

# ODwyer's

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### AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

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### PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

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March: Food & Beverage

June: PR Firm Rankings

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# The tired trend of the 'anti-woke' brand

**T**wo years ago, I wrote an editorial in these pages about a phenomenon I referred to as “performative wokeness,” or when brands resort to the grifty act of empty sloganeering or reflexively declare their progressive bona fides in an opportunistic bid to gain market share.

That’s still happening—arguably, now more than ever. But in response, the pendulum has swung the other way. Celebrities, brands and media personalities are now cashing in on the public backlash to wokeness, catering to some consumers’ frustrations at what they perceive to be a political climate where brands are effectively shoving diversity, tolerance and inclusion down our collective throats. Enter the pernicious, equally performative “anti-woke” brand, which has become the single most significant development this year in our ongoing culture wars.

Brands, now effectively rendered a cudgel for our political interests, have ideologically committed Americans waging a bizarre proxy war with some predictably silly—and sometimes dangerous—results. Either way, I’m assuming this latest development has given more than a few boardrooms pause on whether to dip their toes into the political arena going forward.

Consider these recent offerings from the anti-woke economy.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has built an entire political platform on being anti-woke. His nonstop spat with Disney, which started last year after Disney publicly criticized the Republican presidential candidate’s Parental Rights in Education legislation (aka the “Don’t Say Gay” bill), which bars educators from discussing sexual identity in classrooms, resulted in the Governor retaliating by dismantling Disney’s ability to self-govern its Orlando amusement parks, a move so stupid that even Donald Trump called it “an unnecessary political stunt.” Disney, in turn, sued DeSantis and scrapped a \$17 billion expansion plan in the Sunshine State. DeSantis’ war on woke might’ve won him a few early plaudits, but Mickey Mouse is a more beloved brand any day, and worse, the entire ordeal has made the Florida Governor look like a one-trick pony. DeSantis is now trailing Trump in the polls by double digits, with many polls now showing Trump carrying twice the support.

In what has undoubtedly been one of the biggest branding disasters in recent years, Bud Light found itself in a reputational crisis in April after it sent transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney a set of beer cans to celebrate her gender transition. When Mulvaney promoted Budweiser’s flagship low-calorie beverage in an Instagram video, that partnership proved to be the branding equivalent of an atomic bomb, with conservatives nationwide ditching their favorite beer of choice. Musician Kid Rock—who’s currently capitalizing on the anti-woke wave with an entire summer concert series called the “No Snowflakes Tour”—filmed himself shooting a case of Bud Light with a semiautomatic rifle. Tracking figures from Nielsen IQ now estimate that Bud Light’s sales volume is down 30 percent from the same time last year. In response, the beer maker has rolled out an aggressively populist new ad campaign titled “That’s Who We Are,” which features a behind-the-scenes look at the lives of Anheuser-Busch employees, in a bid to change the conversation, win back customers and halt its cratering sales. The company is also kicking off a desperate promotion over the Fourth of July holiday, where it plans to give away free beer.

Even Chick-fil-A is apparently too woke now for some right-wing groups. The fast-food chain, which is famously closed on Sundays and has long championed conservative values—its chairman has repeatedly stated he only supports the “traditional” definition of marriage—found itself in the crosshairs recently after news broke across social media circles that it had hired a vice president of DEI. That boycott proved to be a bust, presumably because a fast-food favorite is a bridge too far for fair-weather ideologues.

The list goes on and on. Former Fox News personality Eric Bolling even hosts an entire series on Newsmax now called “Go Woke, Go Broke,” dedicated to the public backlash brands—like retailer Target—subject themselves to when they attempt to be conscientious or take a public stand on social issues.

To be sure, there’s definitely a market for these “anti-woke” crusaders, much as there is for brands that broadcast their commitment to social-justice efforts. I can’t possibly predict what the next phase in our culture wars will look like, but I’m not convinced that the world we’re currently working to create—where corporations set the yardstick for what’s morally acceptable behavior—is a world that anyone on either ideological side actually wants. Given the backlash some of these aforementioned brands have faced in recent months—there seems to be a new victim every week—it straddles the obvious to state that brands need to tread carefully these days. I’m guessing that many brands might begin second-guessing their commitment to ideology-driven marketing in the future. Some might ditch the practice altogether. Maybe that’s not a bad thing. ○

— Jon Gingerich

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# Media ranks among Americans' least trusted institutions

A newly released Harris-Harvard poll shows that Americans' low views of the media are matched only by their grim current outlook on the state of the country and the economy at large.

By Jon Gingerich

U.S. corporate media broadcasters and social media companies now rank among the least trusted institutions in the world, according to the May results of the Harvard CAPS / Harris Poll, a monthly collaboration between the Center for American Political Studies at Harvard

and the Harris Poll and HarrisX.

In fact, Americans' views of the media are at such a nadir they're matched only by our current collective outlook on the state of the country and the U.S. economy at large.

According to the poll, when it comes to the most and least favorable institutions

today, Americans gave Fox News an unfavorability ranking of 42 percent, tying with Black Lives Matter. CNN earned an unfavorable ranking of 40 percent, below NATO, Ukraine and the U.S. Supreme Court. Twitter (38 unfavorable) and MSNBC (36 unfavorable) were other low-ranking institutions. TikTok achieved an unfavorability rating of 47 percent, barely beating out Antifa, China and Russia, which bottomed out the list.

So, what are Americans' most beloved institutions? According to the poll, Amazon (78 percent), the U.S. Military (77 percent) and Google (75 percent) are the most favored institutions among Americans.

According to the poll, most Americans still prefer to get their news primarily from TV (43 percent), followed by online news sites (22 percent). Facebook came in third (8 percent), followed by Google (6 percent), the radio (6 percent), Twitter (5 percent) and TikTok (3 percent).

Most respondents identifying as conservative who get their news primarily from TV (40 percent) said that Fox News is their preferred news source, while most Democrats (28 percent) get their news from CNN. Both outlets dominate online as well.

The Harris-Harvard survey also painted a bleak picture when it comes to Americans' views on the current state of the country. Fewer than a third (31 percent) of Americans said they think the country is on the right track, and two-thirds (62 percent) believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. An additional 62 percent think the economy in bad shape, and almost half (49 percent) said their personal financial situation is now worse than it was before.

Americans said inflation remains the single most important issue facing the country today (34 percent) followed by immigration (27 percent), the economy and jobs (25 percent) and guns (22 percent).

Finally, the poll found that a majority of Americans (62 percent) don't think Biden or Trump should run for a second term. Two-thirds (66 percent) said they believe the country needs "another choice" aside from Biden or Trump in 2024.

The Harris-Harvard survey polled more than 2,000 registered U.S. voters in May and was conducted online by The Harris Poll and HarrisX. ●

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# AI may result in fewer future hires at small businesses

Almost half of small business owners say they now expect to hire fewer people in the future due to the capabilities offered by generative AI tools, according to a new survey. But business owners also say they don't expect AI technology to replace the workforce they currently have, even if they plan to adopt AI tools in some capacity in the future.

By Jon Gingerich

For months, the news media has dedicated an extraordinary amount of attention to generative artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, Google Bard and Microsoft Bing, as well as to fears regarding how that technology threatens to upend—if not completely replace—some sectors of the workforce.

As it turns out, those fears may be justified, as many small business owners now seem confident that they'll be able to leverage AI technology for an increasing number of applications traditionally handled by employees, according to recent findings from accounting software company FreshBooks.

FreshBooks' survey, which sought to measure AI's current and future usage in one of the most vital sectors of the U.S. economy, discovered that 44 percent of business owners said they expect to hire fewer people in the future due to the capabilities provided by generative AI.

More than half (60 percent) said they think AI technology will dramatically change their business within the next five years. Two out of three business owners surveyed (66 percent) said they plan to adopt generative AI for their business in some capacity within the next year.

When it comes to which areas of their business these owners expect to see the most impact from AI, analytics and finance came in at first place (52 percent), followed by sales and marketing (46 percent), customer communications (45 percent), accounting and finance (42 percent) and planning and strategy (40 percent).

Bottoming out the list were service delivery (29 percent) and hiring and recruiting (28 percent).

On the other hand, small business owners don't seem particularly convinced that AI technology will replace the jobs of their employees anytime soon. Two-thirds of business owners surveyed said they don't think AI will replace them or their staff. The survey also found that the smaller the business, the less likely small business owners think AI will replace employees.

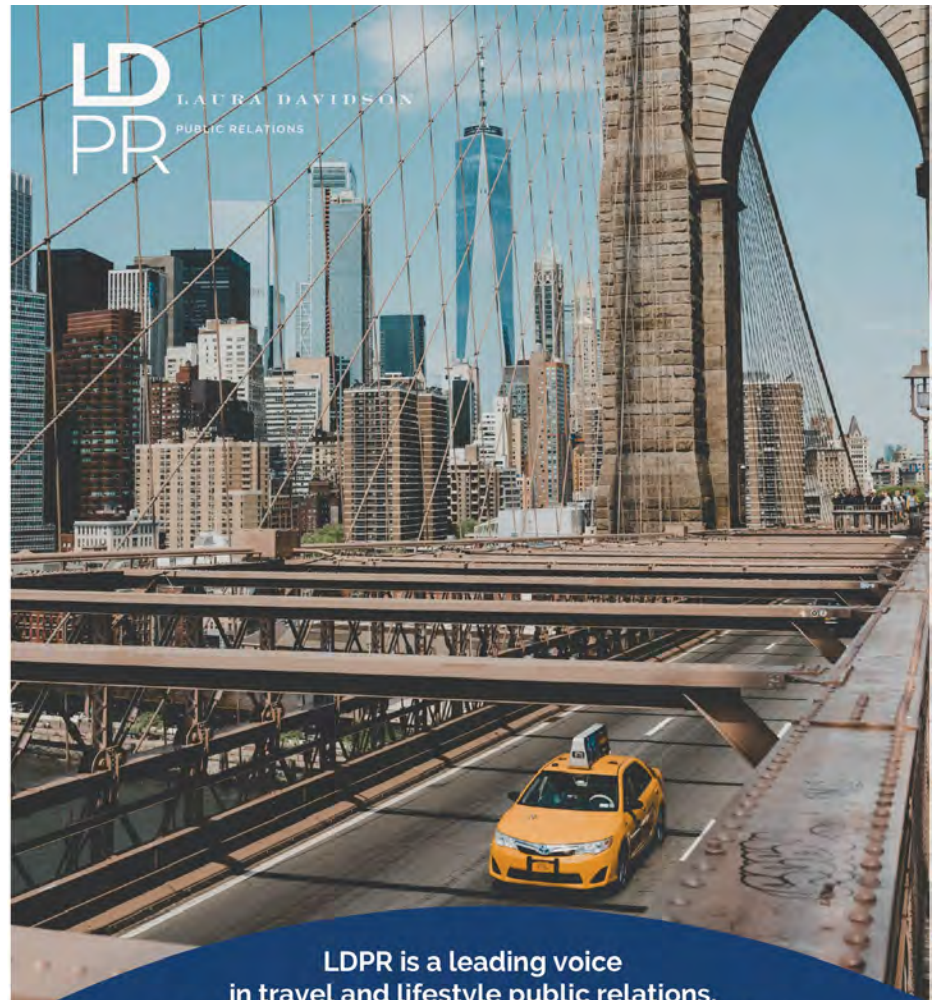
The report additionally found that nearly half (46 percent) of small business owners admitted they aren't currently clear on how AI could benefit their business. Only 25 percent said they're currently using or testing generative AI tools. And 16 percent admitted they don't use generative AI

technology because they're not a "technical person."

Finally, regardless of how and to what extent small business owners foresee using AI tools in the course of running their business, an overwhelming majority of respondents (80 percent) admitted they're concerned

about privacy, ethical and intellectual property issues associated with this technology.

FreshBooks' "AI Report" was based on an online survey of 1000 U.S.- and Canada-based small business owners across various industries. The survey was conducted in-house in May. ○



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# Promoting authentic travel experiences in a virtual world

While artificial intelligence can increase efficiency and improve various aspects of our lives, it will never be able to replicate our ability to share the powerful and transformative experience of travel.

By Jennifer Hawkins

At last, Silicon Valley has fashioned a technology that can pump out press releases at lightning-fast speed, and now we learn it has the potential to one day wipe us all out. I'm referring to artificial intelligence, of course, which, with a recent flurry of attention in the likes of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and other outlets, has many who make their living in public relations and the media world wondering what the future holds for our industry. While AI has undoubtedly revolutionized various aspects of our lives, however, it can never truly replace the rich and transformative experiences of real life including what we all are vested in: travel.

As a PR executive and leader for more than two decades, I've always been quick to encourage our clients and agency to bob and weave and embrace modern communications channels. There's no apology necessary when implementing efficiency to get things done. But with AI now nipping at our heels—and yours—I believe it's time for travel publicists to double down on incentivizing journalists and editors, and hence their readers, to think beyond efficiencies and responsibly encourage authenticity in travel to ensure that the richness and rewards of what we promote aren't lost to the conveniences of AI.

How rich and rewarding? AI may provide us with pre-planning inspiration or virtual glimpses of far-off destinations, tempting us with tantalizing images and information, but it remains nothing more than a teaser made up of videos and pretty pictures. It can't replicate the feeling of stepping foot in a foreign land, immersing oneself in its culture, connecting with locals and witnessing beauty and diversity firsthand. Real travel is about more than just sightseeing; it's about being curious and exploring with all of our senses, embracing the unexpected and venturing into the unknown.

One of our more inspired and resolute clients, Nomadic Expeditions, launched its adventure and cultural tour company to Mongolia so that travelers could go beyond sightseeing to actually help to preserve the traditions of the country's nomadic herding legacy. Founded in 1992, Nomadic played an important role in Mongolia's early efforts to expand openness for Western travelers. Among its goals was to breathe new life into local traditions before they disappeared, including conceiving of and hosting the Golden Eagle Festival, a celebration of the

centuries-old practice of the Kazakh people. Drawing thousands of spectators, the festival has helped revive a time-honored tradition for a new generation of Kazakhs and revealed the importance of preserving the nomadic culture.

I also think of our client Wilderness, widely acclaimed as Africa's leading eco-tourism operator that is celebrating 40 years of protecting and restoring the world's wildlife and remaining untamed places through its pioneering conservation-based tourism model, with an ambitious goal of doubling the amount of land under its protection by 2030. Every one of Wilderness' 40-plus camps across nine countries—with the newest addition of Tanzania—is rooted in site-specific conservation initiatives, as well as community engagement and enrichment, such as protecting rare desert lions along the Skeleton Coast of Namibia and reforestation Rwanda's Gishwati Forest for the preservation of its many indigenous wildlife species, including critically endangered mountain gorillas. Wilderness' manifesto as a leading conservation and hospitality company is to focus on immersing guests in fascinating environments in which their camps operate and creating intimate encounters between them, nature and culture. And ultimately, increasing the world's wilderness by involving more and more people in their purpose. It's remarkable and inspiring.

Then there's The Bushcamp Company, operating in Zambia, whose offerings protect the delicate ecosystem of South Luangwa National Park from poachers. The only travel operator in the southern region of the national park, The Bushcamp Company is actively involved in a range of conservation and community efforts including supporting anti-poaching and anti-snaring activities; aiding schools by sponsoring students, paying teachers' salaries, building classrooms, and feeding 2,500 students every day; and drilling 200 boreholes to provide safe, clean drinking water to thousands of locals daily. With all of the above, guests can rest assured that the hospitality, wildlife encounters and cultural interactions they enjoy with the aid of locals who really know their way around the bush wouldn't be possible without their support.

Admittedly, all of the experiences noted above aren't for travelers on a tight budget. But with the travel industry now essentially a watchdog for the environment and culture, travel operations of all types and the

PR pros that promote them can still make strides toward a better world. And experiencing these moments and these places firsthand is crucial to getting people—through travel—to understand more deeply what these places and peoples are about, and in many cases how fragile the places and cultures are.

It starts with bringing passion to what we do. As my colleague Amy Terpeluk, Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Impact Lead at Finn Partners, has observed, rallying companies to support things that make a difference really matters, particularly “at a time when companies are under increasing pressure to address social and environmental issues while keeping a keen eye on the bottom line.”

But in our politically charged age, might not such moves elicit prickly responses? “Time and time again,” Terpeluk continues, “research analytics show that companies with favorable reputations built on a foundation of societal good reap the benefits of customer connection, increased sales, and the ability to attract and retain top talent.” Rather than focus on “the issue of the day” then, she recommends embracing “long-term, purpose-driven commitments [that] benefit both business and society.”

Responsible PR pros recognize this and continue to encourage people to embark on real travel and real adventures, promoting the idea that there's no substitute for the transformative power of physical exploration. In the same vein, they should also inspire journalists to encourage their readers to always embark on real-life journeys, enabling them to capture the essence of a place through authentic firsthand encounters.

Seeing the world up front and personal is the real deal, and the emotions we feel and memories we collect lie at the heart of travel. Being somewhere new with people makes for a rich life as a traveler. Ultimately, AI will never be able to replicate the profound impact and irreplaceable memories created when we step out into the world to explore for ourselves.

Jennifer Hawkins is Managing Partner and NY Travel Practice Leader at Finn Partners. ●



Jennifer Hawkins



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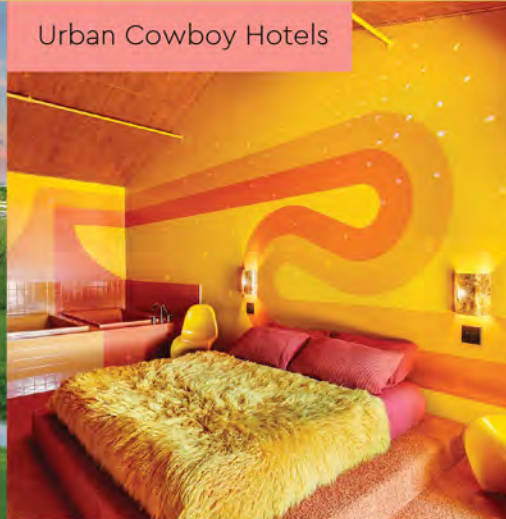
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# Preparing for the unexpected

Catastrophes can strike travel destinations at any time. As communications leaders, we have an obligation to prepare for the unexpected and provide proactive strategies that protect our clients' reputations as well as mitigate future crises.

By Lauren Kaufman

Crisis aren't planned, they happen. But you can plan for a crisis. Are you prepared?

From hurricanes to infectious diseases, we must always be ready to navigate a crisis. While many of us have inadvertently become experts steering through the pandemic, we must proactively apply best practices learned to a plan that will help mitigate the next crisis.

Get this: according to research from The Conference Board's C-Suite Outlook 2023, only 50 percent of CEOs feel their brands are prepared for a major crisis. Just half! In today's fast-moving media ecosystem, news of an incident can spread globally within minutes, and a single crisis can have devastating and long-term consequences.

As PR leaders, it's our job to get ahead of situations. Our crisis communications experts at MMGY NJF audit client destinations and brands to determine potential risk factors and levels of preparedness to alleviate fallout. We've found most issues can be broken into two categories: dangerous situations and reputational crises.

Dangerous situations like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, political unrest and violent crimes come hard and fast with immediate protocols needed. Once the imminent threat has passed, the aftermath can—and usually will—lead to a reputational crisis. Addressing and turning around negative perceptions and traveler sentiment is of utmost importance.

## When weather strikes

The effects of climate change mean that natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods and wildfires are only going to grow more intense and leave more damage in their wake. As the East Coast recently experienced, wildfires burning 500 miles away in Canada greatly impacted cities and communities, effectively shutting down activities and events at a moment's notice.

When a natural disaster makes a direct hit on a destination and the recovery period is long, a dangerous crisis can quickly turn into a reputational one. PR efforts require constant vigilance

and the flexibility to adapt messaging as conditions change.

After Hurricane Ian caused catastrophic damage to our client Lee County, Florida (Fort Myers-Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods), in September 2022, we immediately adapted our crisis playbook to manage the situation. Starting with in-the-moment updates of rescue and cleanup efforts, we pivoted to messages communicating that most of the destination would be closed to tourism for the time being. We shared stories of resilience and goodwill as locals rallied together, allowing us the opportunity to spotlight the strong sense of camaraderie that makes this community so special.

As more and more areas and businesses began to reopen, we focused our efforts on educating the public and changing their perceptions of a destination hit by disaster. We shifted our pitch strategy from coastal activities to inland adventures, gathered intelligence on voluntourism opportunities and spotlighted local wildlife recovery. By activating journalists, influencers and local ambassadors, the message became clear: The Fort Myers area is on a path to recovery and welcoming visitors once again. In June 2023, this was underscored by a three-minute CBS Sunday Morning "A Moment in Nature" segment showcasing how nature is on the mend on Sanibel Island. It was a grand slam for the destination.

Much of our learnings around this topic came from a successful recovery campaign for the British Virgin Islands. In September 2017, the destination was devastated by two consecutive Category 5 hurricanes

that damaged 90 percent of its accommodations and attractions, causing \$4 billion in damage. By late 2018, it was time to get the message out that the BVI was back in business and ready for visitors to return to the Sailing Capital of the World. We focused messaging on sailing and yachting as well as nature and adventure, with an aggressive media relations campaign that ultimately led to the cover of *Travel + Leisure's* February 2019 Caribbean issue and earning the destination the number-two spot on *The New York Times* 52 Places to Go list in 2020. BVI was back on the map. And then COVID-19 struck ...

## Mitigating a health crisis

While we've all dealt with the impacts of the pandemic, as an agency, we had extensive practice managing strategies around infectious diseases long before COVID-19 was a household name.

HEI Hotels & Resorts first reached out to us in 2019 with an urgent plea for help: It was evacuating one of its Atlanta hotels after the Board of Health suspected that several recent guests had contracted Legionnaires' disease during their stays. HEI was not a current client, there was no crisis plan in place and our response had to be lightning-fast. We quickly drafted a holding statement while also gathering as much information as possible from the client, news reports and social media. We did this in tandem with developing a strategy to ensure that timely, accurate information was flowing from HEI to the media and other stakeholders, including all hotel employees, future guests and members of the community.

While our communications strategies were constantly reassessed and updated with the client's team and legal advisors, we closely monitored traditional and social media to determine if reactive statements and corrections needed



Lauren Kaufman



Florida's Sanibel Island.

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## PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

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to be issued in response. Once health officials determined no ongoing risk to public health existed on the property, we worked with local and national media to announce the hotel was reopening and to assure the public that they would be safe.

### Being the communications hub

When public confidence plummets, crisis communications requires a highly coordinated plan, often between multiple stakeholders. Between September 2021 and June 2022, our client, a major transportation provider, experienced two accidents where multiple fatalities occurred. We immediately jumped into action to assist the organization's communications team with minute-by-minute updates on media coverage, social media chatter and information gathering. During the first 24 hours and several days following, we tracked initial press reports as well, as social media sentiment around the crash response. With two major disasters in such a short amount of time, it was extremely important to make sure all public statements were clear, respectful and authentic, taking particular care not to use the same language for the

second statement that we did for the first.

Once the crisis was no longer a lead news story, we shifted back to our previously prepared consumer earned media plan. Our main concern was to be sensitive to the seriousness of these crashes, allowing ample time to pass before resuming proactive travel and lifestyle media outreach for the company.

Lessons learned and optimized for each situation:



- Being proactive mitigates the need to be reactive.

- Be prepared! By having an updated crisis plan including crisis playbooks covering a variety of potential scenarios at the ready, you'll be able to mobilize quickly, saving valuable time and reputational danger.

- By definition, crisis management requires being nimble around evaluation, fact-gathering, updating, strategizing and implementing a response.

- In a world where news travels faster than most people can even process, it's important to monitor multiple sources of information, including traditional and social media.

- It's critical to identify stakeholders and establish clear lines of communication.

- PR should be the communications hub to digest and disseminate information.

- Spokespeople need to be identified and trained in advance in order to present a unified and coherent message. This message needs to be aligned all the way up the chain, for example, from a hotel's general manager to its front desk receptionists to outside travel advisors and suppliers to quell any misinformation.

Let's ensure the travel industry feels more than 50 percent prepared for the unexpected. We're here to help your brand and can conduct a risk assess-

ment, review and refresh your existing crisis communications plans, as well as develop new plans to address a variety of crisis scenarios. Visit [www.njfp.com](http://www.njfp.com) for more information.

*Lauren Kaufman is Senior Vice President and Director of Operations at MMGY NJ.* ○

## Sustainability messaging builds brands

By Steve Barnes

Effective sustainability messages can also kickstart a brand's reach and relevance, according to new research from the NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business and Edelman.

"Effective Sustainability Communications: A Best Practice Guide for Brands & Marketers" partnered with R&D, innovation, sustainability and marketing teams at nine leading global brands representing such sectors as apparel, food and beverage, technology, household items and personal care to find out which environmental sustainability claims are most motivating to consumers.

The results of the study, which were unveiled at the Cannes Lions Festival by Randi Kronthal-Sacco, senior scholar at NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business, and Edelman CEO Richard Edelman show that a potent sustainability message can lift brand reach and relevance between 24 and 33 percentage points compared with a

high-performing category message alone.

Sustainability claims yielded a significant benefit across the board, with all nine brands seeing a claim centered on sustainability as either the most appealing (two of nine brands) or the top most in consumer appeal (seven of nine brands), outperforming other category claims.

In general, the 2,700 consumers surveyed showed a preference for simple, jargon-free sustainability messages that connect directly to them, their family and the world around them.

They also said that a brand's sustainability claims need to be grounded in its core purpose. "Sustainability claims that ladder to relevant category claims are the most appealing," it says. In other words, sustainability means more to consumers if it also bears a strong relation to the basic reasons for buying a brand (taste, effectiveness, etc.)

Consumers also had strong reactions to claims regarding animal health, sustainable

sourcing, local sourcing, and children and future generations. Support for local farmers was also very positively viewed.

It also matters where consumers come into contact with sustainability messaging. Packaging, TV, and in-store signage were deemed the most effective venues for those messages, with platforms like TikTok and Instagram lagging behind. One big exception: Gen Z. For Gen Z respondents, TikTok was almost as effective as packaging and TV.

Interestingly, the research also showed that the top performing claims varied little across political or demographic divides.

"Every leader thinking twice about sustainability on the grounds of it being 'divisive' needs to know this: If you communicate sustainability the right way, it will appeal across political affiliation, income, gender, education levels, and age groups," said Edelman. "Sustainability is an amplifier and if brands embrace it, we can exponentially increase growth and trust." ○



# Navigating the ever-changing media terrain in travel PR

News outlets are folding, phasing out hardcopies and cutting staff at an unprecedented rate. How are PR professionals working in today's travel media landscape supposed to share their clients' stories if there are no on-staff journalists left to pitch?

By Michelle Abril

Any public relations professional worth their paycheck understands the importance of reading. We read to stay current on travel trends, look for new writers to engage and monitor clients and competitors. Everyone has their preference on how they read, whether scrolling away on smartphones or tablets, going old-school and cracking open a magazine or wearing newspaper ink stains with pride. But the way we're reading and what we're reading has drastically changed, given the major shift in today's print and online media landscape.

Last year, some of the most-beloved magazines ceased print issues in exchange for full online operations, including *Allure*, *Parents* and *People en Español*, while others folded completely. Newspapers are also phasing out hardcopies and transitioning to digital-only content. In addition, news outlets are cutting staff—Vox Media laid off 130 employees—and some publications have discontinued day-of news coverage, such as *Thrillist*, which cut food and drink news from its site. It begs the question for the communications industry whether we'll even have on-staff journalists to pitch in the future.

Travel publicists must be nimble, think beyond the glossy magazine and look to other mediums to generate client news. As the media continues to evolve, everyone can benefit from looking beyond the gold-standard *Travel + Leisure* cover story.

## Podcasts

According to Spotify, as of 2023, there are 464.7 million podcast listeners and more than four million podcasts globally. It's predicted that in 2024 there will be around 504.9 million podcast listeners! As a commanding digital medium often focused on specific themes, consider turning to podcasters and their millions of listeners in the same way we once did 50-page magazines distributed to millions of readers. The convenience of capturing consumers hearing your client news and brand messaging at their convenience is a game-changer for brands.

Podcasts are a great way to position clients as thought leaders in the travel industry and share buzz-worthy news. For example, journalist Holly Rubenstein hosts new episodes weekly on *The Travel Diaries*, which

highlights a special guest and their inspiration for wanderlust destinations, while *Conde Nast Traveler's* Editor Lale Arikoglu hosts weekly episodes on *Women Who Travel*, shining a light on women and their most unique travel tales. If you have a client able to provide travel tips, pay attention to Jason Moore's *Zero to Travel*, where he and an interviewee provide actionable advice to help listeners travel better and smarter.

## Influencers

Thanks to their built-in audience, influencers are instrumental to any travel brand. They're virtual storytellers whose impact can be easily measured, helping brands push out timely news to meet campaign KPIs. From Instagram and TikTok to Twitter, people consume travel news and trends on these popular platforms, so companies need to leverage this opportunity in an innovative way. Major travel brands like Hilton regularly engage with influencers across platforms as they are dubbed "ambassadors" and produce creative content that hits key messaging and resonates with core audiences in an organic way. For example, Hilton's 10-minute TikTok went viral as the untraditional video featured the iconic hotel chain heiress Paris Hilton as well as famous creators Chris Olsen, *GirlBossTown* and *KelzWright*, challenging viewers to stay to the end for a chance of winning Hilton Honors Points.

Tarte Cosmetics raised awareness for the destination of Dubai with an influencer trip that sent social media and print media into a frenzy. A group of 50 makeup and lifestyle influencers and their plus ones from eight different countries around the world were invited to Dubai for the launch of a new foundation that had them experience the product in a luxurious destination. Not only were consumers talking about Tarte, but the destination collaboration was uncanny, given that brand trips are not typically widely discussed. The hashtag *#TarteDubaiTrip* has more than 20 million views alone.

Delta Airlines creatively leveraged influencers to launch their *#SkyMilesLife* microsite *DeltaSkyMilesLife.com*, which typically would only be trade-focused news. They worked with 14 creators to produce 500 pieces of quality content to use across owned and paid channels that target key audiences with more than 12 million views.

## Broadcast

Television has always been one of the most influential and popular media platforms, allowing news to instantly spread visually to millions of consumers. We could qualify for early retirement if we all had a dollar for every time we heard a client name the "The Today Show" as a dream placement! Nowadays, organic inclusion in national broadcast segments is a rarity, as heavily branded news tends to lean into integration paid tactics. Still, savvy communicators know that pitching client travel news tied to a bigger social media trend or national holiday increases the chance of getting coveted airtime.

While national broadcast might be a feather in your cap, local broadcast outlets often tend to be easier to secure and equally strategic when it comes to moving the needle with your client's desired target audience. Local outlets might result in a longer segment that hits all key messaging versus a quick mention on a national outlet, so don't ignore the smaller regional segments. In addition, if your client is still looking for national coverage, take the local coverage and pitch the same story to the network's national syndicate, referencing the client's local appearance on their regional station, and sometimes—if you have the right story—regional networks will get picked up by their syndicate for the evening news.

As PR professionals, we find ourselves in a constant state of navigating a dynamic media landscape, like a ship captain maneuvering through shifting currents. Let's remember to look toward the horizon and never lose sight of the importance of relationships! Irrespective of the medium, whether it's a traditional journalist or podcaster, it's crucial to cultivate connections with individuals who can contribute to promoting your client. Recognize the significance of these relationships, as they have always been important, but now hold an even greater significance in our current climate.

Michelle Abril is Vice President at Coyne Public Relations. ○



Michelle Abril



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# Implementing the ultimate marketing trifecta in travel

In the world of travel, where Gen Z and Millennial travelers reign supreme, speaking directly to this demographic through the trifecta of traditional PR, influencer marketing and social-media marketing is a powerful way to connect with consumers across multiple angles.

By Laura Davidson

The secret of success in today's travel business can be summed up in a single phrase: understanding your customer. This axiom is especially true when it comes to Gen Z-ers and Millennials, two generations with radically different approaches to travel. To reach, attract and win them over, travel marketers must understand everything about them from their booking habits to their service priorities and shift their methods to speak to them on their terms. In the PR world, this means fusing traditional public relations tactics with social media and influencer marketing to launch a wave of impact across a sea of multiple platforms.

We all know the power and purpose of traditional public relations. Thoughtful pitches, creative activations and coordinating firsthand experiences for editors take storytelling to a new level that resonates with audiences and forges a connection to a brand, destination or experience. These tactics turn into stories, strategic partnerships, cutting-edge campaigns and narratives that capture the essence of a brand and propel it into the spotlight.

But traditional PR only works up to a point when it comes to reaching Millennials and Gen Z-ers. It must be supplemented by the full box of social media tools including support from brands' social media accounts, user-generated content and hashtag usage across a variety of social platforms. Equally important is the efficient use of influencers, a group that has evolved over the last five years into a high-impact, measurable, significant army of promotional partners. They give us enormously valuable and previously unimaginable access to these younger generations by transforming travel trends into captivating viral moments, speaking to audiences on a personal one-on-one level and turning our clients into conversations.

Engaging the right influencers for a brand alongside traditional media helps to solidify key messages and also showcase offerings and experiences in a different way. For example, having a strong influencer marketing plan in place for campaigns surrounding openings or product launches generates real-time buzz and immediate

interest among consumers. The instantaneous nature of social media can be capitalized on to spread the word quickly while starting to build wider interest. Print, digital and broadcast stories then supplement the social media exposure thereby swelling the wave of buzz and interest, resulting in a well-rounded, successful launch.

While "earned" media stories are being placed and influencers are driving the conversation on social media, brands additionally need support through organic posting and user-generated content. For example, influencers can launch a hashtag that ignites a social media movement that builds its own momentum. Consumers and other brands then join in, generating additional conversation and naturally expanding

larger audience. It's a way that turns offerings into conversations, and conversations into happenings, which we see when consumers book trips or experiences that they saw on social media.

In one example, it's no secret that most hotels had to close their doors during COVID as travel came to a halt. In one instance, a hotel in the Utah desert used that unprecedented time to open. The resort's landscape made it naturally achievable for guests to keep a distance from others and enjoy the outdoors in a safe way.

In order to drive immediate awareness and buzz, the PR team hosted a notable social media influencer who is in alignment with the hotel brand, pre-opening.

This gave the new hotel the awareness it needed during such a crucial time and also gave the hotel image and video assets in order to launch an opening social media campaign on its own channel. Simultaneously, the PR team laid the groundwork for editorial stories to publish both pre-and post-opening, which supplemented the social media buzz and generated a successful well-rounded opening campaign. All these components led to a fully booked opening month with multiple buyouts and a strong series of bookings throughout the remainder of the year and into the following year.

As Millennials and Gen Z-ers grow older and more affluent, they'll only grow in importance and begin to dominate the market as the Baby Boomer segment shrinks. Brought up traveling and treating travel as a necessity rather than a luxury, these younger generations bring enormous market potential, but only to those who speak directly to them through the trifecta of traditional PR, influencer, and social media marketing. To succeed as PR professionals we must understand our customers and be as quick to adapt to emerging communication trends as they are. The clock is ticking ... TikTok.

Laura Davidson is CEO and Founder of Laura Davidson Public Relations. ○



Laura Davidson



Camp Sarika by Amangiri, located in Canyon Point, Utah.

Photo courtesy of Aman.

the audience. Before you know it, a single hashtag can have more than 500 billion views just on one platform, which we're currently seeing with #adventuretravel on TikTok. Engaging influencers to launch a hashtag is also a strong tactic for targeting a niche audience. For example, brides and grooms (#bridal) currently has 8.7 billion video views and #destinationwedding has 1.3 billion video views on TikTok. And the journey doesn't stop there ... the continued use of social media amplifies the reach of a property or brand or offering, establishing it as a vibrant and strong leader within a niche community. Through captivating visuals, compelling stories and interactive engagement, a brand can find a new and/or



# AI in travel public relations, friend or foe?

The PR industry is adopting and leveraging AI-powered tools in creative and exciting ways, but a human touch will always be essential in delivering the personalization and expertise required in any successful travel campaign.

By Amy Sedeño

As the PR landscape continues to evolve, artificial intelligence is making its way into our everyday account servicing. While adopting AI presents exciting possibilities for PR professionals, it also introduces a unique set of challenges. As with any new technology, there's a learning curve for PR practitioners, but with AI, there's the added stigma of dehumanizing the core of our business: "human relations." After research and practice on how to implement tools like ChatGPT, PitchPrefer and Brandwatch in our work, it's important to objectively delve into the benefits, drawbacks and the verdict on the use of AI for travel public relations. By understanding the intricacies of this technology and its impact on our profession, we can navigate the evolving landscape with confidence and make informed decisions about incorporating AI into our workflows.

## The good

What drove us to explore AI at CIIC PR in the first place was the premise to understand consumer analytics better. Data-driven PR is smart PR, and AI-powered tools can help us analyze large volumes of data, monitor media coverage and engage with consumers more efficiently. By tracking news mentions and measuring the impact of our campaigns, we can optimize media relations, refine our strategy, identify areas of opportunity and stay ahead in an increasingly competitive environment. For example, Coca-Cola's "Taste the Feeling" campaign used AI to analyze social media conversations and identify emotions associated with Coca-Cola products. Subsequently, this data was utilized to craft personalized advertisements and tailored product recommendations that resonated with their target audience. These predictive analytics can uncover valuable information to guide PR strategy, especially for hotel clients and destinations which need current consumer insights, consumer preferences and market trends to make strategic decisions.

Some PR agencies are also using AI-powered chatbots to automate tasks like media monitoring and social media engagement, as well as to generate reports and insights allowing PR professionals to focus on higher-level strategy. AI-powered media monitoring tools can also scan through multiple publications, blogs and social media platforms to identify relevant coverage

and trending topics. This allows PR professionals to stay on top of the latest news and trends in real-time, enabling them to respond proactively to media inquiries and opportunities and manage potential issues before they become a crisis.

Writing tools can also be used to help break writer's block, find a perfect keyword or even spark creativity for social media posts. By leveraging AI, PR practitioners can tap into a vast pool of knowledge and data to find the perfect keywords that resonate with their target audience, enhancing the visibility and impact of their messaging.

AI can also be used to brainstorm creative ideas and as a starting point for press releases and pitches through Natural Language Generation technology.

Another added benefit is optimizing influencer marketing campaigns by assisting in identifying relevant influencers in the travel industry and analyzing their social media engagement and audience demographic. It's important to know the limitations of this feature since PR pros know their clients best and the personalities and content that align with the brands they represent.

## The bad

Is AI too much of a good thing? Some of the rising concerns over AI-powered tools are privacy, ethical considerations and data security. There's also the issue of trust, which is why agencies need to be transparent about the tools they use and how they're implemented. It's essential to adhere to ethical guidelines and best practices to maintain trust with clients, media and stakeholders. Relying too heavily on AI can result in factual errors and inaccuracies if the sources are not properly vetted.

Another common criticism is the potential loss of human touch and personalization because these tools can't grasp human emotion and lack the empathy and understanding necessary for critical problem-solving.

While AI can assist in content generation, it lacks the element of storytelling and originality that content creators bring to the table. Especially with creatives, there's the fear of job displacement. Generic, stale messaging does not drive action, and that's where our expertise comes in. It can also result in messaging that is tone-deaf or simply irrelevant to your target audience. Take BuzzFeed for example. The company announced in January that it would start using AI for

some of its content. The result has been, as expected, lackluster, with many articles using the same format. AI-generated travel articles, for instance, don't have the nuances we come to expect from experienced travel writers who take in the sights, smells and sounds of a destination and turn it into aspirational stories.

Keeping up with the rapid growth of AI can also pose a challenge. Public relations is a dynamic industry that requires professionals to keep up with trends and tools. The ever-evolving world of AI will require us to stay ahead and engage in continuous learning and adaptation more than ever.

## The verdict

Successful PR strategies are built upon the foundation of professionals who possess deep industry experience, understanding the nuances and intricacies of effective communication. While AI-powered tools offer tremendous benefits in terms of strategy optimization and efficiency, they shouldn't be seen as a substitute for human knowledge and expertise. AI lacks the ability to fully comprehend and replicate the range of emotions and nuanced decision-making required to navigate the complex aspects of our business. It's crucial to recognize the limitations of AI while acknowledging its potential advantages. By embracing AI technology, agencies can develop more targeted and personalized campaigns, leveraging data-driven insights to deliver optimal results for clients. Furthermore, AI can automate standardized processes, freeing up time for PR professionals to explore creative angles and innovative approaches. However, it's essential to view AI as a tool that enhances our capabilities rather than a complete replacement for the human touch, storytelling prowess, and strategic thinking that PR professionals bring to the table. The key lies in striking a balance between leveraging AI's power and harnessing our own expertise to create impactful and successful PR campaigns.

Amy Sedeño is Vice President & Partner at CIIC PR. To learn more about CIIC PR and our services, contact us at [connect@ciicpr.com](mailto:connect@ciicpr.com). ○



Amy Sedeño



# A touch of personalization goes a long way

Why adopting a personalized approach to influencer marketing drives engagement, builds credibility and sets travel brands apart.

By Adriana Sanchez

It's no secret that personalization plays a pivotal role in elevating the guest experience. While travel brands have mastered this when it comes to revolutionizing on-property stays, it's often overlooked when enlisting creators and designing influencer collaborations.

As proven time and time again, personalization is vital in unlocking the full potential of these partnerships and driving significant impact.

In today's competitive and crowded travel and hospitality landscapes, providing customized experiences is no longer considered a luxury. It has become *the* essential element in truly setting brands apart. These tailored experiences, based on individual preferences and needs, are what make them so unforgettable. Noteworthy moments and occurrences transform the regular consumer or traveler into lifelong customers by fostering loyalty. They feel seen.

Our data-driven world provides access to more consumer insights than ever before, and industry leaders have cracked the code for how to leverage this data and turn it into a lasting connection. This vast data generated from guests' previous stays, behavior and interests allows hotels to deeply understand their audience before they even step foot through the door. These data points create countless engagement opportunities throughout their journey, which begins well before a guest's arrival at the property. Hotels can offer discounts, add-ons and elevated experiences, from curated in-room amenities to individualized concierge recommendations or exclusive dining options. Communication with guests can be constant via their preferred method, all while using their name to evoke a deeper feeling of camaraderie.

Predicting guest needs is as effortless as making their stay feel unique and special. The opportunity for brands to interact with guests through various touch points enables them to not only meet but exceed expectations. And in fact, consumers are demanding they do just that. A recent study released by McKinsey reported that 71 percent of customers want businesses to provide personalized experiences and 76 percent are frustrated if they don't receive it. This is particularly relevant to the travel space, with 70 percent of guests reporting having a more positive experience at hotels

that use personalization techniques.

So, why don't travel brands use this same approach when it comes to influencer marketing? It helps drive engagement, credibility and more importantly results, too.

For influencers, personalization makes a world of difference and it should start with the very first interaction. As we know, first impressions really can be everlasting and it's nearly impossible to come back if you start things off on the wrong foot.

During a recent panel in New York City, TikTok creator Rod Thill (1.6 million TikTok followers), who entered the social media spotlight and our mobile feeds during the peak of the 2020 lockdown, shared his biggest red flag when being tapped for a potential brand collaboration: a brief lacking any personality. If the outreach note doesn't include any personal details or a clear understanding of what he stands for, "it's a no." The ask must align with his vision and display a level of research on the brand's end that proves this is a viable partnership.

This accomplishes two things. First, he immediately knows the brand is serious about a collaboration with him. Presumably, they have fully vetted his profile and possess a deep understanding of who he is and what he stands for. Meaning, they're seeking him out specifically, which could minimize any back and forth down the line regarding expectations or content output. All this extensive research typically means that by the time he reviews a personalized brief, it's likely the right opportunity. Of course, Thill conducts his own due diligence to ensure it's a fit from his perspective as well.

Second, it develops a level of trust between both parties. No one understands an influencer's community better than they do—they built it and engage with their followers constantly. They're viewed as experts for a reason and if brands are able to tap into their unique perspectives and insights by trusting them enough to give them creative freedom, the results will speak for themselves.

Another form of successful personalization when working with influencers takes things one step further. Rather than purely engaging partners to develop assets or post content on their channels, brands are reaping the benefits of co-creating. As seen with Christina Najjar (i.e., Tinx; 1.5

million TikTok followers) also known as "TikTok's big sister," and the launch of Tabasco's first-ever product collaboration—a limited edition jalapeño dressing. Tinx is known to overshare every detail of her life with her followers and opens up to them as if they were her friends. She often posts the food she's eating and salads smothered in hot sauce are a regular occurrence. "Normalize hot sauce as dressing," she repeats. So, when Tabasco approached her for this collaboration, it was a no-brainer and a win-win for both parties. The brand had seen a growth in interest from Gen Z and this was a great way to authentically build credibility with that particular demographic.



Adriana Sanchez

These kinds of collaborations also foster long-term relationships between influencers and brands, which drive better and long-lasting results.

Social listening can also play an important role when finding the right influencer partner. Brands should be mining for organic partnership opportunities and using them to their advantage, knowing influencers are regularly sharing their day-to-day. A brand-influencer pairing that made headlines last month with influencer Alix Earle (5.4 million TikTok followers) is a testament to just how impactful it can be. The recent Miami University graduate, who gained tremendous popularity earlier this year, was on a Euro trip with friends when she suddenly found herself stranded without a place to stay in Italy following a booking scam. AirBnB quickly jumped to the rescue and put the group up in a luxurious Positano villa. Earle went on to post a tour of the villa thanking and tagging the brand for saving the day. Not only did she post organically numerous times to her millions of followers, but the stunt was picked up by major outlets resulting in thousands of dollars worth of earned value.

Travel brands must evolve their influencer marketing strategies to not only include personalization but be at the center of everything they do—just like when dealing with guests.

Adriana Sanchez is Vice President, Digital, at Magrino PR. ●



# The new world of luxury travel

Adapting communications strategies to the evolving preferences of today's discerning travelers.

By Kayla Atwater

In recent years, a notable shift has emerged in the preferences of discerning travelers, moving away from solely seeking high-end accommodations and instead prioritizing meaningful experiences. Whether it's a desire for personal growth, experiential learning or genuine connections, discerning travelers are increasingly seeking out unique opportunities to connect with destinations—and the people amongst them—on a deeper level.

This changing landscape has brought about a new definition of luxury travel, one that goes beyond upscale guestrooms and fine dining and focuses on the intangible elements of unforgettable moments. As luxury travel trends continue to evolve, it's important to recognize these shifting preferences and adapt our PR strategies to effectively cater to this redefined market.

## The shift beyond materialism

Luxury travel is no longer solely defined by physical spaces and material offerings. Today's luxury travelers yearn for experiences that are immersive, allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of their surroundings in a more hands-on and interactive way. Through the rise of the "experience economy," the experiential value of the trip is held to a higher regard than the actual cost, and luxury travelers are willing to spend more for those that they deem truly special.

To cater to these preferences, travel providers must evaluate their offerings to ensure they provide enriching benefits and elevate the perception of luxury. As travel PR professionals, we are consistently working with our clients to suggest new and innovative ways to meet the evolving demands of luxury travelers. From incredible behind-the-scenes tours with local experts to private cooking classes with renowned chefs, discerning travelers are turning to exclusive opportunities that offer true escapes from the ordinary.

## Authentic cultural immersions

Cultural immersions have become a cornerstone of luxury travel. One of the most important aspects of cultural immersions is incredible culinary experiences, offering a further look into the heart and soul of a destination. Culinary adventures that allow travelers to sample authentic local dishes, learn about traditional cooking techniques and celebrate locally sourced ingredients are at the top of many luxury travelers' lists during the trip planning process, as the in-

dustry shifts to more authentic pursuits.

Another way that travelers are embracing cultural immersions is through the opportunity to give back while on their trips. Volunteering or participating in community engagement initiatives has been brought to the forefront of many travelers' minds, especially after the pandemic, inspiring them to leave behind a positive impact on the local communities that they visit. Whether it's participating in conservation efforts, supporting local businesses, or contributing to sustainable tourism initiatives, travelers more than ever recognize the significance and value this adds to not only their overall experience but the economy as a whole.

## Tailor-made experiences

Undoubtedly, personalization is a key factor in the preferences of discerning travelers. Luxury travelers have come to expect customized experiences that cater to their unique interests. Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all itineraries and standard vacation packages. It's paramount to provide the personalized touches that transform their trips into once-in-a-lifetime memories that resonate with what they value most.

When it comes to personalization, a highly skilled concierge is an invaluable resource, enabling travelers to have a key point of contact that anticipates their needs. Luxury travelers, known for their meticulous attention to detail, place great importance on knowing that they have a dedicated professional working tirelessly to make their trip exceptional.

To navigate the ever-expanding world of options and rising complexities of the trip planning process, many luxury travelers are also turning to the help of travel advisors to ensure a truly personalized experience. Discerning travelers recognize the value of expert knowledge and the insider access that travel advisors can provide. According to a recent annual research report by financial services company Flywire, 81 percent of respondents said that working with travel experts is the only way to have a true luxury travel experience. Furthermore, 67 percent said they could not imagine traveling without an agent/advisor, with 62 percent citing the benefits of agents' ability to take care of everything.

## The role of PR

PR professionals play a crucial role in capturing the attention of this highly selective audience. To effectively reach luxury travelers, firstly, it's essential to recognize the im-

portance of storytelling and narrative-driven communications. As luxury travelers are no longer merely looking for products or services, our PR messaging aims to highlight the transformative power of travel and evoke emotions that go beyond traditional marketing tactics.

Another key strategy to reach luxury travelers through PR is by establishing thought leadership. Discerning travelers often turn to the advice of trusted resources and industry experts to curate their travel experiences. By highlighting the faces behind our clients as authorities in the luxury travel space, our PR efforts can foster credibility and build brand trust.



Kayla Atwater

To amplify a brand's visibility, we do this by arranging executive interviews on trending relevant topics, securing speaker roles at industry conferences, submitting bylined articles to target industry publications and hosting intimate media events to share valuable insights, among many other tactics.

The expectations of discerning travelers will continue to redefine luxury travel, however, the importance of unique experiences will hold strong. With the value of the global luxury travel market anticipated to rise at a considerable rate, from \$1.4 trillion in 2022 to \$3.3 trillion by 2032 (according to findings from Acumen Research and Consulting), the future of luxury travel lies in striking a balance between the material and experiential components. As luxury brands adapt their offerings and strive to stand out in the competitive landscape, travel PR professionals are ready to craft strategic storytelling and develop stand-out campaigns to promote this redefined means of luxury.

Kayla Atwater is Associate Vice President of the Travel and Tourism division at Hemsworth Communications. ●

## PR news brief

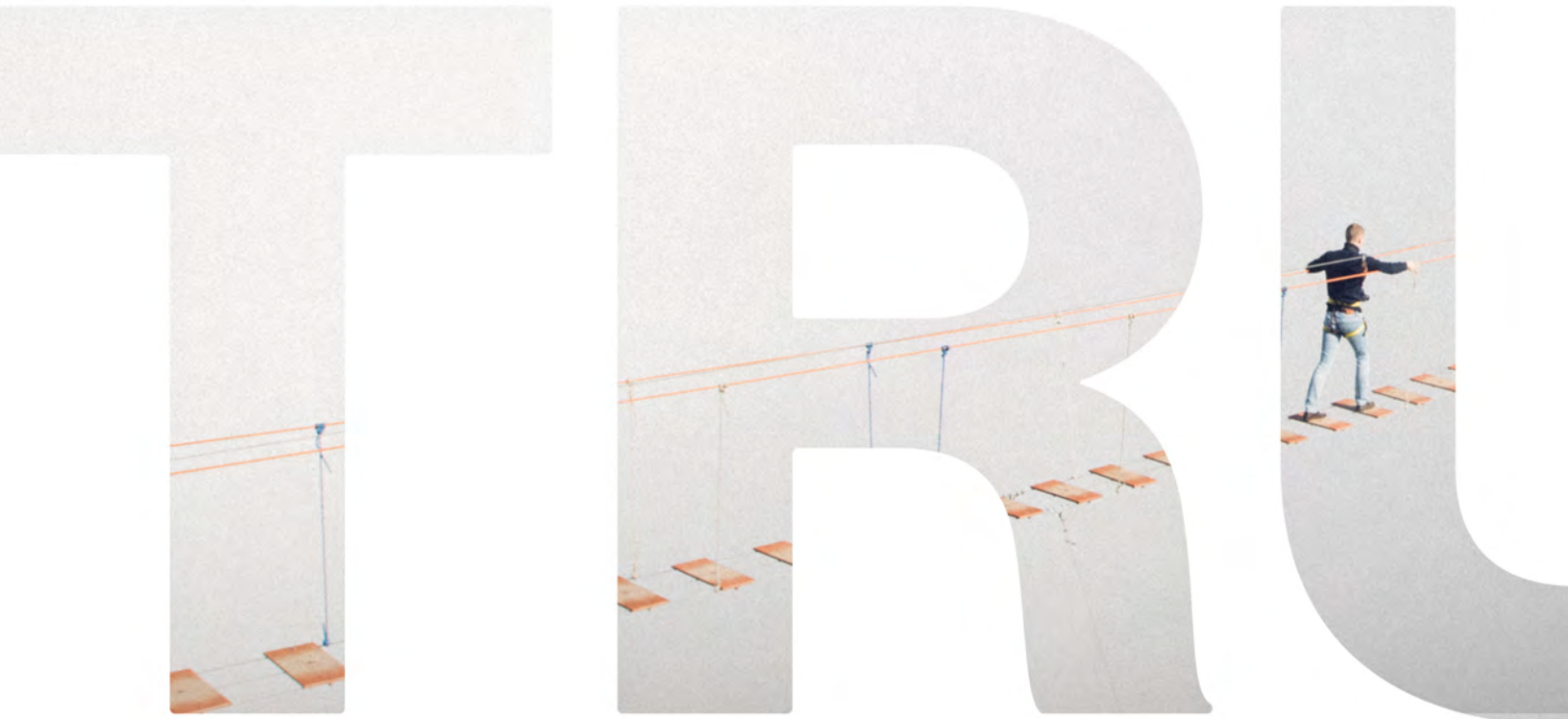
### WPP takes stake in Majority

WPP has acquired a 30 percent stake in Majority, the diverse multicultural shop that was co-founded by basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal.

Atlanta-based Majority focuses on "disruptive creativity that moves culture" via branded entertainment, advertising, digital, product innovation, experiences, art and activism.

The shop prioritizes diversity in its hiring practices and talent development, with its entire C-suite and more than 75 percent of its staff representing the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities.

Its clients include Coca-Cola, NBA G League and Match Group.







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# Navigating the new PR landscape

A list of 10 emerging trends and developments that are currently shaping the future of the public relations industry.

By Kerry Anne Watson

**T**he future of public relations is evolving at the speed of culture. With advancements in technology, evolving media landscapes and shifting consumer expectations, our industry must evolve as well. And with the adaption of AI, many PR pros are wondering what the implications are for the future of the industry. Below are 10 key developments we see shaping the future of PR.

**Pitch perfect.** In a short timeframe, there have been several AI-assisted tools developed that can help PR professionals tailor information for pitches to increase the likeliness of earning media coverage. Newsroom employment has fallen 26 percent since 2008, even as demand for online content has wildly increased. With newsrooms continuing to shrink, media outlets have fewer full-time writers to utilize. What this means for the PR industry is that their pitches be perfect, spot on and immediately usable. In addition to tools like Grammarly, Cision and Meltwater, there are newer AI platforms such as PRophet and PitchPrefer, which evaluate your pitch, predict media interest and help draft personalized copy to interested journalists. AI can give us the ability to quickly and more easily tailor messages to specific audiences, which in turn can improve the effectiveness of outreach efforts.

**Digital dominance.** There's no surprise that the increasing reliance on digital platforms and technologies is transforming the PR landscape. PR professionals are utilizing digital tools and analytics to gather insights, monitor online conversations and measure the impact of their campaigns. Social media, content marketing, influencer collaborations and online reputation management have become integral parts of PR strategies.

**Data-driven insights.** By analyzing the interactions between users and AI platforms like ChatGPT, PR professionals can gain valuable insights into customer behavior, preferences, pain points and emerging trends. These insights aid in refining PR strategies, targeting specific audiences and delivering tailored messages. AI is providing new tools and capabilities to help us to be more efficient, strategic and effective, however, it's not able to replace human intelligence and judgment.

**Personalized and targeted communication.** With the abundance of data and

analytics, PR professionals can now tailor their communication strategies to target specific audiences. Personalized messaging and customized campaigns are becoming more prevalent to connect with individuals on a more meaningful level. The use of data-driven insights allows PR practitioners to understand their audience's behaviors and interests, enabling them to deliver more relevant and engaging content.

**Diversity and inclusion matter.** A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion public relations strategy is vital for organizations that strive to commit to promoting and celebrating diversity. The failure of most corporate DEI programs is that they've become a statement-only strategy ("Our commitment to diversity"), without real change. Brands that want to attract new customers and foster loyalty, especially with Millennials and Gen Z, will need to ensure that they have examples for any DEI statements they make. Any brands who will try to use DEI policies merely as a "PR ploy" will backfire. Overall, the DEI PR strategy should seek to foster an environment that allows for open and honest conversations while celebrating differences and advancing the company's mission.

**Newer platform outreach.** With the elimination of print outlets in the media universe, clients still expect the same number of eyes on their brands. PR pros will diversify their outreach and pitch newer platforms and content mediums, such as podcasts and newsletters. As the nature of PR opportunities available continues to shift, PR pros will continue to use more varied channels to identify the right ones for their clients. With channels such as Qwoted, Substack, Muck Rack, HARO, Twitter and Slack for media outlets, it's easier than ever for reporters to request expert sources and for PR pros to respond and pitch emerging platforms. One of the greatest things about the increase in podcasts is that they are niche specific ... there's truly a podcast for every audience. While the numbers are not massive in many cases, audience members are highly engaged and interested in the topic at hand. Newsletters are another great way for companies to build brand awareness with individuals who would have the most propensity to engage with their brand.

**Authenticity and transparency.** Consumers are increasingly demanding au-

thenticity and transparency from organizations. PR professionals need to build trust and credibility by ensuring open and honest communication. This includes addressing public concerns, being accountable for mistakes and engaging with stakeholders in a transparent manner. PR campaigns that showcase the human side of organizations and emphasize their ethical practices are likely to gain traction.

**Influencer marketing.** PR professionals are collaborating with influencers and key opinion leaders to reach target audiences effectively. Influencers help to amplify brand messages and create authentic connections with their followers. However, as the field becomes more saturated, PR practitioners must carefully select influencers who align with the brand and engage in effective partnerships—i.e. the rise of the "genuinfluencer" trend—rather than purely transactional relationships.

**Crisis management and reputation resuscitation.** In an era of social media and instant communication, crises can quickly escalate. PR professionals need to be proactive in managing crises and protecting the reputation of clients. Rapid response plans, effective communication strategies and media monitoring tools are vital in mitigating potential damage and restoring trust. Crisis simulations and preparedness trainings are also becoming more utilized to ensure brands are ready to handle any unforeseen situations.

**Emphasis on measurement and ROI.** PR professionals are under increasing pressure to demonstrate the value and impact of their efforts. The future of PR lies in the ability to measure outcomes and link PR activities to business goals. Advanced analytics, data-driven insights and performance metrics are being used to assess the success of PR campaigns and justify investments. Measuring the ROI of PR activities will be crucial for demonstrating the value of PR to organizational objectives.

Overall, by staying on top—or ahead—of emerging trends, PR professionals can continue to navigate the evolving media landscape and effectively engage with their target audiences to heighten awareness and conscious consideration for clients.

Kerry Anne Watson is Managing Director at The Zimmerman Agency. ○



Kerry Anne  
Watson



# The dirty words of 'scopes'

Writing and defending a properly written scope of work is harder than it sounds.

By Mark Riggs

As marketers, strategists, creatives, public relations and public affairs professionals, we know and understand the power of words. We arrange them and re-arrange them “just so” to make sure we’re effectively communicating, or not communicating the right or wrong message.

Often, we can’t help ourselves, and we use a lot of words, and instead of making a situation better, we get “wordy” to our detriment. Or more directly, to the detriment of the latest P&L report from your agency CFO, as is often the case with scopes of work.

Generally, when we win a new client or a new assignment from an existing client, we jump right into the work. The emails start flying, briefs are being developed, we try and “get them a couple of placements,” so we—the agency—can validate the client’s decision to hire us. What we generally don’t do is take a breath and discuss how we will work together, what the relationship will look like when it’s functioning optimally, or what we’ll do together to ensure the relationship is always improving and how often we will review the success we have had toward our agreed-upon goals.

From the moment we’re awarded the work, we should discuss our uniform onboarding process and how that includes both parties communicating their expectations of each other—because, after all, we’re in business together.

When you don’t express how you and your agency work, what you’re doing is immediately inheriting the negative equity from the client’s previous agency—if they had one—or worse, falling into the client’s perception of how an agency-client relationship should function when they’ve never had an agency. Somewhere along the way, someone told me, “Unexpressed expectations are planned resentments.” And if the scope isn’t written in a clear, concise and defensible way, you and said client will land in the trash heap of unexpressed expectations, sooner rather than later.

In my 23 years in the agency business and my last five years as an agency growth consultant, I’ve seen indefensible scopes time and time again. These documents are often littered with what I call “The Dirty Words of Scopes.”

At the time of writing this piece, Pemberton has identified 18 words and/or phrases—it continues to grow—that leave us with indefensible scopes, inhibiting us

from drawing a line in the sand with a client, so they—and we—know when it’s being crossed, leading to over-servicing. A few examples are ...

- Ongoing
- As needed
- As requested
- Included, but not limited to (a personal fav)

Now, over-servicing is bound to happen to some degree, but with this “line” you and your agency can determine just how far you’re willing to go—or not. Here’s the thing: We don’t just over-service with time, we over-service with additional services that we’re not being compensated for, which leads to giving away too much time. And over-servicing leads to erosion of AGI, and if you aspire to ever sell your agency, that dwindling AGI ultimately limits the multiple you may be offered.

The scope of work is something that most, if not all of us, take for granted. We want to

get something signed so we can get down to business and produce the desired outcomes. But as an industry, we must make the work feel tangible. Time, ideas, strategies, counsel ... it’s all intangible. Our clients don’t walk out our doors with a tangible product in their hands as they would if they were shopping at their local sporting goods store.

Our clients understand the consumer dynamic of menus and pricing because they’re all consumers. They know they can’t walk into a big box retailer with \$100 and expect \$300 of goods ... so why are you setting the expectation that they can get it from you? You and your agency must make the work and scope feel tangible and communicate clearly when the client’s requests/needs outpace the established resource. After all, we’re in business, and it’s already challenging enough without giving away your value, products and services. So, wash your mouth out and rid our scopes of work of these dirty words.

Mark Riggs is CEO of Pemberton. ○



Mark Riggs

## Social media marketing critical for brands

By Jon Gingerich

Today’s business leaders recognize the value of social media marketing as well as the impact social media data and insights have on informing key business decisions, according to new research from Sprout Social.

As a result, business leaders are increasing investment in social media and broadening the role it plays in their companies’ overall marketing strategies.

The report, which surveyed marketing, customer service and communications professionals on the role that social media plays in their business strategies, found that executives almost universally agree that social media is vital for their companies’ communications efforts.

Nearly all (97 percent) of business leaders surveyed agree that social media data and insights are essential for effective public relations, and 91 percent believe that social media has a positive impact on a business’s public relations efforts. Nearly nine in 10 (88 percent) of business leaders think that social media should be a business’ primary communication tool.

Sprout’s report found that an overwhelming majority (96 percent) of executives polled think companies should continue to invest in social media marketing. And according to the report, that’s exactly what

most companies intend to do. 80 percent of the business leaders surveyed said they plan to invest more in social media over the next three years. In fact, nearly half (44 percent) said they’re planning to increase their company’s social media budgets by more than 50 percent over the next three years.

Business leaders also appear to recognize that the data and insights capabilities provided by social media are essential in informing their overall business strategies. A whopping 97 percent believe the practice of using social data to understand market trends will increase over the next three years, and 90 percent said they think their company’s success will depend on how effectively it can use those data and insights. As a result, 93 percent of business leaders said that moving forward, they expect social media data and insights to be a primary source of their future business intelligence.

Almost all (98 percent) of business leaders also said they think companies should work to better understand the potential of AI and ML technology, and almost the same number (97 percent) believe AI and ML will enable companies to more efficiently analyze social media data. ○



## 20TWO STUDIO

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**Lauren Knudsen, President**

20Two Studio is a PR and social agency passionate about bold storytelling for lifestyle and luxury brands in the travel, hospitality, wellness and real estate industries and hones in on expertise areas including traditional public relations, social media, influencer relations, brand partnerships and content creation. The ethos of the Studio is inspired by the number 22, symbolizing adaptability and insight and considered to be a master number focused on accomplishment at the highest level. 20Two Studio's innovative and strategic approach to creative storytelling with a focus on ROI and integrity contributes to the thoughtful results The Studio delivers to its clients. Lauren Knudsen, a 15+-year veteran of J/PR, leads the agency as President.

Established in 2021 with footprints in New York City, Los Angeles, Nashville, San Diego and Tampa, The Studio's fast-growing client portfolio touts nearly two dozen impressive hotel brands, celebrated resorts and boutique properties around the world including Miraval Resorts & Spas, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, W New York—Times Square, The Roundtree—Amagansett, Independent Collection Hotels & Resorts, L'Auberge Del Mar, and more.

The Studio is backed by the globally-recognized and award-winning industry powerhouse J/PR, 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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Since 2008, Public Relations and Communications have been our flagship services, with destination clients making up a significant portion of our business. We know how much a tailored communications plan can positively impact tourism. In our world, we focus on one thing: ensuring destination visitors are ready for an unforgettable visitor experience.

We build destination brands that inspire desire and provoke wanderlust. We find their essence and bring it to life through award-winning public relations and content-rich campaigns, transforming audiences into participants, sharing the siren-song stories that set places apart and pull people in.

We tap into the mindset of individuals seeking unique and remarkable experiences and bring them to life through media. Our successful track record includes working with renowned destinations such as Travel Nevada, Kalispell, Montana, Visit Carmel, Edgewood Tahoe Resort, Yosemite National Park, Placer County, and more. Through our efforts, we have garnered global attention, generated billions of impressions, and secured millions of dollars in earned media value, all while significantly boosting the local economy through increased room nights.

We are fiercely independent and true to our mission, vision and values—but also fiercely dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a woman-owned business enterprise, we understand the importance of amplifying underrepresented voices, providing opportunities for diverse career growth, and practicing cultural humility to cater to the unique needs, desires, and perspectives of a diverse constituency. Our ultimate goal is to make a positive impact on the communities we engage with and leave them better than we found them.



**Melanie Brandman, Founder & CEO of The Brandman Agency.**

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**Michael Gartenlaub, Vice President**

**Veronica Werhane, Account Director**

The Brandman Agency is a dynamic, results-driven integrated communications and public relations firm, specialized in travel, luxury and lifestyle. Founded by Melanie Brandman in 2000, The Brandman Agency is consistently ranked one of the top tourism and hospitality agencies in the industry.

With offices in New York City (HQ), Los Angeles, London and Sydney, the Agency prides itself on the global lens it brings to their work supporting some of the industry's most respected organizations. Beyond being fluent in several languages—among them Spanish, French, Italian, and Mandarin—the team of 40+ staff around the world are also fluent in the business of hospitality, both professionally and personally.

The Agency is committed to exceptional service and highly values its relationships with clients and media. As a result, many have worked with The Brandman Agency for 10+ years and are able to personally engage with media, influencers, and celebrities considered by most to be untouchable. In response to the rapidly changing media landscape, The Brandman Agency launched Travel Curator—a wholly-owned editorial channel—in 2011 followed by Brandman Digital in 2016. The Agency offers a full service social media, content creation and digital marketing arm to our communications offerings.

## CIIC PR

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**Carolyn Izzo-Feldman, CEO & Founder**

**Amy Sedeño, Vice President & Partner**

CIIC PR is an award-winning, 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 27 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, Crescent Hotels & Resorts, Palladium Hotels & Resorts, Curator Hotel & Resort Collection, Savoy Signature Hotels in Portugal, Bless Hotel Madrid, Kempinski Hotel Cancun, Novotel Hotel Miami, The Norman Estates at Rancho San Lucas, Aliz Hotel Times Square, voco NYC, VIK Hotel & Wine in Chile, Mexico Grand Hotels & Residences, and Cala Luna Hotel & Spa in Costa Rica, just to name a few. As des-





**CIIC PR in action at Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. Cultural Fiesta in Panama.**

tination experts, CIIC's destination experience includes Nevis, Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, The Mexican Caribbean (Quintana Roo), Surfside, FL and Barbados, among others.

CIIC's work is strategic, creative, and results-driven, and has been recognized with awards from PR Daily, *PR News* and has received more than 20 HSMAI industry awards. In addition, our team has been awarded 'Top Women in PR' and was recognized in 2023 as a 'TOP 100 Agency' by *PR News* for the second consecutive year.



**A Jet-Set Journalistic Adventure: Coyne PR Takes Media Maestros on a Whirlwind Expedition to the Tropical Haven at Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa, February 2023.**

CIIC is proud to be Woman-Owned and is Certified as a Women's Business Enterprise by WBENC.

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**Lauren Mackiel, Senior Vice President**

Over the past several years, the travel industry experienced a boom, some even referring to it as the Golden Age of Travel 2.0. However, many media outlets report that the "revenge travel" trend is now turning. As travel gradually slows down, it becomes increasingly challenging for businesses to capture the attention and spending of consumers. Coyne Travel is here to help you navigate this evolving landscape and stand out.

In this highly competitive environment, our team excels in uncovering consumer insights, developing effective strategies, and implementing comprehensive marketing campaigns that resonate with target audiences. We understand the challenges posed by media shifts, staying ahead of emerging trends on digital and social media platforms to ensure clients effectively exceed their business goals.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in travel is revolutionizing customer experiences through personalized recommendations, chatbots, and advanced data analytics. Coyne Travel is at the forefront of these trends, leveraging AI to enhance communications, drive growth, and meet key performance indicators.

Coyne Travel believes in the enduring power of the industry to inspire, connect, and transform. Meaningful travel experiences still hold value, allowing people to connect and gain a deeper understanding of the world. Our clients gain access to industry expertise to capture the hearts and wallets of discerning travelers. We invite you to join us on this journey as we navigate the ever-evolving travel industry, offering trusted partnership in maximizing brand potential and driving success.

## DECKER/ROYAL

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**Cathleen Decker, Stacy Royal,**  
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**Devyn Barker, Senior Vice President**

Award-winning Decker/Royal is a creative communications and marketing agency serving hospi-

talities, 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 singular purpose: measurable results.

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

Clients: Adventure World Travel; App in the Air; Beaches Resorts; Brendan Vacations; Club Wyndham; Contiki; Costsaver; Friendly Planet Travel; Fowl Cay Resort; Holland America Line; Insight Vacations; Island Routes; Lindblad Expeditions; Luxury Gold; Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa; Le Barthélemy Villa Rental; Margaritaville Vacation Club; Market New Haven; Natural Habitat Adventures; Panorama; Reno Tahoe; Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa; Salt Cottages; Sandals Resorts; Sandy Pines Campground; The Claremont Hotel; The Lincoln Hotel; Trafalgar; The Sandals Foundation; Tourism Fiji; Travel + Leisure Co.; Uniwold Boutique River Cruises; Wanderer Cottages; WorldMark by Wyndham; and Your Jamaican Villas.



**To celebrate the cruise line's 150-year journey from immigrant carrier to consumer ocean liner fleet, D/R orchestrated a partnership between client Holland America Line and The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. Highlights included on-board video content across Holland America's entire fleet produced by an Ellis Island researcher, and a curated exhibit at Ellis Island detailing the brand's historical prominence in bringing one in 10 immigrants from Europe to the United States.**



## DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLORS INTERNATIONAL (DCI)

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Our passion is places. Established in 1960, Development Counsellors International (DCI), is focused on elevating the lives of people living, traveling and working in the places we serve by engaging our passions for travel, exploring new cultures, and doing good. During the last half century, we have worked with more than 500 cities, regions, states, provinces and countries to help them attract visitors, business investment 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 through TAAN Worldwide. We have a strong record of successfully partnering with numerous international brands—Barbados, Belize, Monaco and Thailand; as well as domestic destinations—Baltimore, Florida, St. Louis, and San Antonio.

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**Diana Bianchini**, Founder + President

Founded in 2002 by Diana Bianchini, Di Moda Public Relations is an award-winning lifestyle communications agency that focuses on achieving client goals through innovative strategy, strength in relationships and activating intelli-



**To inspire travelers of color to consider the U.S. Virgin Islands for their vacation, DCI launched a consumer activation at the Made in America music festival in Philadelphia, reaching 40,000 prospective travelers.**

gently across all media platforms. The agency consistently delivers success through a number of customized services including traditional public relations, marketing, philanthropic management, special events, influencer programming, social media management, specialized introductions, and strategic partnerships.

Di Moda is recognized as a leader in elevating profiles of experts and thought leaders as well as spearheading sustainable community oriented campaigns that leave an indelible global impact. The agency represents the modern pioneers that are committed to making a positive impact on the world. These brands, projects, campaigns, foundations, and experts think boldly outside the box, create change, and redefine industries and lifestyles. Di Moda's roster includes clients in wellness, hospitality, travel, emerging lifestyle, technology, architecture & design, foundations, non-profits & philanthropic initiatives, and innovative design groups as well as artists, individual experts, social entrepreneurs, thinkers, visionaries, dreamers, and life lovers.

## DIFFUSION

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Diffusion is an independent, global communications agency founded in 2008, operating a net-

work of wholly owned offices including New York, Los Angeles and London and an international partner network. The core of Diffusion's success is our unmatched ability to constantly strive for work that delivers meaning, purpose and measurable impact for our clients, our team and for society to take on the status quo and transform the future faster. Diffusion offers creative public relations services to clients spanning consumer lifestyle, travel and leisure, enterprise and consumer technology, retail and business services, including GoPro, Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni, Hilton, Boll & Branch, SevenRooms, Eyebuydirect and more. The Diffusion team is built of curious explorers who are connected to culture and community around the world. Though the world of travel and leisure has been forever changed following the COVID-19 pandemic, a pent-up demand to see and experience new cultures and destinations remains. Our approach to driving excitement and interest for Travel 2.0 is deeply rooted in our years of experience crafting PR programs for everything from online bookings platforms, hotels, airports, airlines, tour operators and beyond.

## EDELMAN

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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 de-

liver 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).

## ELEVEN SIX PUBLIC RELATIONS

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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, food & beverage and lifestyle brands, such as Caribbean resorts: Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya, Atlantis Paradise Island, Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort Spa & Casino, and Hôtel Barrière Le Carl Gustaf; New York City-area hotels



and restaurants: InterContinental Barclay New York, Kimpton Hotel Eventi, Kanopi restaurant from James Beard-nominated Anthony Gonçalves, NoMo SoHo, The Opus, Westchester, Royalton Park Avenue; and additional hotels and resorts: Andaz West Hollywood, Art of Living Retreat Center, The Elms Hotels & Spa, Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa, and Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas. Other clients include: non-profits and tour operators Pacific Whale Foundation, PacWhale Eco-Adventures, Remote Lands, and Red Savannah, insurtech company VisitorsCoverage, Visit Argentina and Visit Patagonia events, and more.

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Evins believes hospitality goes beyond an industry; it is an ethos based upon creating compelling, engaging and inspiring experiences as well as building interactive, enriching and purposeful relationships. Our approach transforms market data and intelligence into actionable insights and programming, utilizing blue sky thinking with bottom line accountability.

With more than 35 years of experience, Evins has an established reputation for contributing to the growth and success of prestigious industry pioneers and iconic brands. It is also well-regarded for its corporate and executive reputation platforming, issues and crisis management and strategic business counsel. Led by an outstanding team of industry professionals at the intersection of communications, culture and community, Evins is focused on optimizing mind-share and transforming it into engagement, advocacy and market share.

Evins has proudly forged enduring and successful client partnerships, with an average tenure of more than eight years and several in excess of 30 years, including Arlo Hotels, Chenot Palace Weg-



**Evins' Chairman Mathew Evins and Vice President, Travel & Lifestyle Michelle Kelly at Forbes Travel Guide's 2023 Summit honoring the best of the best in global luxury hospitality.**

gis, CORE Club, Duxiana, Exclusive Resorts, Flâneur Hospitality, Forbes Travel Guide, Hotels & Resorts of Halekulani, HOTEL THE MITSUI KYOTO, Inspirato, International Luxury Hotel Association, Jet Linx Aviation, Laphroaig, Maker's Mark, Ocean Reef Club, Royal Hawaiian Center, Sangha Retreat by Octave Institute, The Fifth Avenue Hotel, The Knickerbocker Hotel, The Lanesborough, The Lowell and Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection, amongst many others.

## FAHLGREN MORTINE

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**Neil Mortine**, Chairman & CEO  
**Marty McDonald**, 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 and South Carolina—with associates in many markets across the U.S. 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; Sonoma County Tourism; Visit Sun Valley; North Dakota Department of Commerce/Tourism; and many other destinations, regions, hospitality properties and more.

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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. 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 port-

folio includes clients in lodging, destinations, airline and cruise, design, health and wellness, attractions and travel-related services. Destinations include: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Dubai Tourism, I Love New York, Hong Kong Tourism, Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, Greater Palm Springs, Michigan Economic Development Corporation/Pure Michigan, Orlando, Italy, Colonial Williamsburg, Travel Alberta, Iceland and more. Hotels include: The Ned Hotel, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, Accor Power brands, St. Regis Aspen, Mandarin Oriental, Montage Hotels & Resorts, 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, Intrepid Travel 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 D.C. 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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**Leah Knepper**, SVP, Travel & Tourism Practice

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public rela-

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## FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN

— Continued from page 27

tions, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, a distinction it has held since 2001. Headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., and founded in April 1997, FWV has received 30 National Agency of the Year honors over the past 26 years. 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 Andrew Jackson's Hermitage; 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; Dorothea Dix Park, a 308-acre destination park in Raleigh, N.C.; the Dude Ranchers' Association; Gatlinburg, 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.).

FWV is the parent company of fashion and lifestyle PR firm AMP3 (New York City); mobility and transportation-focused agency The Millerschin Group (Greater Detroit); pet and animal health practice FWV Fetching; outdoor, ski, fashion, technology and consumer brand marketing agency CGPR (Greater Boston) and feature film development imprint Prix Productions. 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.

## HEMSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS

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**Samantha Jacobs**, Founder & President  
**Michael Jacobs**, COO  
**Cathy Hayes**, VP  
**Lacey Outten**, AVP, Food/Wine/Spirits  
**Kayla Atwater**, AVP, 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.

Travel/Hospitality clients include, among others: AmaWaterways, ATL Airport District, Banana Bay Resort, B Ocean Fort Lauderdale Resort, Black Swan Asset Management, B Orlando Resort & Spa, City of Dunwoody, City of College Park, City of South Fulton,

Corendon Hotels & Resorts, Cruise Barbados, Discover Dunwoody, Explore Gwinnett, Gateway Center Arena, Georgia International Convention Center, Hilton Garden Inn Palm Beach Gardens, Holiday Inn & Suites Universal, HomeToGo, Hyatt Place St. Petersburg, Kenefick Ranch Winery, Mangrove Beach Corendon Curacao Resort, Massanutten Resort, Performance Hospitality Management, Rental Escapes, VIKAND, WaterWalk Hospitality and Waters Edge Wineries.

## J/PR

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**Jamie Lynn O'Grady, Sarah Evans**, Partners

Established in 2005 by partners Jamie Lynn O'Grady (California) and Sarah Evans (New York), J/PR is a female-founded and operated global communications agency, proudly employing a dynamic team across the US and UK, many of whom have been with the agency for over a decade. Specializing in travel, hospitality, consumer lifestyle, real estate, wellbeing and sustainable brands, the agency brings unmatched depth and experience to clients through traditional public relations, social media strategy, photography, content creation, influencer relations, brand partnerships, and crisis communications.

With offices in San Diego, New York City, London, Los Angeles, Denver and Nashville, plus a presence in Toronto, Atlanta, Arizona, Boston, Chicago and Toronto, J/PR is a trusted leader in integrated media relations and brand strategy, openings, launch campaigns, trend forecasting, guest programming, experiential activations, and influencer engagement. Always innovat-

ing, J/PR was the first agency in its space to launch a (now award-winning) podcast in 2018, Priority Status. In its eighteenth year of operation, J/PR has risen to become one of the country's foremost hospitality agencies, with a global portfolio of clients throughout North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, Caribbean, Mexico, Maldives, Dubai, New Zealand, and beyond that consistently exceeds the reach and quality of competitive agencies many times the size of J/PR.

The agency's client portfolio is made up of flagship hospitality brands including Hilton Luxury Brands, Dorchester Collection, Richard Branson's Virgin Limited Edition, Shangri-La, Relais & Châteaux, Vail Hospitality, Pendry Hotels & Resorts, Great Wolf Lodge, Under Canvas, and Iconic Luxury Hotels, as well as individual hotels around the world and destinations including Panama and Utah. In addition, J/PR has continued to expand its consumer and real estate portfolio with the representation of Hawaiian Airlines, California Olive Ranch, Palazzo Ricci, Velvaere and more.

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.

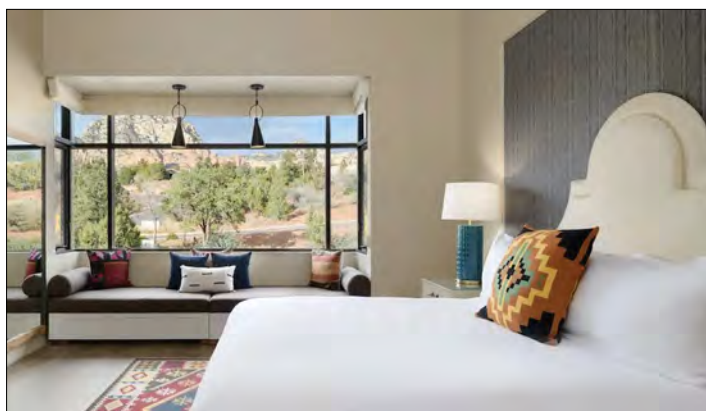
## LAVIDGE

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**Bill Lavidge**, President and CEO  
**Anne Robertson**, Managing Director, Public Relations & Publicity  
**Dave Nobs**, Managing Director, Growth & Development

We work within a wide spectrum of industries and can parachute into any that need us, but we do have favorites, including travel and hospitality. With a focus on the client's end goal, we craft and activate strategies built for results. We're available for standalone PR services or as part of LAVIDGE's unified advertising and marketing offerings.





**LAVIDGE** snagged coverage in *Condé Nast Traveler* for **The Wilde Resort and Spa, a Sedona, Ariz.**, property offering yoga, hiking, restaurants and a range of spa treatments.

With experience as diverse and best-in-class as the clients we serve, our team is a mix of savvy and seasoned PR professionals from both agency and corporate worlds, former journalists, and fresh talent native to the new and always evolving mediascape.

Our top priority: buzzworthy headlines that spotlight your story and brand to the audiences that matter. Our strengths: identifying and nurturing media relationships across all platforms including print, broadcast, podcasts, and influencers.

We design our social media strategies to fit your goals and resources. From content creation to social listening to campaign calendars and posts that enhance engagement with your audiences, we're on it.

From groundbreakings to resort and hotel grand openings to launch parties and everything in-between, we help create and manage events that draw attention to and celebrate your brand.

## LDPR

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**Laura Davidson**, CEO & Founder  
**Leslie Cohen**, President & Owner

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. LDPR has made significant investments in expanding digital capabilities through strategic hiring, and expansion of the in-house team, to enhance the agency's digital capabilities in order to stay at the forefront of the industry. In addition to numerous industry awards, LDPR was named on *The Observer's* 2023 PR Power List Honor Roll and Great Places to Work certified for the second year in a row.

Our clients include Aman; Abercrombie & Kent; VisitScotland; Tahiti Tourisme; Travel Portland; The Boca Raton, Florida; The Resort at Paws Up, Montana; The Ritz Paris; Alila Napa Valley; Charleston Place; Briggs & Riley; Discovery Portugal / Octant Hotels; The Aerial, British Virgin Islands; The Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, Sorrento, Italy; Raffles Boston (opening Summer 2023); One Aldwych, London; Sea Island, St. Simons Island, Georgia; The Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay, California, 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, Miami, and Tampa. LHG has built a legendary reputation over the past 39 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, 22-year organization, 22 global members.
- Impressive travel client retention serving partners over ten years: Collier County FL, Explore Bristol RI, Nassau Paradise Island, Panama City Beach FL, Santa Fe, Sonoma Winegrowers; 15 years: Charleston SC, Providence RI and 20 years: Norfolk VA.

Sampling of new travel accounts—Emirate of Dubai; Cartersville-Bartow, GA; County of Newnan-Coweta, City of Newnan, GA; The Junto hotel, OH; Touchstone Golf; Explora Journeys; Whitewater Montgomery; Lambs & Dragons; Visit Oxford, MS; Top Trumps US, Monopoly Board.

Keys to success—results and creative outreach:

- Maximized Tariq "The Corn Kid's" viral interview on Recess

Therapy by naming him South Dakota's Corn-Bassador. Solidified designation through hosted official visit and press conference at the world's only Corn Palace in Mitchell, SD. LHG secured more than 2,000 placements and 45+ billion impressions across print, digital, broadcast and social including Good Morning America, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, NBC News, Today, NPR, *The New York Times*, *People*, *Teen Vogue*, *Parade*, Yahoo Entertainment and *Food and Wine Magazine*.

- Continued support for Jamaica's tourism recovery. Secured on island Bravo's mega-hit Southern Charm, audience 1.3 million and popular Summer House celebrity influencers at no cost reaching 5.3 million; activated a NYC consumer event showcasing the Island's food and music enjoyed by some 3,000 consumer; and conducted Minister of Tourism TV tour reaching 5+ million viewers. Destination attracted 3+ million visitors in 2022, up 117% over 2021, and a record-setting 1.2 million visitors in the first three months of 2023.

• MSC Cruises—Devised a multi-level communication plan to launch MSC Cruises' newest flagship MSC Seascape and capitalize on the brand's upcoming year-round sailings from New York. Leveraging the ship's presence in Manhattan, LHG generated buzz for the christening by hosting nearly 100 media on board, including the TODAY Show's Third Hour. Outreach earned 3 billion launch-specific media impressions and 250+ placements in six months.

• Leveraged Virginia Tourism Corporation's partnership with Saks Fifth Avenue through a high-level media reception for top outlets that showcased specially designed windows. Event focused on the state's Luxury Resort Collection in conjunction with United Airlines. Earned media reach exceeded 100 million as Virginia continues to increase its perception as a premier domestic luxury destination.

• Taste of the Bahamas—Organized a festive New York media event for the Nassau Paradise Island Promotion Board, including a dynamic destination update, local performers, Bahamian culinary creations and interactive demonstrations. Hosted more than 50 guests that generated more than 1 million media impressions in one week.

- Opened the media's eyes to



**International Grammy award winner singer songwriter Ne-Yo performs at MSC Seascape's naming ceremony in New York City. LHG's efforts earned 3 billion launch-specific media impressions and 250+ placements in the first six months.**

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## LOU HAMMOND GROUP

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the State of New Jersey's highly underrated culinary scene. Having successfully launched the Anthony Bourdain Food Trail, LHG planned and executed a high-profile culinary event. Orchestrated national coverage, NBC's Today show and News Now and reached several thousand consumers with an activation in Herald Square that drove 500 million media impressions, \$10 million value. New Jersey has enjoyed a tourism renaissance with rapidly growing visitation.

- Leveraged Chubbies, a national lifestyle brand, for a creative collaboration with Visit Panama City Beach. Capitalized on Chubbies' strong social media following by hosting admired influencers in the destination to drive national visibility for the iconic beach offerings. In less than 3 days, results included 1.5 million video views, \$300,000 media value.

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 & Chief Revenue Officer

With expertise in brand development, social media strategy, content creation, creator relations, experiential events, and more than



**An official Monopoly Board is coming to Charleston, SC, and Lou Hammond Group is "throwing the dice" to pass GO and taking part in bringing recognition and excitement to the board game. The new edition is expected to launch in November, highlighting the city's famed iconic landmarks with customized play spaces and cards.**

30 years in media relations, Magrino serves as the ultimate connector across the entire communications economy to keep your story trending and ultimately drive consumer preference for your brand.

That is the reason some of the world's most revered lifestyle brands turn to us—and return to us.

Magrino continues to be run by its Chairman & CEO Susan Magrino and President & Chief Revenue Officer Allyn Magrino, along with a diverse team of communications experts focused on staying ahead of the ever-evolving media ecosystem.

### ACCESS GRANTED.

- An All-Star Team
- Multi-Category Reach
- Cross-Channel Expertise
- Industry Connections

## 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, ItsEasy.com Passport & Visa Services, Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay, Transcend Cruises and World Nomads

## MARKETING MAVEN

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**Lindsey Carnett**, CEO & President

With offices in Los Angeles and New York City, Marketing Maven's integration of PR and digital marketing helps provide a competitive edge to their clients. Marketing Maven helps businesses grow their revenues by developing campaigns that engage a target audience, generate sales then utilize advanced metrics to measure ROI. Their services aid national marketing campaigns and product launches with reputation management, organic SEO tracking, competitive analysis reports, influencer marketing and online product reviews to help increase revenue. Visit [www.marketingmaven.com](http://www.marketingmaven.com) for more information.



**Charles Mardiks**, president of Mardiks PR, welcomes Condor Airlines' new A330neo to New York/JFK, where the agency orchestrated a media and client launch event.



Marketing Maven supported Tokushima Prefecture on Shikoku Island in Japan with a luncheon in Santa Monica, CA and a webinar series to promote tourism.



## MMGY NJF

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**Julie Freeman**, EVP & Managing Director  
**Lauren Kaufman**, SVP & Director of Operations

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

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, Denver, San Francisco, Chicago, 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



**In May 2023 in Malta, Oceania Cruises’ Vista was christened by celebrity chef godmother Giada De Laurentiis followed by a rousing performance by Harry Connick, Jr. The gala event featured a touching passing of the torch from industry icon Frank Del Rio to his son Frank A. Del Rio, new president of the line. The MMGY NJF team worked over a year planning the global launch, hosting 130 media on the inaugural voyage, which immediately generated 168 placements and over 1.6 billion impressions.**

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, Concord Hospitality, Costa Rica Tourism, Crystal Coast, Destination Greater Victoria, Discover Grand Rapids, Etihad Airways, Explore Worldwide, Fairmont Empress, Visit Greater Palm Springs, Go City, HEI Hotels, Hotel Vermont, HSMAL, LATAM Airlines, Marriott Marquis, Meet AC, Oceania Cruises, Rooftop at Exchange Place, Sensei, Student Universe, Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater, Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau, The

National World War II Museum, Travel Texas, Visit California, Visit Corpus Christi, Visit Dallas, Visit Elizabeth City, Visit KC, Visit La Paz (Mexico), Visit Newport, Visit Santa Barbara, Visit Traverse City, WTTC and Windjammer Landing Resort.

## PINEAPPLE PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**Deborah Stone**, President

Your story starts here! Pineapple PR is an integrated communications company specializing in serving businesses and organizations in the tourism, hospitality and economic development industries. We are storytellers with a history of delivering a superior level of service



**As agency of record for Perillo Tours, Redpoint plans robust annual campaigns to help drive brand awareness and bookings, especially for their tours to Italy. From feature story placement to satellite media tours and everything in between, Redpoint is charged with getting widespread coverage in North American media.**

and results-oriented campaigns for destinations, properties and attractions. Our talented team creates and executes public relations, social media, content marketing and digital marketing services that move people to action. 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.

## REDPOINT MARKETING PR, INC.

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**Christina Miranda**, Principal & Co-Founder  
**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,

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## REDPOINT

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MSC Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Tauck, Collette, Perillo Tours, Learning Journeys, United States Tour Operators Association, Student & Youth Travel Association, Loews Hotels, Affinia Hotels, Woodstock Inn & Resort, Kennebunkport Resort Collection, Topnotch Resort & Spa, Red Lion Inn, Porches Inn at Mass-MoCA, 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.

## TJM COMMUNICATIONS

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**Treva J. Marshall**, Pres., treva@tjmcommunications.com  
**Joel Kaiman**, VP, joel@tjmcommunications.com

TJM Communications is an award-winning, global lifestyle public relations firm, specializing in the travel, food, wine, convention and event sectors. We provide strategy, media and influencer relations, content creation, crisis management and social media services for leading hospitality brands domestically and globally.

Our agency is distinguished by a committed team of passionate professionals who develop genuine long-standing relationships with media and clients and thrive on exceeding expectations. We don't believe in PR for the sake of PR. We believe in public relations as a creative, strategic approach aligned with sales and marketing goals. Clients Include: Walt Disney World, Visit Sarasota, Cirque du Soleil, Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort, Evermore Resort, Sawgrass Marriott Resort & Spa; restaurants: Four Flamingos; A Richard Blais Florida Kitchen; Shula's Steak House; Rosa Mexicano; Todd English's bluezoo and Il Mulino.

## TURNER

A Fahlgren Mortine company

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**Christine Turner**, President  
**Melanie Dennig**, Executive VP

TURNER represents the world's best luxury resorts, destinations, spirits, wellness, and outdoor brands. Our tenured teams in New York, Chicago, Denver, Charleston, and Miami have unmatched industry experience and deliver nimble, innovative strategies. TURNER specializes in storytelling, with a particular emphasis on generating editorial influence, social media engagement, and content-forward owned channels.

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 established 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.

## ZAPWATER COMMUNICATIONS

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**Amanda ReCupido**, Managing Director, Chicago  
**Holly Zawyer**, Managing Director, Miami  
**Stephanie Poquette**, SVP, Social Media and Influencer Programming

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

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

Our agency integrates multidisciplinary services such as digital engagement, experiential tactics and media relations—to drive bottom-line results. To date, Zapwater has won 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.

In 2023, Zapwater was named a finalist for both *PRWeek's* Outstanding Boutique Agency and *PRovoke Media's* Digital Agency of the Year.

Our travel client roster includes a curated mix of destinations, hotels & resorts and airlines including:

Airlines—Air Tahiti Nui, COPA Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, Finnair;

Cruise—Havila Voyages;

Destinations—Discover Baja Sur, Discover Dominica Authority, Jungfrau, National Tourism Board of Serbia, Travel Manitoba, Visit Connecticut, Visit Finland;

Hotels & Resorts—Andaz Mexico City Condesa, Ayana Bali, Borgo San Vincenzo, 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, Hotel Zachary, Hyatt Regency Salt Lake City, Hyatt Regency San Francisco, Mount Cinnamon Resort, Ocean Club Resorts, PPHG Hotels, Sofitel Chicago, Swissotel Chicago;

Entertainment & Attractions—Gallagher Way Chicago, Grupo Xcaret, Museum of Illusions, Skydeck Chicago, Tiqets.

## 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, Bryce Canyon, South Padre Island CVB, Visit Laredo, Hertz Rental Car Company, Pyramid Global Hospitality, Westgate Resorts, Kessler Collection of Luxury Resorts, Delaware North, Hotel Terra and Grand Teton Village in Jackson Hole, Henderson Beach Resort, Little Palm Island, Mahekal Resort (Playa del Carmen), The Preserve Sporting Club & Residences, Amsterdam Manor (Aruba), The Madison Hotel, Ritz-Carlton Dallas, Marriott's Harbor Beach Resort, TPC Network (Corporate), The Westin Riverwalk San Antonio, Kimpton Brice Savannah, Kartrite Resort, Brown Palace, Crescent Court Fort Worth, Mansion on Forsyth, The Squire Inn, JW Marriott Savannah Plant Riverside, Pelican Grand, Ocean Key Resort, Bungalows Key Largo, Beaver Creek Lodge, Wild Dunes and more. **O**



# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2022)	Firm	Net Fees (2022)
1. <b>Finn Partners</b> , New York, NY	<b>\$23,500,000</b>	20. <b>Bellmont Partners</b> , Minneapolis, MN	<b>\$592,851</b>
2. <b>Edelman</b> , New York, NY	<b>22,669,000</b>	21. <b>Fish Consulting</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>440,000</b>
3. <b>Zimmerman Agency</b> , Tallahassee, FL	<b>17,500,000</b>	22. <b>Tunheim</b> , Minneapolis, MN	<b>440,000</b>
4. <b>J Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	<b>16,184,000</b>	23. <b>Singer Associates PR</b> , San Francisco, CA	<b>402,026</b>
5. <b>Turner</b> , a <b>Fahlgren Mortine company</b> , New York, NY	<b>14,705,846</b>	24. <b>MP&amp;F Strategic Comms.</b> , Nashville, TN	<b>277,010</b>
6. <b>MMGY NJF</b> , New York, NY	<b>9,510,162</b>	25. <b>Ehrhardt Group, The</b> , New Orleans, LA	<b>257,280</b>
7. <b>Lou Hammond Group</b> , New York, NY	<b>9,068,858</b>	26. <b>Landis Communications</b> , San Francisco, CA	<b>248,000</b>
8. <b>Zeno Group</b> , New York, NY	<b>6,921,469</b>	27. <b>360PR+</b> , Boston, MA	<b>230,000</b>
9. <b>Coyne PR</b> , Parsippany, NJ	<b>6,461,067</b>	28. <b>Jackson Spalding</b> , Atlanta, GA	<b>196,477</b>
10. <b>French   West   Vaughan</b> , Raleigh, NC	<b>5,400,200</b>	29. <b>PSC</b> (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	<b>177,214</b>
11. <b>Ruder Finn Inc.</b> , New York, NY	<b>3,230,000</b>	30. <b>Marketing Maven PR</b> , Camarillo, CA	<b>160,256</b>
12. <b>Zapwater Comms, Inc.</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>2,833,100</b>	31. <b>TruePoint Communications</b> , Dallas, TX	<b>138,931</b>
13. <b>5W Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	<b>2,500,000</b>	32. <b>Rasky Partners, Inc.</b> , Boston, MA	<b>136,250</b>
14. <b>rbb Communications</b> , Miami, FL	<b>1,982,596</b>	33. <b>Otter PR</b> , St. Petersburg, FL	<b>129,477</b>
15. <b>Kivvit</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>1,764,785</b>	34. <b>Slide Nine Agency</b> , Columbus, OH	<b>99,597</b>
16. <b>Hemsworth Comms</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>1,429,478</b>	35. <b>Gregory FCA</b> , Ardmore, PA	<b>93,000</b>
17. <b>Pineapple PR</b> , Chamblee, GA	<b>1,382,009</b>	36. <b>Lawlor Media Group</b> , New York, NY	<b>62,900</b>
18. <b>Violet PR</b> , Montclair, NJ	<b>1,011,230</b>	37. <b>Inspire PR Group</b> , Westerville, OH	<b>44,128</b>
19. <b>Berk Communications</b> , New York, NY	<b>901,933</b>		



# Seizing the moral high ground

By Fraser Seitel

In public relations, all you have is your “reputation.” Relationships are built on “trust,” and as a public relations counselor, once you lose that trust—with clients, employees, journalists, et. al.—you lose everything. Stated another way, the prevailing mantra of positive public relations is “Do the right thing.” And the cardinal rule, therefore, for public relations practitioners is “never ever lie.”



**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*.

Sadly, the practice of public relations has been beset from its very beginnings by ethical questions. Ever since Ivy Lee accepted a job a century ago with

the owner of the German Dye Trust, which turned out to be an agent of Adolf Hitler, the field has been largely distrusted.

When Bill Clinton lied about not “having sexual relations” with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, the President called on his public relations advisors, James Carville, Paul Begala and Lanny Davis, to sow skepticism in the media with gossipy tales of the intern’s vivid imagination and questionable motives.

In the 90s, the revelation that the President of the United States had purposely lied was unfathomable. Clinton’s blatant breach of ethics opened the floodgates for the tidal wave of incivility, immorality and down-right duplicitousness that dominates public discourse today. In 2023, not only has it become perfectly acceptable for politicians, athletes, media personalities and celebrities to deceive the public, but some of society’s most notorious liars—from Al Sharpton to George Santos, from Donald Trump to Prince Andrew—are rewarded for their actions.

So, modern public relations has always suffered a perception problem with morality. That’s why in 2023, with societal standards sinking all around them, public relations professionals must embrace, as the field’s reigning moral philosopher Jim Lukaszewski puts it, “unapologetic honesty and forthrightness and engagement with our critics.”

Here are some random examples of how

Prof. Lukaszewski’s principles might work with more ethically-active public relations counsel.

## Saving San Francisco

San Francisco was once America’s most picturesque city; it’s now a hellhole, riddled with crime, rampant homelessness, deranged street people and other niceties that have shattered tourism, killed commerce and imperiled its downtown.

Most recently, San Francisco’s 35-year-old upscale shopping mall, the Westfield Centre, announced that it was throwing in the towel, leaving Bloomingdale’s and Neiman-Marcus as the lone remaining luxury stores in a decaying downtown.

So, what’s the moral public relations advice for San Francisco’s reluctant liberal Mayor London Breed to reverse the city’s accelerating decline? Be strong. Get tough. Confront the critics. Stay the course. In other words, have the courage to follow through on the \$14 million plan she announced in May to materially increase downtown police presence, get the homeless off the streets and declare war on shoplifters. But when ABC’s “Good Morning America” speculated that the Westfield Centre closure might turn San Francisco into a “zombie city,” the mayor’s response wasn’t reassuring.

Replied the Mayor’s office: “Lacking foot traffic in our downtown areas as a result of work-from-home habits, as well as challenges stemming from shifting shopping trends that have persisted for years, were exacerbated by the pandemic.”

Such a pathetic, pussyfooting response isn’t only unwise public relations counsel, it doesn’t augur well for the future of San Francisco.

## Lightening up on Biden’s economy

The latest public opinion polls show President Joe Biden’s approval rating hovering around 40 percent. That’s bad, and he’s vulnerable, not to mention old. But when Republicans go after him on the economy, they aren’t only being disingenuous but making a pivotal miscalculation.

The criticism is unfair, because as they—and we—are well aware, it’s the independent Federal Reserve Board, rather than the President, that possesses the power to influence prices, control interest rates, impact employment and moderate inflation. So it’s Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, not Mr. Biden, who largely holds the key to the direction of the U.S. economy.

Moreover, because it appears that Mr. Powell and his colleagues are steering the economy in the right direction, by the time the presidential campaign really heats

up, inflation may be tamped down and Biden may hold the upper hand. The fact that many, if not most, Americans are still working, flying, eating out and generally thriving should give Republicans pause on deriding the President for the economy. It’s simply the wrong thing to do.

## Backing off on Disney shaming

And speaking of Republican angst and Biden vulnerability, current polling suggests that Mr. Biden would ultimately beat the most likely Republican candidate. Of course, that leading candidate is none other than the curiosity that is Donald Trump, so all bets are off. But ... if Republicans do come to their senses and reject the Donald as their nominee, who’s most likely to be the candidate?

The answer, if he quickly embraces an immediate course correction, is Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who, despite his deep faults in personality and charisma, might be enough to beat a wounded Biden.

First, though, DeSantis must immediately cease his Walt Disney Company shaming campaign. DeSantis initially went after Disney to satisfy right-wingers who renounced the company’s statements supporting the LGBTQ community’s opposition to a Florida law banning elementary school discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

But instead of leaving it there, Gov. DeSantis has persisted in threatening to legislate against Disney’s business in Florida, which employs 80,000 Floridians and accounts for hundreds of millions of state dollars in commerce and tax revenues. In response, Disney CEO Bob Iger stepped up the tit for tat and announced his company would drastically curtail its planned expansion in Florida, leaving the state’s commercial future in doubt. And there Mr. DeSantis uncomfortably sits, his presidential aspirations hanging in the balance. So what should the governor’s advisors tell him to do?

Clearly, the most ethical, moral and right thing to do is schedule a meeting with Mr. Iger, agree to disagree on the social/educational issues that initially sparked the debate but bury the hatchet on the other business-related aspects that make no sense to either Florida, Disney or the political future of Ron DeSantis. Turning the other political cheek, so to speak, will help convince voters that Mr. DeSantis isn’t nearly as obstinate as his critics claim.

The point is that advising a client to “do the right thing” often requires, as Mr. Lukaszewski might put it, “calmness, character, compassion and candor.” That’s the real test of a public relations professional. ○



## Green succeeds Lambert as G&S CEO

**A**nne Green, who joined G&S Business Communications with its 2018 acquisition of CooperKatz where she was CEO, will succeed CEO Luke Lambert on Jan. 1.

Lambert is a 27-year veteran of G&S, working in business development, Managing Director in New York and President before becoming CEO in 2012.

He called Green, a 30-year PR veteran, “one of the smartest and savviest leaders I have worked with, respected by her colleagues, peers, clients and the communications community.”

In her post, Green will have overall responsibility for performance, operations, growth, innovation, culture and the continued evolution of its fully integrated suite of marketing and communications services.

G&S also upped Principal and Chicago Managing Director Brian Hall to President, and Senior VP-Human resources Kate Threewitts to Chief People Officer.

Managing Directors Caryn Caratelli, Stephanie Moore, Dana Ferrell (Raleigh) and Meredith Topalanchik (New York) will report to Hall, as well as the shop's communications, creative, digital and paid media teams. ○

## BCW names Google's duBrowa CEO

**B**CW has recruited Corey duBrowa, VP-Global Communications and PA at Google and Alphabet parent, as CEO to succeed Donna Imperato, who announced plans to exit in January.

DuBrowa, who joined Google in 2018, reported directly to CEO Sundar Pichai.

He also was Chief Communications Officer at Salesforce, Senior VP-Communications at Starbucks, President of Waggener Edstrom, VP at Ketchum and Director of Employee Communications at Nike.

DuBrowa will join BCW in August and will also oversee GCI Health, Prime Policy Group, Direct Impact and HZ. ○



Anne Green



Corey duBrowa

## Leavy takes CNN COO post

**D**avid Leavy, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Warner Brothers Discovery, has been named COO of CNN Worldwide, effective June 20.

He will assume responsibility for commercial, operational and promotional activities and report to CEO Chris Licht.

Leavy is a 23-year veteran of Discovery and a top lieutenant of CEO David Zaslav. He will remain in charge of public policy and CSR matters at Warner Bros. Discovery.

CNN has been battling a ratings slump. Its primetime viewership plummeted 25 percent to 494,000 in May from a year ago.

As Chief Corporate Operations Officer at Discovery Inc., Leavy handled the launch of discovery+ in 2021, guided its public listing on the NASDAQ exchange in 2008, and worked on the deal to acquire Scripps Networks Interactive in 2018.

Earlier, he worked in the Clinton White House as Chief Spokesperson for the National Security Council and Deputy Press Secretary for Foreign Affairs. ○



David Leavy

## Sandy Werth dies at 73

**S**andra Werth Harbrecht Ratchford, who was CEO of Paul Werth Associates, died June 18 after a battle with cancer. She was 73.

The former public school teacher was asked by her father, Paul, to join his firm in 1983.

Upon his retirement in 1986, she became president of the firm that is celebrating its 60th anniversary and is the only Columbus-based strategic communications firm that remains under the same family ownership.

Sandy was past Chair of PRSA's Counselors Academy and a founding member of the PR Council. She also chaired the External Advisory Council for the College of Engineering at The Ohio State University and was a member of the university's President's Alumni Advisory Council and the Dean's Advisory Council for Fisher College of Business.



Kim Mandara

She served on the boards of Encova Insurance and the Davey Tree Company, and was the immediate past President of the Columbus Club.

In lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Sandra Werth Ratchford Memorial Fund at The Columbus Foundation, or other charity of the giver's choice. ○

## Kelley returns to Interpublic

**J**acki Kelley has returned to Interpublic as EVP, chief client & business officer after a four-year stint as CEO Americas & chief client officer at dentsu.

She joined IPG's Mediabrand in 2009 from Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, exiting in 2014 as CEO North America & president of global clients.

Kelley was SVP at USA Today during an 18-year run and deputy COO at Bloomberg before moving to dentsu in 2019.

IPG CEO Philippe Krakowsky welcomed Kelley back, calling her “a force in our industry who leads with great heart and a keen understanding of what marketers need in order to succeed in today's complex media and consumer landscape.” ○



Jacki Kelley

## Disney's DEI chief resigns

**L**atondra Newton has quit her chief diversity officer job at Walt Disney Co. to pursue other endeavors, according to a memo from Sonia Coleman, chief human resources office.

She joined Disney in 2017 from Toyota, where she handled its DEI program.

Coleman said Newton “inspired countless cast members and employees to bring about lasting change and to help create a world where we can all feel safe and we all belong.”

She is “dedicated to ensuring every person sees themselves and their life experiences represented in a meaningful and authentic way.”

A search for Newton's replacement is under way. Disney is in the midst of corporate layoffs. ○



Latondra Newton

## SKDK snags aide to NY Gov. Hochul

**B**ryan Lesswing, Senior Advisor to New York Governor Kathy Hochul, has joined Stagwell's SKDK unit's public affairs practice unit as SVP to work on corporate, crisis and advocacy clients.

Lesswing has provided strategic communications counsel to Hochul since 2019.

He handled her transition from lieutenant governor to succeed Andrew Cuomo in the top job, response to the COVID-19 pandemic and supported her run to become the first elected woman to lead the Empire State.

Prior to joining Team Hochul, Lesswing served as Communications Director for Sen. Tammy Baldwin's (D-WI) re-election campaign, worked as Director of Campaign Communications at EMILY's List, and was Communications Director for Maryland's Democratic Party. ○



Bryan Lesswing



## Ballard targets VA for UpToDate

**B**allard Partners has signed on to represent UpToDate Inc., online clinical decision support provider.

The firm will educate the executive branch about the importance of online medical information to the Veterans Affairs Library Network.

VALNET is the largest healthcare library network in the U.S.

Its staff supplies information, research and education to enhance the quality of care in the VA health system.

Brian Ballard handles the work along with former Republican Congressman Jeff Miller of Florida.

Miller chaired the House Veterans Affairs Committee for three terms and served on the Armed Services Committee. He helped draw up Donald Trump's talking points in 2016 to reform the VA.

UpToDate is owned by Wolters Kluwer, which is based in the Netherlands. ○

## Biden aides launch Second Floor Advisors

**T**homas Isen and Alex Yudelson, veterans of Joe Biden's White House, have launched Second Floor Advisors strategic communications and impact engagement shop.

Isen served as liaison between the President and his Cabinet, while Yudelson was Executive Secretary of the Domestic Policy Council.

Prior to joining Team Biden, Isen held a variety of communications, marketing and business development roles in the fashion, beauty and retail space at Charlotte Tilbury personal care products marketer and Dr. Barbara Sturm.

Yudelson served in the Obama administration as the President's outreach person to sports teams, leagues and athletes. He also was Chief of Staff for the government of Rochester (NY), overseeing more than 3,000 employees and managing intergov-



Thomas Isen and Alex Yudelson

ernmental affairs.

Second Floor Advisors will help clients navigate today's fraught political landscape and leverage their platforms to create positive change with an emphasis on consensus building. ○

## Airbnb's Feldman drives to GM

**E**ric Feldman, who headed federal and international affairs at Airbnb, has signed on at General Motors as Executive Director of Federal Affairs. He assumed the post on June 26.

As the automaker's senior Democratic lobbyist, Feldman will pair with his Republican counterpart Hollyn Schuemann to engage with Congress and federal government officials.

Schuemann worked for Louisiana Congressman & House Commerce and Energy chair Billy Tauzin.

Feldman was Chief of Staff for Michigan Senator Gary Peters and held the same post when he served in the House. He also did a stint as Deputy Research Director for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Peters is active in emerging auto technology sector issues such as autonomous driving and cybersecurity. ○



Eric Feldman

## FGS works D.C. for S2G Ventures

**F**GS Global is monitoring legislation in the areas of energy, agriculture, climate and oceans on behalf of S2G Ventures of Chicago.

S2G is the investment platform of Builders Vision, which was launched and is led Lukas Walton. He's the grandson of Sam and Helen Walton, founders of Walmart and the Walton Family Foundation.

Builders Vision invests in and collaborates with non-profits, businesses, and others working towards sustainable solutions to societal and environmental challenges.

FGS has nine staffers working the S2G Ventures push. The team includes Partners Catharine Ransom (Senior Climate & Environmental Advisor to Sen. Max Baucus); Anthony Reed (Chief of Staff to Rep. Denny Hastert); Grant Leslie (Senior Advisor to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack); and Jacqlyn Schneider (Deputy Staff Director for the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry). ○



## Chartwell reps spyware developer

**C**hartwell Strategy Group is providing strategic communications services to NSO Group, the Israel-based cybersecurity firm that developed the notorious Pegasus spyware.

Pegasus, which can be installed remotely on phones without the owner knowing it, is licensed to intelligence and law enforcement services.

The United States on Nov. 3, 2021, blacklisted NSO Group from receiving American technology after it determined that its software was used by foreign governments to “maliciously target” activists, journalists and political opponents.

Hanan Elatr, widow of Jamal Khashoggi, filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court on June 15, claiming that Saudi Arabia put Pegasus on her cellphone to spy on her husband.

NSO has denied that its software was used to bug Elatr’s phone or that it had any involvement in the murder of Khashoggi.

Chartwell reps NSO as a subcontractor to Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman law firm. It signed the NSO contract on Dec. 20, 2021 but the pact did not go into effect until Jan. 11, 2022 when Chartwell got a \$100,000 payment from the company.

The firm received \$200,000 from NSO during the six-month period ended Feb. 28, 2023 for media outreach to outlets including the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, Bloomberg, Foreign Affairs, Reuters, Politico, Boston Globe, Associated Press, and The Mail. ○

## BGR launches impact index

**B**GR Group unveils Impact Index, a data-based analysis that gauges the clout of foreign countries in the U.S. and D.C.

The tool is part of BGR’s Analytics group that launched in May under Frank Ahrens, the firm’s PR principal. The Impact Index aggregates and analyzes data across 25 main categories divided into 109 indicators.

FARA News



### NEW FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT FILINGS

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

**C. Landon Parvin**, Virginia, **registered June 8, 2023 for Embassy of Japan**, Washington, D.C., regarding preparing and editing speeches and other public relations materials as needed.

**Independent Diplomat, Inc.**, New York, N.Y., **registered June 13, 2023 for Mission of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations**, Majuro, Marshall Islands, regarding providing advice in the areas of diplomatic strategy, diplomatic tools and techniques and public diplomacy.

**Myriad International Marketing, LLC**, Overland Park, Kan., **registered May 30, 2023 for Destination British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada**, regarding pitching Destination British Columbia story ideas to strategic media outlets and to build relationships with key media to promote British Columbia to U.S. travelers.

Lobbying News



### NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT FILINGS

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

**ACG Advocacy**, Washington, D.C., **registered June 8, 2023 for Peregrine Fund**, Boise, Idaho, regarding funding for raptor conservation programs. Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered June 5, 2023 for Sierra Space**, Broomfield, Colo., regarding international issues and assistance on identifying international clients for this commercial space company.

**Todd Strategy Group**, Washington, D.C., **registered June 5, 2023 for FOX Corporation**, Washington, D.C., regarding policy issues impacting television and media business.

**Yorktown Solutions**, Washington, D.C., **registered June 20, 2023 for High Power Exploration Inc., (HPX)**, Wilmington, Del., regarding the HPX’s development of the Nimba iron ore deposit in Guinea.

The data are compiled, weighted and scored to produce a ranking for each of the 195 UN member and observer nations in each of the 25 main categories, as well as an overall ranking.

BGR says the tool is the only Index that incorporates online media monitoring and social media monitoring and analysis to give countries up-to-the-minute insight about what is being said about them online. BGR analyzed 3.8 trillion pieces of online and social media data from Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2022.

The Impact Index is designed to be actionable—countries can clearly see where they stand in regard to peer and rival countries and how they can improve their ranking. It gives them the lay of the land, showing the categories where they punch above and below their weights.

Ahrens says with the Impact Index countries no longer have to rely on anecdotal, outdated and untested assumptions and gut feeling when determining where they stand and deciding how to engage with policymakers and the media. Ahrens expects BGR’s current clients (India, South Korea, Bahrain and Uzbekistan) and future ones will benefit from the Impact Index. ○

## BGR signs \$600K pact with Iraqi political party

**B**GR Group has signed a one-year \$600,000 contract to provide government relations and PR services to Iraq’s Taqadum (Progress) Party.

It also may conduct outreach to Washington officials, NGOs and the US media.

Formed in 2019, the Sunni political group says its mission is to establish a civil and modern state through cultural society change in Iraq, where about 60 percent of its people are Shia Muslims.

BGR’s contract kicked off June 15. Founding Partner Ed Rogers heads BGR’s Taqadum team. International & Trade practice co-heads May Seiden and Lester Munson; I&T Principals Mark Tavarides and Walker Roberts; and PR Principal Frank Ahrens round out the group. ○

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j public relations

## J Public Relations

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

212/924-3600

letstalk@jpublicrelations.com

www.jpublicrelations.com

Employees: 56. Founded: 2005.

## Agency Statement:

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

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

JPR is continuously listed on the Observer's annual "PR Power 50" as one of the country's most powerful PR firms and Crain's "Best Places to Work in New York City." The agency also garnered "Top Places to Work" by PR News and received a Five Star rating in Forbes inaugural list of "America's Best PR Agencies," in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success. An industry innovator, JPR became the first travel PR agency to launch a podcast in 2018, Priority Status.

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

## Office Locations:

### New York

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

212/924-3600

### San Diego

2341 Fifth Ave., San Diego, CA 92101

619/255-7069

### Los Angeles

429 Santa Monica Blvd., #280

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Condado Vanderbilt - San Juan, PR



Jamie Sigler O'Grady,  
Sarah Evans, partners

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**\$60**

Total/Value

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or contact Melissa Werbel, Director of Research, 646/843-2082, [melissa@odwyerpr.com](mailto:melissa@odwyerpr.com)**





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- **JOB FLASH™ EMAIL**  
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The Resume Bank allows the ability to contact potential candidates, only paying for those who are interested.

Contact O'Dwyer's Career Center's customer service department at [clientserv@communitybrands.com](mailto:clientserv@communitybrands.com) or Call (727) 497-6565 for more information.



An aerial photograph of a tropical resort. In the center, a rectangular swimming pool with clear blue water is visible. A person is floating on their back in the pool. The pool is surrounded by lush greenery, including large-leafed plants and banana trees. To the left and right of the pool, there are thatched-roof huts, likely part of a bungalow or villa complex. The overall scene conveys a sense of luxury and relaxation in a tropical setting.

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