a few elements to consider before implementing an outsourcing procedure:

- Hold a strategy session with key stakeholders and leaders within your organization to identify areas for outsourcing. Understand the risks and benefits of outsourcing from multiple perspectives before beginning your process.

- Develop a written plan with benchmarks and a timeline that factors in the time to hire a firm and evaluate after initiation.

- Identify key companies that align with your values and can assist with the tasks you need. After you've selected possible partners, be sure to thoroughly interview them before making a decision.

- Initiate and re-evaluate the outsourcing process. Try to follow your written plan as closely as possible.

Whether used as a stopgap measure for lack of talent or a way to reduce costs over time, outsourcing can be useful—if implemented and utilized strategically. **O**

Justice Dept. probes Trump's media deal

Digital World Acquisition Corp., the blank check company that plans to take Donald Trump's social media platform public, said today that each of its directors has received subpoenas from federal prosecutors at the Southern District of New York related to the deal.

The Securities and Exchange Commission on June 13 issued subpoenas requesting documents and information regarding DWAC's due diligence regarding Trump Media & Technology Group and other information covering communications related to the merger.

The Justice Dept. and SEC subpoenas "could materially delay, materially impede or prevent the consummation of the business combination," according to DWAC's Form 8-K filing.

DWAC also revealed that board member Bruce Garelick, Chief Strategy Officer of Rocket One Capital, resigned effective June 22.

The federal grand jury has requested information from DWAC about its communications with Rocket One, an investment firm based in Miami.

TMTG issued its own statement: "We encourage and will cooperate with-oversight that supports the SEC's important mission of protecting retail investors." ○

D.C. PA vet Bartlett joins Kekst CNC

Brian Bartlett, who served in George W. Bush's White House and co-founded the Rational 360 shop, has joined Kekst CNC to open its Washington office and expand its PA offering.

As Partner, he will advise clients on creating campaigns to influence policy decision making and shape opinions about issues of public concern.

At Rational 360, Bartlett chaired its global corporate affairs practice chair until exiting the Washington firm in May. He helped launch Rational after working as Account Supervisor at Ketchum and Managing Partner at Surus Strategies.

Bartlett has handled crisis situations, reputational matters, litigation and special situations.

On the political front, he served as advance rep for president Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney and worked on Mitt Romney's two presidential runs, Scott Brown's bid for Massachusetts' Senate seat and Bob McDonnell's race for Virginia's governorship.

France's Publicis Groupe owns Kekst CNC, which has PA staffers in London, Brussels, Berlin and Stockholm. ○



Brian Bartlett

Brunswick Group enrolls Duke U's Schoenfeld

Brunswick Group has recruited Michael Schoenfeld, VP for Public Affairs, Government Relations and Chief Communications Officer at Duke University. He will join the firm on Aug. 15.

As a Brunswick Partner, he will counsel higher education institutions and academic medical centers.

Prior to his 14-year run at Duke, Schoenfeld



Michael Schoenfeld



spent a dozen years at Vanderbilt University, exciting as Vice-Chancellor of Public Affairs.

He also was Senior VP for Policy and Public Affairs at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Brunswick CEO Neal Wolin sees a big opportunity to support colleges as they deal with social and political issues and believes Schoenfeld will become an invaluable asset as the firm grows its capabilities in the academic space. ○

Invariant recruits ex-Harris aide

Shari Yost Gold, who advised Vice President Kamala Harris during her 2020 run for the presidency, is coming on board at Invariant, the firm led by Heather Podesta.

In addition to advising the presidential campaign of Mike Bloomberg, the senatorial campaign of current DNC chair Jaime Harrison and the NYC mayoral campaign of Ray McGuire, Yost Gold has also served as a Senior Advisor at MikeWorldWide. She has run her own firm, Yost Gold Consulting, since 2003.

At Invariant, Yost Gold will be a Senior Advisor in Communications and Public Affairs, working with corporate leaders as they respond to key D.C. policy decisions.

Podesta told CNBC that the hire comes as corporations have been faced with handling such controversial policy decisions as gun safety measures and the Supreme Court ruling on Roe v. Wade. ○



Shari Yost Gold

HSBC's Rosello banks on MetLife

Chris Rosello, who was Executive VP and head of public affairs for London's HSBC, will join MetLife on July 5 as VP and leader of its federal government relations unit.

Based in Washington, he will report to Susan Greenwell, Senior VP and Head of Global Government Relations.

At HSBC since 2017, Rosello led the planning, coordination and execution of the bank's federal, state and regulatory strategy.

Earlier, he did a seven-year stint at Wells Fargo as Senior VP-Federal Government Relations, where he helped the bank implement Dodd-Frank provisions.

Rosello also handled legislative affairs at the US Treasury Dept. and was a staffer on the House Financial Services Committee. ○



Chris Rosello

WPP slates 'Ukraine open for business' pitch

WPP plans to launch an investment promotion campaign to spur economic development in war-ravaged Ukraine. The effort, a partnership with Ukraine's government, will include WPP units in Poland, Czech Republic and Ukraine.

CEO Mark Read told O'Dwyer's that each of WPP's PR firms will take part in the campaign. He said "Hill+Knowlton will certainly be heavily involved as they have teams and an office in Ukraine."

Dubbed "Advantage Ukraine," the drive will target business leaders in the region and throughout the world. The campaign will highlight opportunities in Ukraine's technology, education, agriculture and creative sectors.

Read and Oleksandr Tkachenko, Minister of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, unveiled the investment push at the Cannes festival.

Werner Hoyer, president of the European Investment Bank, estimates Ukraine reconstruction costs will be in the \$1.1 trillion range. ○

BMF flies Japan Airlines

BMF signs on as global social media and public relations agency of record for Japan Airlines. The agency will help JAL grow brand relevance through increased social following, engagement, and reach; improve customer retention; build preference from new customers; share valuable consumer insights in real time; and keep the JAL in the global media conversation.

BMF will also spearhead Tokyo-based content ideation and production for the airline. "We look forward to partnering with BMF at this critical juncture to breathe new energy into our social feeds and secure meaningful results with top-tier media, inspiring brand loyalists and new customers alike to choose JAL," said Japan Airlines VP, CX, Data analytics and Marketing Akira Mitsumasa. ○

C&M delivers State Dept. pitch for Ukraine

Crowell & Moring is working on behalf of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine in its bid to acquire sophisticated encrypted messaging software produced by New York-based cybersecurity company Quantum Technologies Laboratories.

Since Russia's invasion, Ukraine lacks both the infrastructure to engage in procurement activities and funding to buy needed communications services for its government and military, according to C&M's Justice Dept. filing.

Ukraine has asked Quantum to approach the U.S. State Dept. on its behalf to ask it to pay for the software and satellite transmission and reception services.

C&M's Robert Burns is assisting Quantum in approaching the State Dept. on behalf of the Council. ○

Jamaica's foreign minister taps Finn Partners

Finn Partners is providing PR, media relations and thought leadership services to Kamina Johnson Smith, who is Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

She has been campaigning to replace Patricia Scotland of Dominica as Secretary-General of The Commonwealth.

Johnson Smith has traveled to African Commonwealth nations, including Nigeria, Botswana, Tanzania and Ghana, to press her bid that reportedly has backing from the UK and India.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting is slated for Kigali, Rwanda, from June 20 to June 25. Rwanda is last nation to join the 54-member grouping of former British territories.

Finn Partners used to represent Jamaica tourism but resigned that account, which is now at Lou Hammond Group, in 2021. ○

Union 'trend' story

—Continued from page 38

win for labor." The story heralded the historic significance of the first Starbucks store to vote for unionization, calling the decision "an important symbolic victory for labor at a time when workers across the country are expressing frustration with wages and working conditions."

Curiously, omitted in Scheiber's description of the momentous event were the number of employees who participated in this historic vote; the final vote to unionize was, in fact, 19-8. The story also downplayed that a simultaneous election at another Buffalo Starbucks ended in a 12-8 vote against unionizing, and an election at a third Buffalo Starbucks ended 15 for unionization, nine against and seven challenged.

The point is that elections at three stores out of tens of thousands—among 78 employees out of 400,000—merited top billing in the world's most prestigious newspaper. The more significant point was that the results of those three elections were hardly conclusive—one win, one loss, one chal-

lenge—and, arguably, neither "symbolic" nor "historic" nor a "trend."

No matter. The *Times* and Scheiber were off and running. Over the past six months, the *Times* featured no less than 12 Scheiber Starbucks union "news" stories—most of them stunningly meager—to keep the issue alive.

What was big news was the Scheiber blockbuster on April 1, headlined, "Amazon Workers on Staten Island Vote to Unionize in Landmark Win for Labor." Sure enough, a cadre of Amazon employees, unaffiliated with any national labor union, voted to unionize at one of two massive Staten Island warehouses.

Over the next three weeks, The Staten Island Amazon union vote triggered 13 separate follow-up stories in *The New York Times*, one of which proclaimed triumphantly, "From Amazon to Starbucks, America is Unionizing."

Well, maybe not so fast. Two weeks later, the *Times* sheepishly reported, "Amazon Union Loses Vote at Second Staten Island Warehouse."

In point of fact, despite the best efforts of *The New York Times* to peddle the myth, there was no burgeoning U.S. labor union revival. Besides the handful of Starbucks stores and the one Amazon warehouse, the sum total of newly organized labor victories was infinitesimal.

Nonetheless, in today's lemming-like media ecosystem, if the *Times* says it's so then so it must be. And following the *Times'* unrelenting onslaught of Starbucks and Amazon, media from CNN to NPR to the Chronicle of Philanthropy dutifully paid witness to the rejuvenation of the labor movement in America. Scheiber gleefully added to the mix with a June 8 scoop that 85 Trader Joe's employees in western Massachusetts had filed for a union election.

And so in the end, *The New York Times* campaign to forward the fabricated "trend" of labor union momentum sweeping the nation became a self-fulfilling prophecy; leaving in its wake two of the most liberal, progressive and socially-conscious corporations in the land and earning yet another victory for "independent journalism." ○

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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.

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Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

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