

RANKINGS ISSUE

**PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS RANKED BY
NET FEES, SPECIALTY, REGION & GROWTH**

**MORE THAN 130 FIRMS RANKED ACROSS
19 INDUSTRY SPECIALTIES**

**7 NEW RANKINGS
CATEGORIES ADDED**

AUTOMOTIVE, EDUCATION, ENERGY,
INDUSTRIAL, NON-PROFITS, CSR/
PURPOSE, REAL ESTATE,
AND MORE!

RANKINGS OF HEALTHCARE PR FIRMS, PG. 36

RANKINGS OF TECH PR FIRMS, PG. 26

PR FIRMS RANKED BY ANNUAL GROWTH, PG. 51

FINANCIAL & INVESTOR RELS. FIRMS RANKED, PG. 30

INDEPENDENT FIRMS RANKED BY NET FEES, PG. 48

PR FIRMS RANKED BY GEOGRAPHY, PG. 52



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EDITORIAL

MORE TRUST MEDIA'S
COVID-19 REPORTING

NO REBOUND FOR POST
COVID-19 SPENDING?

CREDIBILITY DURING
TIMES OF CRISIS

KEEPING HOPE, PURPOSE
IN THE 'GREAT RESET'

COMING TO GRIPS WITH
OUR NEW REALITY

PREPARING FOR A
PANDEMIC

THE NEXT WAVE OF
PANDEMIC COMMS

OPENING DOORS

CRISIS ENGAGEMENT VS.
CRISIS MANAGEMENT

TECH GAINS GROUND
IN CHALLENGING TIMES

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS
OF TECH PR FIRMS

REVENUES UP 10% AT
TOP 10 FINANCIAL FIRMS

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS
OF FINANCIAL PR FIRMS

TOP 10 HEALTHCARE
FIRMS POST 14% GAIN

CULTURE DURING
TIMES OF CRISIS

6

8

9

10

12

14

16

18

20

22

24

26

28

30

32

34

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF
HEALTHCARE PR FIRMS

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF
PR SPECIALTIES

INDEPENDENT FIRMS
GREW 7.7% IN 2019

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS
OF MAJOR US PR FIRMS

WINNING TODAY'S
RELEVANCE CHALLENGE

LEADING GAINERS
AMONG PR FIRMS

O'DWYER'S REGIONAL
RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS

IS BIG BUSINESS GAMING
PAYCHECK PROTECTION?

HOW TO MEASURE
EARNED MEDIA IMPACT

COVID-19 BRINGS
LOSSES TO PR SECTOR

PERCEPTONS, PREPARATIONS
FROM THE KITCHEN TABLE

THE END OF MEDIOCRITY

PR AGENCIES LEARN
TOUGH LESSONS

PROFILES OF RANKED
PR FIRMS

WASHINGTON REPORT

COLUMNS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Fraser Seitel

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
Richard Goldstein

ADVERTISERS

5W Public Relations3
APCO Worldwide.....5
BackBay Communications.....31
Bliss Integrated Communication.....21
Butler Associates, LLC9
Cerrell Associates, Inc.63
Crosby23

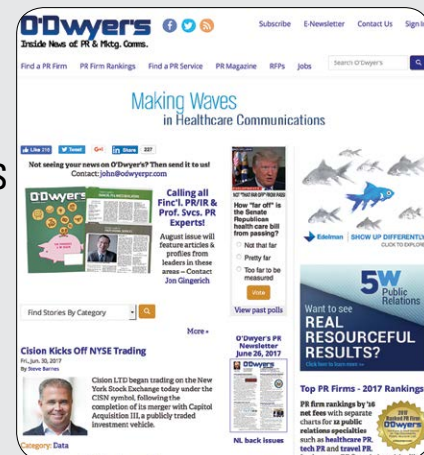
Edelman44-45
Evoke KYNE.....19
Fahlgren Mortine17
Finn Partners.....13
The Hoffman Agency27
Hotwire25
The Hoyt Organization.....57

ICR59
Joelle Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher.....67
LaVoieHealthScience33
Padilla7
PAN Communications, Inc.15
Prosek Partners.....29
rbb Communications.. Inside front cover

Qorvis Communications Back cover
Sitrick & Co.....73
Sloane & Company.....61
Stanton Communications 11
The Stevens Group8
W2O Group37



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EDITORIAL CALENDAR 2020

January: Crisis Comms. / Buyer's Guide
March: Food & Beverage
June: PR Firm Rankings
July: Travel, Tourism & International
August: Financial, I.R. & Prof Services
October: Healthcare & Medical
November: Technology & Social Media

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Did Fox News fan social distancing revolt?

Does Fox News, which downplayed the threat posed from COVID-19, bear any responsibility for the deaths of 100,000 Americans who perished from the disease? An intriguing study from the National Bureau of Economic Research (Cambridge, MA) released May 26 provides grist for that argument.

Conducted by researchers at Columbia University, University of Chicago and SafeGraph, a geospatial company, it found that exposure to Fox News during the early stages of the pandemic substantially lowered compliance with social distancing regulations. The research shows that a one percent increase in Fox News viewership reduced adherence to stay-at-home guidelines by about nine percent.

The analysis was based on data from SafeGraph social distancing data compiled from GPS pings from 45 million mobile devices measured in conjunction with Fox News viewership rates. The researchers make it clear they “do not attempt to attribute the Fox News effects to health outcomes, namely cases and deaths.”

They do point out that after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 an international public health emergency on Jan. 30, Fox News played down the potential risk throughout March as the virus began to spread in the US and Americans were forming beliefs about the severity of the threat.

Fox host Laura Ingraham accused Democrats of “weaponizing fear” and called them the “pandemic party.” Sean Hannity urged viewers to be more concerned about gun violence in Chicago than COVID-19. He offered a sympathetic platform to president Trump, who told him on Feb. 2: “We pretty much shut it [COVID-19] down coming in from China.”

The study did not test the exact mechanism through which Fox News viewership persuades individuals against complying with social distancing.

The authors argue that the findings are likely the result of contrarian and misleading broadcasts made in early March regarding the effectiveness of social distancing. “Given that these persuasive impacts arise in spite of highly-publicized social distancing recommendations by health experts, these findings are indicative of the ‘advice discounting’ phenomenon through which media outlets override expert opinions,” they said.

A Fox News spokesperson told *O’Dwyer’s* the NBER study is merely a working paper that was not peer reviewed.

There’s also been recent coverage of social distancing on FOX News Channel’s news and opinion programs, including “America’s Newsroom,” “Hannity,” “Cavuto,” “Bill Hemmer Reports” and “FOX & Friends.” Fox medical contributor Dr. Marc Siegel told “America’s Newsroom” co-anchor Ed Henry he is “deeply disturbed” by images of parties at Lake of the Ozarks and called on the Missouri Memorial Day weekend parties to self-quarantine after not social distancing. Hannity scolded the Ozark partygoers, saying their failure to self-distance “could be a disaster” for vulnerable Americans.

When it comes to those who flout federal health guidelines intended to keep Americans safe during the pandemic, perhaps there’s no greater violator than President Trump. Two-thirds of American voters want Trump to wear a facemask when he’s out in public, while 27 percent say he shouldn’t, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released May 20. Ninety percent of Democrats and 66 percent of independents want Trump to cover his mouth and nose when outside. Thirty-eight percent of Republicans say the same.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s COVID-19 guidelines state: “Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.” A face covering, according to the CDC, is meant to protect others in the event that the wearer has the virus.

Presidents Obama, Bush II, Clinton, Bush I, Reagan and Carter certainly would have worn a mask during a pandemic, if recommended by the CDC. They considered themselves leaders of the government. Trump, in contrast, views himself as a non-president.

The narcissist-in-chief though doesn’t care a lick about others. Americans get it. The Quinnipiac poll found that 56 percent of us say Trump doesn’t care about average people.

The President shuns the mask because he feels it somehow conveys weakness, or an acknowledgement that COVID-19 is a deadly virus.

Trump’s miserable response to the outbreak is the signature failure of his administration and the reason why the US death toll is moving to the 100,000-mark. Fifty-six percent of Quinnipiac respondents disapprove of Trump’s handling of the pandemic. That’s up from 51 percent in April.

Voters believe Joe Biden would have done a better job in handling COVID-19 by a 55 percent to 39 percent margin. Hopefully, we’ll find out if that is true. **○**

— Kevin McCauley

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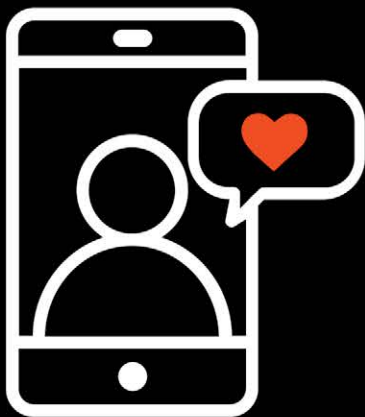
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More Americans trust media's COVID-19 reporting

As coronavirus cases continue to spread across the country, the percentage of Americans who believe the media exaggerates the risks associated with the pandemic is declining, according to a Pew Research Center study.

By Jon Gingerich

News coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to dominate the media cycle, but Americans' opinions regarding the media's handling of the outbreak have generally turned more favorable, according to analysis recently released by the Pew Research Center.

Pew's report, which assessed Americans' opinions regarding the media's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, found that the number of Americans who currently believe the media exaggerates the risks associated with the outbreak now stands at 48 percent, a decline of 14 percent from Pew's previous findings in March (62 percent).

Americans' perceptions regarding whether the media have conveyed the coronavirus' risks truthfully remain divided, however, and typically that division lies along partisan lines. While only 30 percent of respondents identifying as Democrat or Democrat-leaning currently believe the media has exaggerated the risks of the outbreak (compared to 49 percent in March),

the dial hasn't moved nearly as much for Republicans, 68 percent of whom still believe the media exaggerates the risks of COVID-19 (a drop of only eight percent from the 76 percent of Republican respondents who said this in March).

Overall, Pew's analysis discovered that Americans approve of the media's coverage of the pandemic, with more than two-thirds (69 percent) of respondents saying they believe the media have covered the outbreak very well—or at least somewhat well—a number that's virtually unchanged from previous Pew findings in March (70 percent). More than half (59 percent) additionally said they think the media are providing them with important COVID-19-related information, compared to about a quarter of Americans (24 percent) who disagree. About half of respondents (49 percent) also believe the media's coverage of COVID-19 has been largely accurate, compared with 24 percent who think it's been mostly inaccurate.

Once again, however, respondents' political leanings appear as a clear indicator in influencing their perceptions regarding the media's accuracy and overall performance in covering the COVID-19 pandemic. While about eight-in-ten Democrat and Democrat-leaning voters think media have covered COVID-19 somewhat or very well, only slightly more than half of Republican and Republican-leaning voters (54 percent) believe this. And while two-thirds of Democrats (66 percent) think the media's COVID-19 coverage has been largely accurate, less than half that number of Republicans (31 percent) agree.

Americans have COVID-19 news fatigue

The continuous flow of news regarding the COVID-19 pandemic continues to capture Americans' rapt attention, but it appears many of us are beginning to show signs of COVID-19 news fatigue.

According to Pew's analysis, 71 percent of Americans said they now have to "take breaks" from COVID-19-related news, and nearly half (43 percent) reported that coronavirus news leaves them feeling worse emotionally.

Amid this constant news churn, half of Americans (50 percent) said they also often still find it difficult determining what's true and what's false regarding the outbreak, and nearly two-thirds (64 percent) said they've seen at least some COVID-19 news and information that appeared to be fake.

Nearly nine-in-ten Americans (87 percent) claim they're following coronavirus-related news "very" or at least "fairly" closely, figures that remain, roughly, on par with findings from the previous Pew survey conducted in March (89 percent). More than half (56 percent) said national news outlets are a major source in getting that news, compared to 46 percent who primarily cited local outlets. About two-thirds (61 percent) of respondents said they give equal amounts of attention to both national and local sources when it comes to coronavirus news.

Pew's analysis was based on a survey of more than 10,100 U.S. adults drawn from the nonpartisan think tank's American Trends Panel, a nationally representative list of randomly selected U.S. adults. Data for the report was compiled as part of the nonpartisan think tank's Election News Pathways project, an ongoing initiative that seeks to understand how Americans are getting their news in the months leading up to the 2020 election. Surveys were conducted online between April 20-26. **○**



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Spending may not swing back after COVID-19

Recent changes in consumer behavior brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic might not disappear as quickly as hoped, according to a series of recent reports.

By Jon Gingerich

U.S. retail sales plunged a record 16.4 percent in April to account for the single greatest two-month spending decline on record. As states across the country begin to reopen, however, retailers and analysts have been hoping to see a return to pre-pandemic spending levels as Americans venture outside for the first time in months.

But that turnaround might not come so easily. Like virtually every other facet of American life, consumer purchasing behaviors have been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. With more than 38 million currently unemployed and millions more expressing trepidation regarding the stability of their current jobs, several recent forecasts now suggest that many consumers plan to maintain their COVID spending behaviors even after the pandemic is over, leaving the retail sector in continued uncertainty and further impeding the chances of a speedy recovery for the U.S. economy. The fact is, it matters little if businesses are back if there's no demand.

A Harris Poll survey conducted in April found that 79 percent of respondents said they'll likely continue to spend less and save more once the coronavirus outbreak ends, and more than two-thirds (68 percent) said they'll continue to avoid nonessential travel.

An April *USA Today/Ipsos* poll found that COVID-19 had influenced more than a third (35 percent) of respondents to cut back on spending or delaying an important purchase.

Only 17.8 percent of Americans said they currently plan to get a haircut or go to a restaurant when the lockdown in their area is lifted, according to a May Bospar survey.

So, what are Americans doing with their money? Recent reports suggest they're saving it. The government's Bureau of Economic Analysis in late April reported that the personal savings rate in the U.S. climbed to 13.1 percent in March, totaling \$2.17 trillion in personal savings. This accounts for the highest savings rate since November 1981.

Meanwhile, the BEA reported that during the same period, personal income decreased two percent, disposable personal income decreased two percent and personal consumption expenditures decreased 7.5 percent.

These figures further suggest that increased job instability and household income declines are influencing many Americans to hoard their money, a development that bodes poorly for an economy whose growth depends on consumer spending.

According to an April survey released by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's Center for Microeconomic Data, the perceived probability of losing one's job within the next year now stands at 21 percent, the highest percentage ever recorded in the NY Fed's survey since its inception in 2013.

Meanwhile, the perceived probability of voluntarily leaving one's job within the next 12 months, the probability of finding a job within the next three months and household income growth as well as household spending growth all fell to record-breaking lows.

"The data is depressing," said Bospar principal Curtis Sparrer. "We predict that consumer spending will continue its slump." ○



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Credibility during times of crisis

Companies that survive the COVID-19 crisis are likely to be stronger and more nimble for the experience. But they'll also be evaluated for how they survived.

By Michael Sitrick

In my decades of experience in crisis communications, I've rarely seen such uncertain times as this for corporations and businesses, even following 9/11 and the 2008 recession. Unless you're in the enviable position of running home delivery services or toilet paper manufacturing, there are few businesses that are likely to remain unscathed, presuming they survive. Adding to the uncertainty, consumers are bombarded every day with apocalyptic headlines and body counts, not unlike what we experienced during the Vietnam War, when the evening news provided a running tally of American deaths.

Except now the war is at home, and those deaths aren't abstract numbers. They're our neighbors, family members and coworkers. The virus is a silent enemy that lives among us, not in some faraway desert or jungle. It hasn't only devastated our population and altered our lifestyles, perhaps irreparably, it has leveled our economy.

Few companies are unaffected, whether it affects sales, or the health and wellbeing of employees. It has also upended the advertising and PR business, albeit with a few exceptions. Many companies have had to scramble to produce new marketing messages that strike a balanced tone of concern with branding, while avoiding sounding like they are tone deaf. Hell hath no fury like a social media mob that thinks a commercial—or for that matter a social media posting—is out of touch, to say nothing of a journalist who sees such a commercial or posting or receives an awkward PR pitch.

Companies that survive the crisis are likely to be stronger and more nimble for the experience. But they'll also be evaluated for how they survived. Were they honest with customers, employees, financial analysts and stakeholders? Or did they fumble and fudge? Despite the title of my first book, "Spin," in that book—and in my subsequent one, "The Fixer"—I stressed the importance of telling the truth and being honest in one's communications. I've done the same in my practice. Full disclosure of problems as soon as possible is often the best way to avoid giving a story "legs," in which new revelations dribble out that create mistrust. While the up-front disclosure may create short-term challenges, a company's reputation will be better for it in the long term. And as I often counsel clients, if you don't tell your story, someone else will tell it for you.

Fundamentally, I don't believe the core aspects of communications will change after the crisis passes, even if it lays waste to some media outlets. All constituencies—whether customers, employees or shareholders—deserve and demand transparency. Depending on the industry, regulators and politicians may impose it. Better to be ahead of the curve before the steering wheel is taken from you, and someone else is driving the narrative.

I've worked with both individuals and corporate clients throughout my career, many of them facing dire circumstances and make-or-break moments. Inevitably, the successful ones are those that don't underestimate the situation, and plan in advance. While no one could have fully prepared for the crisis we are experiencing, there are several steps that should be taken.

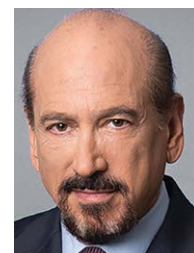
Communicating with employees should be a top priority. Take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the health and welfare of your employees and communicate with them on a regular basis. Keep them up to date on what is happening—both good and bad. A number of companies have adopted the term "team members." Whether or not you use that term, treat your employees like members of the team. The saying I adopted early in the life of my firm, "If you don't tell your story someone else will tell it for you" does not only apply to dealing with the media. It applies to communicating with employees, customers, vendors and investors. You can fill the information void with facts, or you can leave it empty and it will be filled with rumors. If there have to be layoffs, explain to the entire employee base what you are doing and why, as well as how it's necessary for the current and future stability of the business. If you get a call from the media—whether about layoffs or the stability of the business—once again, if you say "no comment" there's a high likelihood that void will be filled with a disaffected employee, competitor or "expert talking head." And there's a good chance those quotes will be without attribution.

How customers are treated is another area that gets outsized attention during this crisis. The airlines, concert promoters and vacation home rental industry were harshly criticized early on in this crisis for refusing to refund money when trips and events were cancelled due to government lockdowns. Many companies struggled

to explain the policies that restricted refunds—or at least that is what it looked like from the media coverage. Those that made amends later on saw their explanations and good deeds drowned out by the consumer outrage and media criticism. One of the ultimate penalties for this behavior is state-level and/or Congressional action, coming inevitably after politicians haul corporate executives into hearings where they're immediately put on the defensive.

Companies need to make a hard analysis when faced with these circumstances: Is the cost of upfront goodwill less expensive in the long run than lasting reputational damage? If there's a legitimate reason for refusing the refunds

legally, say so in a clear and understandable way. If you get a reporter who debates you on the law, get a company lawyer on the phone. You might also look at expanding the time period for reusing the tickets



Michael Sitrick

and perhaps waiving the penalty for changing flights or tickets if there is one. While there's no magic potion, I've assisted many clients where, in hindsight, the crisis could have been mitigated early on, before the headlines and negative stories.

One group that's often overlooked in communicating during a crisis are the company's vendors. If you want to ensure that your goods and services continue to be provided on normal terms, make sure your vendors hear from you, as opposed to the rumor mill, which can be fueled by competitors. This is particularly important if your company has been the subject of media articles which indicate that it's facing financial "challenges," which could cause vendors to withhold shipments. An email from the company's CEO and/or a call from a senior executive can do a lot to ensure good relationships continue and unwarranted fears are assuaged.

Finally, how companies respond as corporate citizens in their communities will also be remembered in the long run. There's no shortage of opportunities to donate to local food banks, or assist first responders, in times of crisis. For companies with strong balance sheets, these are small, symbolic efforts that pay back far more than they cost. And, the charity recipients are often happy to do the work of publicizing the good deed.

Michael Sitrick is the Founder, Chairman and CEO of Sitrick And Company. ○

Sink *or* Swim?

When a crisis occurs, communicators must make complex decisions quickly and under pressure.

Establishing a process for decision making—*before trouble strikes*—can make the difference between sinking or swimming in difficult times.

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Inspiring hope, purpose in the 'Great Reset'

Maintaining your client's brand promise in a post-COVID-19 era by appealing to empathy, intellect and a shared sense of purpose.

By Michael Roth and Meg Wildrick

In early March, we witnessed a dramatic media shift as COVID-19 became the North Star of all news. The lens through which we were viewing society became mirrored in the content we were reading, hearing and seeing. Financial, sports, retail, arts and leisure, travel, real estate and, of course, healthcare news have had to maintain a connection to the global pandemic. And so, agencies began scrambling to assess their clients' relevance to the new national conversation, while corporations focused on their core operating fundamentals and their very survival in a new world that once seemed inconceivable. For both parties, the challenge was to reset marketing messages for the new normal: testing storylines for relevance and tone while tapping into new sources of creativity and agility.

So, what went right and what could've been done better?

First, the bad stuff. We've seen a great deal of "square peg in round hole" storytelling in paid, owned campaigns that missed the mark in terms of relevance. Messaging—some of it sounding a little desperate—came in the form of "we're here for you" communications from the likes of automobile makers, airlines, hotel chains, cruise lines and dog food manufacturers. The good people at Frito Lay wanted you to know that their primary concern is the health and nutrition of our nation, so they're taking action by feeding our families—with Fritos, Cheetos and Doritos—while creating jobs. Meanwhile, Hershey's kisses recommended spreading love from a safe distance—with chocolates. Lexus went so far as to tell customers that this is time for "business as usual," because they've always "put their customers first and understood their needs."

The problem is there's nothing usual about this moment, and claims to the contrary unintentionally tell a different story, i.e., that companies don't want customers to abandon them during the pandemic.

Now, the good stuff. During moments of fear, loss and uncertainty, companies and agencies have an opportunity to help customers by providing them with the information, support and guidance to move forward. By engaging customers' intellect and hearts, they create strong bonds that endure beyond the current crisis.

Brain science and effective storytelling

Studies in brain science show there are two channels in the human nervous sys-

tem: one that reacts to danger/threats with a "fight or flight" response and one that responds to opportunity/purpose. We're at our best when the two systems are in balance, prompting us to take meaningful action. The 24/7 COVID-19 news cycle throws our brains out of balance, offering up a steady stream of anxiety-producing data on infection rates, deaths, unemployment numbers, food shortages and partisan politics.

This puts us in constant panic mode and stifles our ability to move forward. On the other hand, brands that cut through the constant barrage of negative headlines help us regain balance by appealing to a shared sense of purpose.

Story themes and topics that have worked well during the crisis include:

Mental health stories focusing on the need to manage anxiety and depression. Before the pandemic, there were only pockets of mainstream regard for the negative health effects of anxiety and depression. Now, some brands are tackling these issues head-on by building awareness for the importance of mental health and offering solutions that can be accessed at home, at work and in communities.

Connection stories showcasing the benefits of face-to-face communications. Before COVID-19, loneliness was a growing—yet invisible—public health crisis. Today, tech companies, as well as tele-health and educational organizations, are offering new solutions.

Charitable giving stories celebrating access to food and shelter, health and human services and community support. Before the crisis, it was possible to turn a blind eye to the importance of low-income housing, food pantries and "shop local" initiatives. Now, there's a heightened recognition of their importance and a collective rallying cry to provide solutions.

Guidance and direction stories helping us move beyond family and financial hardships. A number of insurance, banking and retirement companies are giving Americans of all ages and income levels easy access to tools, information and guidance resources.

Nimble adaptation stories spotlighting those racing to find treatments, produce safety equipment and fund new diagnostics and tracking tools. Car companies, entrepreneurs, public health and life sciences companies are pivoting quickly to tackle critical health and safety challenges.

Essential service stories reinforcing the value of good things we may have previously overlooked. Food companies that adhere to high quality sourcing standards, online retailers that deliver products on schedule, and healthcare professionals that work on the front lines every day: these are the heroes we no longer take for granted.

Customer service stories demonstrating a brand's commitment to go the extra mile. While some companies have downsized or furloughed their service departments—and others have done a poor job of retaining workers amid safety concerns—a handful have doubled down and increased the attention and support they provide to customers.

Resilience stories of individuals, communities and businesses that are bouncing back from hardship and embracing a new normal.

This, of course, is an incomplete list. But it underscores a need that's now universal: balancing fear and negativity with stories that inspire purpose and hope.

The reset moment

For all the devastation it has caused, the pandemic has also been a humanizing moment. It has reminded us of the good things we have in our lives and the bad things we need to solve for. Several writers are referring to this moment as "The Big Reset."

"In the middle of fear, economic crisis, and social distancing there is a growing sense of closeness," Josh Bersin wrote in *Forbes*. "Regardless of how soon this is over, it's clear we are in the middle of The Big Reset, a new way of thinking about work, life, business and leadership ... some are hiring; others are furloughing. But the biggest issue they face is fear in the faces of their employees."

Brands that demonstrate genuine empathy—to employees and customers—have an opportunity to connect with stakeholders in a way perhaps previously impossible. They also have an opportunity to evolve their brand promise and lead the way forward in a post-COVID-19 era.

Michael Roth is Partner and Healthcare Practice Leader and Meg Wildrick is Managing Partner at Bliss Integrated Communication. ○



Michael Roth



Meg Wildrick

IN THIS TOGETHER

During this time of crisis and upheaval I want to wish all of you—our clients, our staff, our colleagues throughout the industry—my heartfelt wishes for your health and welfare.

The COVID-19 crisis is testing us, and never have the values we cherish—hard work, compassion, and especially collaboration—been of greater importance. The challenges we face are daunting. On a professional level, we must meet the needs of our clients in a rapidly shifting environment, even as we work in remote workspaces, physically far from our colleagues. We must deal with the strain of increased isolation, balancing work with the needs of our families and friends, and most upsetting of all, the potential impact of the virus itself on our loved ones. Our staff is facing these challenges with courage, determination and sympathy for those who are suffering, and I want to recognize their extraordinary efforts to serve our clients during this crisis. They simply amaze me.

Our role as communicators allows us the privilege of helping others, for we are the bridge to accurate information that enables people to make informed decisions. Our value to society has never been clearer. To realize that value, we must support each other and offer our strength to those who struggle—emotionally, economically and physically.

More than 70 years ago David Finn became one of the pioneers of modern PR. He and I worked together for decades, and he was my mentor and best friend, as well as my business partner and father. The values he taught me, to use my professional abilities and personal resources to try to make the world a better place, and to treat everyone with respect, are core values at Finn Partners. Times of crisis remind me of his important lessons.

My warmest regards to all of you, your families and your friends.

In unity,



Peter Finn
CEO, Finn Partners

Coming to grips with our new reality

How to move forward: six business considerations for getting back to work after COVID-19.

By Matt Kucharski

When we were presented with the opportunity to contribute a column to *O'Dwyer's*, we planned to focus on brand strategies and change management after mergers and acquisitions. Then COVID-19 hit, and we switched to crisis and issues management. But we realized that no matter the topic, it would be out of date by the time it got to publication.

So instead, we decided to look ahead, beyond the challenge of the day, and share some thoughts on what professional communicators—both clients and their agencies—will be managing over the long term. The following is our collective perspective.

New table stakes for engagement, culture

As work-from-home restrictions loosen, employee engagement needs to go beyond the near-term operational communications necessary to bring them back to work safely. Smart businesses are using this time to anticipate and adjust to what kind of employer they want to be.

Employees will ultimately determine the ability to pivot quickly and successfully. Moving from in-person to digital self-service? Shifting from low cost to high quality? Changing processes and operational models? None of it happens if employees don't get on board—fast.

Involve employees in problem-solving and visioning. Ask them to identify the cultural gaps that are likely to hold you back. Make sure the business strategy is clear and well-articulated, and then double down on communications. Engaging employees now will help to build the resilience and determination needed for the long recovery ahead.

Reinventing the customer experience

COVID-19 resulted in a cycle of rapid innovation. Companies quickly assessed new customer needs and behaviors and launched new experiences and offers to re-capture the revenue that disappeared with government-mandated prevention guidelines.

Now, companies are looking toward the new emerging reality and determining if the changes they made in response to COVID-19 will remain, and what long-term customer experience shifts are needed to remain competitive.

COVID-19 made it clear that digital is an essential part of every business's customer experience. Clearly, there's no curbside delivery without the underlying e-commerce, CRM and API integrations with partners that make it all possible. But COVID-19 also made it clear that humans and empathy

matter, with new Distancing & Disinfecting teams emerging to keep customers and employees safe.

So, what do you need to do? Quickly and constantly assess how customer values and behaviors are changing. Rapidly respond with innovative new offers and experiences. Assess your technology stack's ability to deliver. Implement rapid test-and-learn cycles and operationalize what works. Then create content and connection strategies that build awareness, drive customer acquisition and encourage loyalty and referrals.

Fighting anxiety with clarity, transparency

From a financial communications standpoint, one constant truth magnified by COVID-19 is that uncertainty breeds volatility. The jagged rise-and-fall of the markets is not likely to change given that return to "business-as-we-now-know-it" will be anything but linear.

There are always key inflection points requiring effective communications with investors. Whether it's the expiration of stay-at-home directives, the emergence of new market opportunities or the elimination of others, every development requires interpretation and context. If you don't do it, others will do it for you.

You mitigate uncertainty with clarity, and that requires being abundantly transparent within the confines of the business and/or industry. Information helps investors and analysts form a clearer picture of your direction and, in turn, lessens uncertainty—and therefore volatility—in what lies ahead.

The inevitable rise of legal disputes

While it doesn't thrill any of us, it's inevitable. Expect more and more legal challenges as the interests of one group come in direct conflict with others. Nurses suing hospitals. Students suing colleges. Families suing senior facilities. Businesses suing governments and each other. The list goes on. It seems as if we're all in this together, until we're not.

Addressing disputes both in the court of law and court of public opinion is nothing new, but the issues arising from COVID-19 will have far-reaching implications on the burden of proof and responsibility. Take the time now to conduct risk assessments and identify potential legal vulnerabilities. Update business liability insurance. Have standby communications plans in place. And make sure your legal counsel and your communications teams are talking to each other.

Community relations gains relevance

Insurers returning premiums to policyholders. Hotels converting to field hospitals. Restaurants offering free meals to medical workers. Nothing sharpens the focus of community relations like a global pandemic. The potential for an extended economic downturn is amplifying the entrenched inequities in society, and public-private partnerships and corporate contributions are swaying headlines, hearts and minds.

Civic responsibility is the core of community relations. The 2008 recession forced businesses to consider the long-term economic value of connecting with community—earning their social license to operate. The time for pandering is past. The public is neither gullible nor guileless. Commitment to a community's well-being must be expressed organically and authentically. Organizations can no longer respond with feel-good efforts or token endorsements of social movements. Self-aware organizations know publics are watching. Businesses need to dig deeper into their corporate psyches—and pocketbooks—to earn lasting goodwill and meaningful visibility.

Expect to see community relations focus more on basic needs, addressing the persistent gaps that unfairly disadvantage those who are deemed different or less-than. For their efforts, those who practice community relations authentically will be elevated to the role of "essential providers" in the public eye. The potential rewards are significant: goodwill, support, loyalty—even advocacy.

You've got a seat at the table—keep it

There's not a single organization that could've managed itself effectively over the past three months without effective communications. That has earned professional communicators and their agency partners a well-deserved seat at the leadership table, advising on the implications of important decisions and then communicating them authentically and effectively. As we manage the effects of this global pandemic on employees, customers, investors and communities, it's up to the communications team to bring its "A" game and deliver continuous value to others on the leadership team. Let's not squander that opportunity.

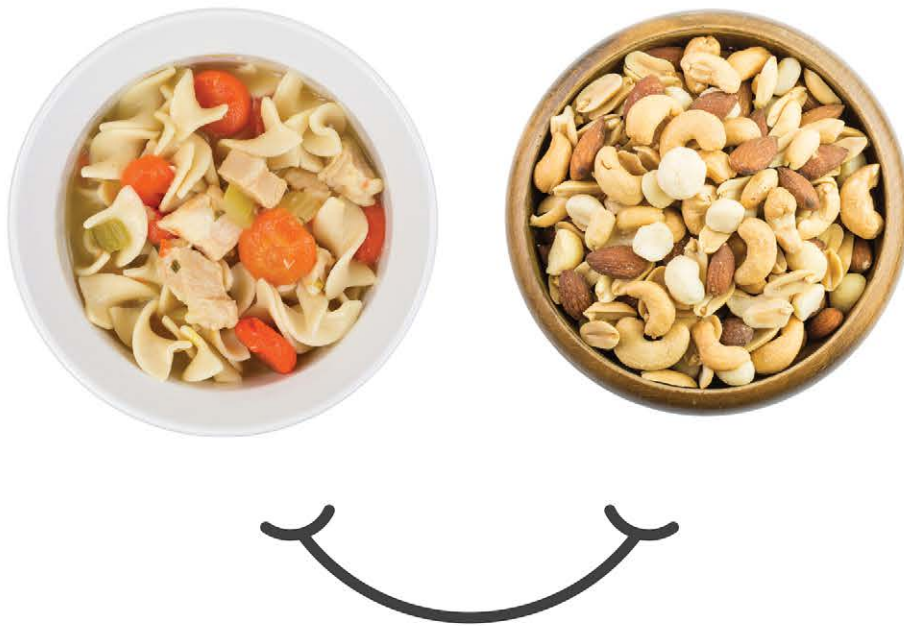
Matt Kucharski is President of Padilla. Natalie Smith, SVP; Dan Morrison, VP; Matt Sullivan, VP; Bob McNaney, SVP; and Tom Jollie, SVP; contributed to this article. ○



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Preparing for a pandemic

How one PR agency found itself controlling the messages for two high-profile COVID-19 news stories on the same day, proving the adage that there's no template for a crisis.

By Thomas Butler

In January, our firm took on a new client, New York City's FDNY Emergency Medical Service workforce. Looking back, the ironies are remarkable.

The FDNY EMS came to us because its message simply wasn't resonating with the news media, nor hitting its target with the public. So, our team got to work. The original goal was that the workforce needed better positive recognition about the intensive medical training it undergoes and its status as front-line, first responders. In many New York neighborhoods, the FDNY EMS is referred to as the city's "Street Doctors." But like Rodney Dangerfield, "they got no respect."

In the six weeks that followed, we gained a lot of traction. The storylines we sought took shape and began playing out in some of New York City's largest news and editorial pages as well as over the airwaves. It even brought forward several high-profile surrogates to stand in unity with this mostly female, underpaid and certainly under-respected workforce. We didn't plan for a crisis with this client, but then the world changed.

That very same client, the 4,500 members of the FDNY EMS that months ago feared its lower profile had become an impediment, had now been foisted into the limelight of American heroes battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

The resources required by the agency to address various storylines and a long and winding list of news media is significant, but the client has graced most of the major network television news channels, and with frequency and repetition told its story to the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, AP, Reuters and hundreds more.

Our original goal was to highlight the vital works EMS workers do and the need for them to be better compensated. As the coronavirus struck, we entered the heat of battle—with no off-the-shelf game plan—and were able to bring that important message to a massive audience.

Similarly, in the earliest days of the outbreak—nearly two weeks before the state stay at home order—I received a call from the Co-CEOs of a prominent consumer beverage brand. Only 30-minutes earlier, they'd been notified by an employee—now in the hospital with pneumonia—that he

was the first confirmed case of coronavirus in a county of 1.5 million.

This was going to be disclosed by the health department to the media first thing Monday morning. So, we had a few hours to prepare? Unfortunately, no, because at that very moment the company was hosting 150 people in its performance and restaurant space.

Together, we had to rapidly establish a plan that considered best-practices but didn't incite irrational fear. Americans had been reading all about the tragic death toll in Italy and China, but the public didn't have sufficient health and medical information. How then, would we or anyone address the public, confronted with such alarming news, and not cause permanent brand reputational harm?

Throughout the night and early that morning, the team prepared for a media onslaught, and for the health officials' announcement to come. Believe me, there's no brand that wants to be first in this type of scenario. When the announcement was made by the health department, the company addressed the media inquiries in a prepared statement from our firm, factual but not alarmist, while steadfastly protecting the privacy of the employee.

The company announced it was immediately closing to the public for several weeks, to recognize a multi-week quarantine period agreed to with the health department and to voluntarily conduct a deep sterilization of its facilities. By now, we've all heard about deep cleaning thousands of times over, but back then it was still news. The firm addressed every media inquiry and the coverage was fair, considering the company had the misfortune of being first. We'd battered down the hatches for the day-two narrative, and then, something unexpected happened.

That day, we received a mid-day call from the leader of the FDNY's EMS union to notify us that it now had the first positive coronavirus case among New York's first responders. He said, "we need to get the word out to the media now."

If you work long enough in this business, you'll always find a time when that big client news scoop misses, simply because a bigger news event comes along. It just so happened that on this day, the bigger, more

dominant news story was also controlled by us. Within minutes, our team was conveying the EMS story to some of New York City's biggest editors and TV news channels. Both stories got told, but because we had the size, capacity and ability to conduct a rapid response to manage two simultaneous crisis situations that day, the outcome was considered a success by both clients. This all illustrates, again, that there's no template for a crisis.



Thomas Butler

For more than 25 years, I've experienced my fair share of being called in to help a corporation, celebrity, CEO or non-profit to tamp down and then pivot in a positive direction away from a crisis. Many times, I've suggested to various CEOs whose company reputations were marked with a bullseye, that the work we can accomplish together, when executed properly, can be a means for the brand to emerge even stronger.

In this pandemic, businesses have needed to scramble simply to survive. Despite some nerve-racking early weeks, the fact that our firm has a significant crisis management practice and long-established work teams that mirror the operations of a newsroom, I believe has given us a greater resiliency.

Throughout this pandemic, we've executed crisis plans—some made on the fly—for dozens of clients in uncharted waters, regardless of their industry. The shuttering of retail locations and protection of staff or overcoming concerns regarding layoffs. In this time, when the existence of many long, well-established brands is threatened, it's the innovative, out-of-the box thinking that our industry is recognized for that will come out in the end. I've spoken with many peers in the PR, marketing and advertising side of the business and many have said their world has been turned upside down.

By this point in my career, having worked with hundreds of companies, brands, campaigns, litigations, I thought, frankly, that I'd experienced so much, including representing the FDNY's firefighters before and after the 9/11 attacks and standing amidst the rubble at Ground Zero. But then a pandemic occurred.

Thomas P. Butler is President of Butler Associates Strategic Communications & PR. ○



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The next wave of pandemic communications

Ways in which our communications strategies will evolve in the coming months as we navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

By Syreeta Mussante

I don't know about you, but I'm exhausted. As communications professionals, we've been in crisis mode for months now. As we lick our collective wounds, take a deep breath and begin to contemplate a potential return to the office, it makes sense to also begin looking forward to the next phase of the pandemic response and how our communications strategies will have to evolve.

Phase one was emergency response. Stakeholders needed to know: Can we ensure business continuity? How is our supply chain being impacted? Are we being good corporate citizens and giving something back? Not to mention addressing the questions our teammates have: Is my job secure? Will I be furloughed? How will you keep me safe at work? How will you support the shelter-in-place requirements, and can I work remotely?

The good news is that most of us have done the work to address these initial issues. Some of them continue of course, and in some cases are exacerbated by how long this pandemic is lasting. But we have a handle on these communications issues. For U.S. companies, it's time to turn our attention to the next phase of this crazy situation: the return to the workplace and the new business climate. The world has changed, and that might mean some big strategic shifts for marketing. What do we need to think about next, from a communications standpoint?

It's time to tell the world that you're open for business and ready to face whatever challenges this new environment and all of the complexity it brings.

Put your employees first—publicly

I shouldn't have to tell you by this point that how you take care of your employees can have a significant impact on the perception of your brand. Wal-Mart and Amazon have been poster children for this brand issue of late. As business leaders, I assume you'll authentically think about the treatment of your employees as they eventually begin returning to work. As a communications strategist, I encourage you to share your thinking publicly, to think about this as a defensive maneuver. You don't have to—in fact, probably you shouldn't—try to get media coverage for your actions, which after all are done in the interest of good business and humanity; but a blog post or publicly shared internal memo to employees can give you a hedge against a potential negative perception. A little transparency

can be your friend here, and remember, sometimes no coverage is the best result.

Everything you do remains in the context of the pandemic

Returning to the office isn't the end of this issue by any stretch of the imagination. And we're all trying to find ways to return to "normal," whatever that now means. Reporters too are getting tired of the deluge of COVID-19-related story pitches and hunger to return to their assigned beats. And yet the COVID-19 media coverage continues, from every angle. Don't make the mistake of believing that your announcements, actions and predictions can be viewed in a neutral light. Even when we try to ignore it, the pandemic surrounds us. Masks, limitations on personal freedoms, record numbers of unemployed: all these things permeate our personal lives. It will continue to impact the response, by media and our stakeholders, to our actions for some time to come. Connections will be unearthed or inferred, and those connections will drive the coverage. The only real way to maximize your visibility and still control the story—a little—is to draw those conclusions yourself and move quickly back to your narrative. Which reminds me...

Refresh your narrative

As a strategist, I've counseled many companies on the development of their "North Star" or company narrative. I've helped executives and founders articulate their perspective on what's happening in the world, what major shift or sea change is approaching and why their company is uniquely suited to address their audience's needs in this new environment. And I've stated hundreds of times that this shouldn't be a moving target; an authentic company narrative isn't something that changes often. But this might be the time to do it.

I'm not suggesting you make a major positioning shift. Presumably, your narrative addresses issues that still exist. But the world has changed dramatically; this is a moment where the environment has shifted perceptions in ways that you didn't likely anticipate when you developed your brand. Your investors, customers and prospects are looking at the world through a new lens. Take a moment to consider if your narrative needs to become more inclusive, more human or more sensitive to the new world order. Communications leaders: this is your responsibility and the reason you deserve

your seat at the table. Use this exercise as a tool to help your executives look at the company through an external lens and perhaps realize there are business shifts to be made.

Bring out the big guns

Many companies work to shield their CEOs and founders from crisis situations. In fairness, I've given that counsel before: select a crisis spokesperson and deflect all questions in their direction. Beyond the top-level crisis resolution messaging, keep the CEO focused on the business and the vision. And certainly, if there's a supply chain expert or you have a healthcare division, those folks should continue to have a significant communications role.

But this is not your typical crisis. This is a new normal. If your senior executives are in hiding, it's time for them to come out. If you want to really reassure your various constituencies that you're confident in your business' ability to persevere, they need to hear it from the folks at the top. COVID-19 is the world that your business must succeed in; this is a C-level conversation. It's time for top execs to emerge as the thought leaders and visionaries they claim to be. How can your executive platforms evolve to encompass our new reality, and how is your company going to demonstrate true leadership in this new climate? Answer these questions internally now. If your thought leader is better in written form, use the blog or contribute an article to get your ideas out to the public. Contribute your insights to the industry dialogue. Don't be afraid of the conversation, welcome it. Winners want the ball.

If there's one thing that's certain, it's that facing our shared issues openly is a much more effective strategy than keeping your head down and hoping not to be noticed. This is especially true in a crisis. If you have a security breach, it's far better to go public quickly and reassure constituents proactively than to try to conceal the problem. If you're ousting an executive for misconduct, you tell your story first, drive the narrative and reassure stakeholders that everything is well in hand. In the new normal that is COVID-19, the same rules apply. Reassure the world that you're ready to handle this new environment and all that comes with it. Frankly, we could all use a little reassurance these days.

Syreeta Mussante is North America Managing Director at The Hoffman Agency. ○



Syreeta Mussante

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Opening doors

Past crises have shown there are often tremendous opportunities to serve clients in new ways, and we're already seeing this play out amid the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

By Bill Haynes

"In the universe there are things that are known, and things that are unknown, and in between them there are doors."

—William Blake

In this era of uncertainty, this march of Mondays where the future is murky and our minds are often muddled, we still have choices. My father has always observed, "If you are perceptive, you can see doors opening." And in adversity, if we pay attention and have an open mind it's often the case we can recognize where the opportunities lie.

Indeed, we have clients who are paying attention and paying it forward. Vital Capital, for instance, is a pioneering impact investor focused on companies in sub-Saharan Africa. The firm, rather than sit on its hands amid the uncertainty, recently announced a new debt facility that provides loans to promising businesses to help them get through the coronavirus pandemic while continuing to offer essential services. Alumni Ventures Group, one of the world's most active venture capital firms, has followed a similar tack, launching a post-COVID Fund focused on entrepreneurial companies working to shape and accelerate the world's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Many of our private equity firm clients are likewise helping their existing portfolio companies manage the crisis and looking for new opportunities to invest.

Our asset management clients are similarly searching for value in the market and counseling clients on asset allocation and taking a long-term view of their investments. Meanwhile, our fintech clients are pursuing opportunities in digital payments, upgrading core banking systems, making trading more accessible to retail investors, and providing access to data and analytics offering insights into consumer behaviors, investment trends or business processes, in addition to other areas across financial services.

During these periods of dislocation in which so many compromised communities are unduly affected, our impact investing clients also are driving awareness around the potential for sustainable investments to combat climate change, improve governance and help reverse social inequality. Importantly, our impact clients are also emphasizing that there need not be a sacri-

fice in financial returns when making ESG investments.

We're proud to help our clients communicate with the media and their other constituents during this time. At BackBay, we're seeing doors open, and selectively walking through them to embrace new opportunities.

To be sure, we've had to find ways to succeed in difficult environments before. In the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 and the ensuing Great Recession, reforms to the banking system led to significant opportunities. As banks spun-off their private equity businesses into independent companies, BackBay helped these firms create new brands. We developed and refined a research process for identifying the brand essence of investment organizations, created new names, logos, websites, marketing collateral, and created excitement around the spinoffs through coordinated media campaigns. These initiatives led to long-term engagements with those firms and imparted considerable experience as we fine-tuned our process and continue to apply and iterate it regularly with new clients seeking to augment their market positioning.

Likewise, when financial services companies began to adopt social media tools to disintermediate traditional channels, we quickly got up to speed on the best ways to leverage the medium on behalf of our clients. And as social media strategies evolve, we continue to provide clients with strategic counsel, and for many, we will help in the execution of these strategies through writing and designing their posts and facilitating engagement with new audiences and networks. Some have even handed us responsibility for managing the social media accounts of their firms' principals.

As the media outlets consolidated and journalists became overwhelmed, social media and other electronic communications enabled "owned" media to proliferate. At BackBay, we recognized that to take full advantage of these new platforms, our clients needed compelling content. We hired journalists who were knowledgeable about financial services, adept at research, and could recognize and write interesting articles for the executives at the companies we represent. Along with message development, media relations and social media,

content development has become a core component of our work today.

Staying attuned to the new opportunities

So, what doors are opening during this crisis? Thus far, the disruption caused by the pandemic has underscored the need for an integrated communications program that leverages the full array of earned and owned media. Digital tools have been essential to help facilitate the kinds of connections that had previously been made at conferences and in-person meetings. The crisis has also highlighted the importance of BackBay being a strategic and tactical extension of our clients' teams. And our flexibility has allowed our clients to pivot quickly from crisis to opportunity.

The crisis has also underscored the importance of specialization and being part of a particular ecosystem, where participants know each other and can serve as references and referral sources. For BackBay, those specializations are private equity and venture capital, impact investing, asset management, and fintech.

Historically, we've always done better in new business pitches and long-term engagements when the prospective client values substance over flash. Ironically, we're finding that it has been easier to have a substantial initial conversation and get to know prospects and clients better over Zoom than across a large conference room table. The conversations and dialogue between teams seems less orchestrated and more genuine. Especially when their cat jumps onto their desk during the video conference or you can see a shower curtain in the background because the bathroom is the only quiet room in the house (a common scenario for people with toddlers running amok). These interactions, however, emphasize how we are all in this together, dealing with worries and inconveniences, and the extent to which a little kindness and understanding can go a long way.

The pandemic is truly a tragedy and it will take a long time for life to return to normal. But people are using their ingenuity and dedication to get through this liminal period and create some order amidst the chaos. Between now and then, there are doors. Which door will you open?

Bill Haynes is Founder and CEO of BackBay Communications. ●



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Crisis engagement versus crisis management

Professionals in our field speak often about “crisis management,” but if communicating in the era of COVID-19 has taught us anything, it’s the need to consider a new approach.

By Peter V. Stanton

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, business and management journals have been filled with articles about communication tactics during a crisis. What to say. When to say it. How to muster your team. The advice pours in from every quarter. At the risk of adding to such chatter, one idea may be worthy of special consideration.

The very idea of “management” is one of command and control in a top-down style of leadership. Decisions are made. Directions are given. Actions are taken. Messages are delivered. All of this is very authoritarian. We can see the result of such a top-down management style in the way people reacted to prolonged edicts about curtailed business, economic and social activities. While compliance occurred in the short term, resistance emerged in the long run. Part of the reason is the manner in which many government officials communicated. “I have decided.” “This ‘order’ takes effect immediately.” “These regulations are imposed ...” While society may need some measure of direction from government officials during a pandemic such as this, the language of orders, regulations and imposition doesn’t foster good will or acceptance on behalf of private sector entities.

To be sure, corporate communicators rarely adopt such terms, but the way in which decisions are made and expressed nonetheless has a profound effect on perception. More than a few major corporations find themselves today striving to restore reputation due to statements poorly framed and expressed.

“Crisis Engagement” is a far more enlightened way to think about what we should be doing in circumstances such as this.

An Engagement strategy calls for dialogue, transparency, explanation and openness. Business leaders often speak of such characteristics or build them into a statement of corporate values, but living those values requires that we go well beyond simply posting them to the corporate web site.

Building a crisis strategy should never be a scenario-based exercise. All too often, the scenario we failed to anticipate is the one that arises. Likely there were very few, if any, COVID-19 communication plans on the shelf waiting for this specific set of circumstances.

Instead, a coherent and adaptable plan

begins with a set of guiding principles that translate into actions suitable to a wide variety of contingencies. Here are some possibilities that are consistent with Engagement versus Management:

Principle one: be open and honest

Honesty maybe the best policy, but it doesn’t come easily to organizations ever mindful of liability. There can be risk in saying, “Here is what we now know and what we do not yet know.” But, our stakeholders, if not our attorneys, always will credit us for saying as much, especially when we go on to describe what we are doing to fill the information gaps.

At the same time, openness requires that we take the initiative to communicate quickly rather than risk the perception we are disengaged or, worse, paralyzed by confusion. Such outreach very early in a crisis does not require that we provide all the answers. It requires that we describe our process, our commitment, and our empathy for those most negatively affected. Adding how we intend to continually share updated information ensures that our stakeholders know we are not spouting platitudes, but demonstrating responsible management action.

Principle two: listen carefully

During the COVID-19 crisis, press briefings and public pronouncements and presentations sparked negative and, in some cases, even hostile reactions. The key to Engagement is to maintain a posture of respect and interest rather than responding to negativity in like manner. Letting the audience know that you care about their points of view and appreciate their willingness to share their thoughts, can significantly improve the potential for reasoned dialogue.

Tonality during a crisis is more important than ever. Words convey not only our message, but also the personality and character of our brand. In an increasingly global communication environment, we must additionally ensure that our ideas and meanings are culturally suitable and understandable, that our words express the same things in different languages, and our written and verbal outreach is done in a measured and disciplined fashion.

Principle three: speak clearly

People around the world have experienced a rapid education in medical terminology and systems as a result of the pandemic.

One medical expert recently, in attempting to explain evidence of severe blood clotting in COVID-19 patients, went into a discussion of “antiphospholipid syndrome.” It turns out a layperson’s alternative wording could be “sticky blood.” Those words are much more easily understood and prompt curiosity as to what that is exactly.

Similarly, corporate communicators can dispense with the jargon of their industry and words commonly accepted in the board room, speaking instead with clarity that is neither condescending nor open to misinterpretation. Words that may seem commonplace such as “benchmarking,” “OEM’s” or even “supply chain” can be unfamiliar to those outside the corporate environment. The words “comparisons,” “parts producers” and “suppliers” can be far more accessible substitutes for a broader range of audiences.

Principle four: provide context

This health crisis brought about a wide array of restrictions that often differed from state to state. But residents of one state had equal access to the news of other states and could easily identify differences and inconsistencies. When a new rule appeared to make little sense or was radically opposite what an adjacent state mandated, the result was often confusion and, ultimately, dissension. Compare this to the original rationale for restrictions of any kind. Health authorities in Washington, D.C. discussed “Flattening the Curve.” They explained what they meant by that and why such an approach was vital. Generally speaking, people understood and complied. In the beginning, there was a broad, general consensus about the need to do nearly unheard of things, because people understood the reasoning behind those measures.

Corporations that take the time to put their decisions into context, sharing the rationale for their actions and providing a framework for continually reevaluating gain favor from consumers and the press even if their actions are not immediately popular. At least it’s understood such actions also aren’t capricious.

Crisis Engagement must become the new approach to navigating difficult waters. Corporations that continue to apply traditional “management” thinking and action will see their brands and reputations suffer as a result.

Peter V. Stanton is Founder and CEO of Stanton Communications, Inc. ●



Peter V. Stanton



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Tech gains ground amid challenging times

O'Dwyer's interviewed executives at the top PR agencies representing the technology sector to find out what factors contributed to their success this year and what the future holds as an industry known for innovation faces disruption on a global scale.

By Jon Gingerich

The top 10 PR firms ranked by *O'Dwyer's* for technology this year brought in a combined total of more than \$476 million in tech-related net fees. Eight of this year's top 10 tech agencies gained in tech-related billings, and each was also up in *O'Dwyer's* overall annual rankings—half of them by double-digits. Number-one independent PR giant Edelman now sees technology as its largest practice, accounting for more than 30 percent of its total revenue (or about \$274.6 million).

Like most industries, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the tech sector in a big way. The tech industry has faced plenty of setbacks in recent years, from privacy issues to data breaches to job-killing robots, each of which has caused society to reexamine the role technology plays in our lives.

Arguably, however, the technology sector is poised to be more resilient than most in the wake of COVID-19. Given that these companies provided the very offerings that have helped us adapt in these unusual times—such as streaming services, social media networks and remote working solutions—it isn't a stretch to consider they'll continue to lead throughout this crisis with untold new advancements we can't yet imagine. Innovation, as it turns out, doesn't disappear in times of crisis.

O'Dwyer's asked several executives at the top PR firms representing the technology world today what the future holds as we balance out an unexpected year and turn toward 2021. According to tech PR leaders, not only will COVID-19 not curb innovation, our latest global challenge has actually presented opportunities for an industry that thrives on disruption.

Hotwire widens lead

Global tech PR specialist Hotwire accounted for more than \$42.1 million in tech-related billings in 2019, retaining the number-two spot in *O'Dwyer's* tech rankings this year with \$5.3 million in tech-related gains from 2018's \$36.8 million.

The U.S. and U.K.-based agency's growth revealed the biggest overall percentage climb among our top 10 tech firms this year, and bested the firm's own \$3.6 million gains in 2018 from 2017's \$33.2 million.

Heather Kernahan, Hotwire CEO, North America, characterized the agency's year as "really outstanding" and one that's the result

of putting together the right senior client team and hiring in growth areas of strategy and insight as well as integrated planning and digital.

"The Hotwire brand wasn't well known in the U.S. three years ago and we've all been on a mission to connect with the industry here and deliver work for clients that get talked about," Kernahan said.

Looking to the future, Kernahan said COVID-19 has companies narrowing down on the most critical business outcomes and asking their PR and communications teams to deliver. As a result, agencies are now being forced to confront and refine what works for which audiences.



Heather Kernahan

"For years we've been seeing that every industry has been figuring out how to be positioned as a tech company, and that is accelerating with this pandemic."

Finn Partners forges ahead

Finn Partners held onto its number-three slot with \$32.1 million in 2019 tech-related billings, accounting for gains of more than \$4.6 million from 2018's \$27.4 million.

Founding managing partner Peter Finn said the agency's technology practice experienced a 15 percent year-over-year growth in new clients, which he attributes, in part, "to multi-country assignments with integrated program elements" such as PR, social, digital and advertising. To address this growth, the global independent agency's tech staff grew by approximately 15 percent this year as well.

Finn sees several noteworthy trends currently shaping the tech world. Technology

for educational institutions (including platforms, access, hardware, programs and distance learning experiences) will advance due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and tech will continue to look to innovations in VR, 5G, AI and machine learning and cybersecurity as pillars for sector growth and momentum.

More importantly, Finn believes COVID-19 has positioned agencies to help tech clients with lead-gen efforts, as events are canceled or moved to virtual settings and with traditional media relations being conducted with more sensitivity. Combined, these factors have his agency's global tech practice stable as it remains focused on counseling clients as they pivot to survive amid the coronavirus and seek to build stronger ties with employees, partners and customers in the process.

"This new environment creates opportunities to view communications more holistically and offer new services to clients who, pre-COVID-19, might not have considered these offerings," Finn said.

PAN picks up number-six slot

PAN Communications is now ranked number-six in *O'Dwyer's* tech rankings, inching up from the number-seven position last year after clearing more than \$19.3 million in 2019 tech-related net fees to reveal year-over-year growth of more than \$2 million from 2018's \$17.3 million.

Executive vice president Mark Nardone said the Boston-based tech and healthcare specialist has witnessed a solid lift in its technology practice in the last year as brands have begun to move upstream across various stages of growth.

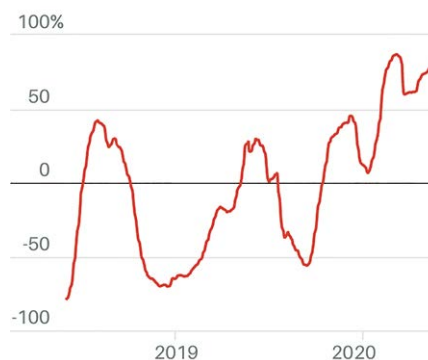
"The companies that came to us a couple years ago as startups and emerging growth brands are now gaining capital and seeing tremendous success as they enter that mid-stage category and lean more holistically on



Peter Finn



Mark Nardone



O'Dwyer's technology PR rankings, pg. 26




Continued on page 35

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RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN TECHNOLOGY

Firm	2019 Net Fees	Firm	2019 Net Fees
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$274,677,000	33. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	1,700,000
2. Hotwire , New York, NY	42,161,713	34. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	1,548,647
3. Finn Partners , New York, NY	32,106,000	35. Peppercomm , New York, NY	1,274,327
4. Zeno Group , New York, NY	22,648,226	36. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	1,192,453
5. Highwire PR , San Francisco, CA	19,595,186	37. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	799,308
6. PAN Communications , Boston, MA	19,344,484	38. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	792,669
7. Walker Sands Communications , Chicago, IL	18,832,290	39. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	724,514
8. ICR , New York, NY	16,671,011	40. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	564,500
9. MWWPR , New York, NY	15,013,280	41. Prosek Partners , New York, NY	525,000
10. Hoffman Agency, The , San Jose, CA	15,005,000	42. Bob Gold & Associates , Redondo Beach, CA	518,102
11. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	14,818,082	43. Feintuch Communications , New York, NY	488,180
12. W2O Group , San Francisco, CA	13,952,000	44. Landis Communications , San Francisco, CA	357,500
13. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	11,342,681	45. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	331,540
14. Shift Communications , Boston, MA	10,953,765	46. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	322,250
15. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	9,000,000	47. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	258,837
16. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER) Columbus, OH	8,799,734	48. Approach Marketing , Worthington, OH	248,624
17. Matter Communications , Newburyport, MA	8,689,663	49. Bradford Group, The , Nashville, TN	210,102
18. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	8,032,000	50. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	159,145
19. Bospar , San Francisco, CA	5,692,505	51. Hunter , New York, NY	150,000
20. Touchdown PR , Austin, TX	4,884,345	52. Akrete , Evanston, IL	148,344
21. March Communications , Boston, MA	4,693,059	53. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	119,000
22. Lumina Communications , San Jose, CA	4,505,079	54. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	110,003
23. Havas Formula , New York, NY	3,400,395	55. WordWrite Communications LLC , Pittsburgh, PA	109,000
24. SourceCode Communications , New York, NY	3,342,813	56. Konnect Agency , Los Angeles, CA	89,983
25. Idea Grove , Dallas, TX	3,288,889	57. Singer Associates, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	38,416
26. Crenshaw Communications , New York, NY	3,047,435	58. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	35,215
27. ARPR , Atlanta, GA	2,631,389	59. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	30,000
28. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms , Seattle, WA	2,559,996	60. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	15,481
29. Karbo Communications , San Francisco, CA	2,395,720	61. Zapwater Communications , Chicago, IL	7,893
30. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	2,100,000	62. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	6,019
31. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	2,066,442	63. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	4,930
32. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	1,740,170	64. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	1,169

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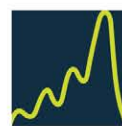
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Top 10 financial firms see revenues rise 10%

For PR firms working in the financial sector, 2019 was overall a bull year, with revenues for the top 10 firms ticking up 9.8 percent to \$209.2 million.

By Steve Barnes

Every firm in the top 10 of O'Dwyer's rankings of financial PR and investor relations agencies saw an increase in revenues, but the two biggest gainers were the only two to have not cracked the top 10 last year. Finn Partners, which rose from #14 to #6, acquired London-based financial firm Moorgate Communications in February 2019, and saw its revenues spike 253 percent to \$8.8 million. A 189 percent jump to \$3.9 million took Padilla from the #18 spot last year to #10 this year.

The top five firms all hold the same spot they did last year. Top of the heap Edelman pulled in \$83.6 million, a 4.9 percent increase over last year's \$79.9 million.

ICR kept the #2 position, with a 3.5 percent increase taking its revenues to \$47.5 million. At #3, Prosek Partners showed a 16.2 percent gain, hitting \$48.2 million. APCO Worldwide's \$11.2 million in revenues (a 4.5 percent hike) kept it in the #4 slot, while Vested rounded out the five top-ranked firms with a 27.1 percent increase to \$9.2 million.

Prosek diversifies

Prosek Partners Founder and CEO Jennifer Prosek said that her firm's crisis/special situations practice, which has been doubling each year, was a major driver of its growth in 2019.

She also said that Prosek's strict focus on the financial sector (which she termed an "emerging market for marketing") contributed to its success, as did its creative services, digital and non-PR business.

Offering a diversified set of services is something Prosek sees as a necessity for firms looking to keep moving forward through the rest of 2020. "Straight-up marketing communications

work is in neutral or negative territory right now," she says, "and will likely stay that way for most of this year."

However, the changed economic climate will also create new opportunities, according to Prosek. "We see the opportunity to launch

a whole new set of solutions—communications-related and otherwise—that are geared toward helping clients pivot from the old way of doing things and enabling them to thrive in an all-virtual or semi-virtual world," she says.

Some of the ways in which Prosek says firms can help make that pivot include video and virtual fund raising solutions as well as coaching and solutions packages that outline strategies for business development and executive visibility in the virtual environment.

Other areas that she sees as likely areas of increased activity are financial technology innovation, communications surrounding bankruptcies and following up on the investment opportunities that may emerge in the market ahead.

Vested adds clients, offices, services

Vested brought on such clients as Canada Life, American Express and Scotiabank in 2019, which agency President Binna Kim attributes to the firm's "multi-channel, integrated support, based on a platform of industry expertise."

Last year also saw Vested open a Toronto office and acquire financial content firm Scribe. Kim says that acquisition "enabled us to deliver turnkey financial content at scale to our clients and new clients."

In the coming year, Kim says companies need to rethink the ways in which they market and communicate. "This particular crisis is challenging because there's no precedent for it, no standard of comparison—but simultaneously, it's a tremendous opportunity for creativity and learning," she noted.

She also says that the unstable financial environment has broadened the relationship Vested has with many of its clients. The expanded services Vested is offering include business continuity planning, em-

ployee relations and investor relations.

The aim of those services, she says, should be to project an image of safety and stability. "We're advising clients to reassure their customers and clients about their stability; telling them to reaffirm their commitment to the space they're in; and reassess their CSR initiative."

Big Year for BackBay

BackBay moved up from #12 to #11 in this year's rankings, boasting a 23.1 percent jump in revenues to \$3.7 million. The agency added clients in such financial services verticals as private equity and venture capital, wealth management, fintech and impact investing.

BackBay founder and CEO Bill Haynes cites several factors behind what he calls a "record year" for his firm.

The first is BackBay's 92 percent client retention rate. Haynes says that he made client retention the agency's top priority in 2019, by listening to clients' business goals and then "working with them to develop and deploy integrated public relations, content development, and digital distribution strategies."

He also says the agency made a concerted effort to drive in-bound new business inquiries. Focusing on the sub-sectors in which the agency has particular knowledge was also a successful strategy, as was a strong emphasis on employee engagement.

Haynes said that continued success in 2020 depends on "being essential to our clients," adjusting the agency's plans to line up with client business needs and working as an extension of the client's team.

As regards the effects of the current health and financial crisis, he stresses that "communications and transparency are more important than ever during periods of uncertainty."

But he also feels optimism about the continued need for the services that financial PR firms provide. "Financial services is a large and essential part of the economy," he said, "and companies in the sector will continue to need assistance as they move from crisis communications mode to recovery and growth mode."



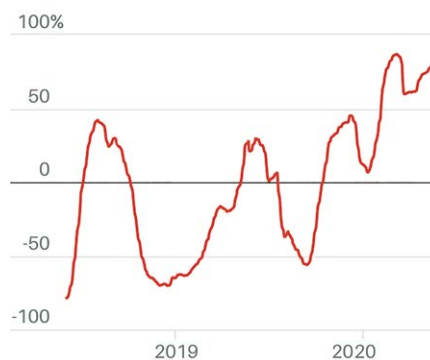
Bill Haynes



Binna Kim



Jennifer Prosek



O'Dwyer's financial PR rankings, pg. 30

— Continued on page 35



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RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN FINANCE

Firm	2019 Net Fees	Firm	2019 Net Fees
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$83,645,000	24. KCD Public Relations, Inc. , San Diego, CA	\$989,089
2. ICR , New York, NY	49,124,635	25. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	771,240
3. Prosek Partners , New York, NY	48,213,707	26. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	769,590
4. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	11,223,699	27. Akrete , Evanston, IL	710,121
5. Vested , New York, NY	9,236,000	28. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	689,114
6. Finn Partners , New York, NY	8,825,000	29. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	671,717
7. Dukas Linden Public Relations , New York, NY	6,318,683	30. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	538,819
8. Lambert , Grand Rapids, MI	5,136,000	31. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	515,166
9. Bliss Integrated Communication , New York, NY	3,976,000	32. Bradford Group, The , Nashville, TN	426,370
10. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	3,939,768	33. Butler Associates, LLC , New York, NY	366,762
11. BackBay Communications , Boston, MA	3,674,919	34. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	360,732
12. RBMG (RB Milestone Group) , Stamford, CT	3,433,225	35. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	330,000
13. Caliber Corporate Advisers , New York, NY	2,922,102	36. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	287,000
14. Hewes Communications , New York, NY	2,761,129	37. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	260,237
15. Zeno Group , New York, NY	2,633,958	38. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	230,760
16. IMRE, LLC , Baltimore, MD	2,573,000	39. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	173,000
17. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	2,100,000	40. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	112,953
18. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	1,978,358	41. SPI Group LLC, The , Fairfield, NJ	100,000
19. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	1,692,445	42. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	92,000
20. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	1,611,164	43. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	79,286
21. Peppercomm , New York, NY	1,571,186	44. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	65,000
22. Havas Formula , New York, NY	1,476,595	45. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	14,469
23. Buttonwood Comms Group , New York, NY	1,212,200		



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Top 10 healthcare firms post 14% gain

The top 10 healthcare PR firms posted a robust 14.3 percent rise in 2019 fee income to \$565 million, compared to last year's \$480 million, according to the 2020 *O'Dwyer's* rankings.

By Kevin McCauley

The performance of this year's top 10 healthcare PR firms outstripped the 10 percent gain to \$697.4 million for the top 50 firms on the list.

Jim Weiss' W2O Group retained command of the top position. A 30.2 percent surge in fees powered the San Francisco-based firm to \$218.9 million in fees.



Jim Weiss

Imre, which ranked eighth, registered the largest percentage gain in the Top 10, up 82.6 percent as a mix of new business wins; organic growth and more overseas work sparked the Baltimore-based firm.

Three firms broke into the Top 10 ranks. Evoke KYNE checked in at No. 6 with \$25.2 million fees following the merger of Huntsworth's Evoke with special healthcare communications specialist KYNE in May. ICR is now the No. 9 ranked *O'Dwyer's* firm with \$18.9 million in fees, thanks to its January 2019 acquisition of Westwicke Partners, a health-centered IR shop in Baltimore. M Booth Health, the No. 10 firm, is the result of the October 2019 acquisition by UK's Next Fifteen Communications Group of Creston's Plc US assets (Health Unlimited).

Imre puts empathy into practice

In 2019, Imre evolved its strategy and digital-led service offerings from patient consumer marketing into medical and scientific affairs and HCP marketing.

"We've long said we believe that taking a moment to listen can change everything, and that approaching patients and physicians—and our clients—with more empathy can be a game changer," said Jeff Smokler, Imre Health President. "We've evolved our empathy approach and further put it into practice with a global product we call Compassionate Intelligence."



Jeff Smokler

Smokler is confident this orchestrated effort to live up to his firm's values will ensure that it attracts the best talent and brand marketing teams who wish to lead the pharmaceutical and biotech brands of tomorrow.

"In the last year we opened our fourth office in Philadelphia and produced work represented on four continents," he said. "Empathy and compassion are universal human traits, and we're proud to be the champion of both on a global scale."

Finn Partners credits deep bench

Gil Bashe, Managing Partner of Global Health at Finn Partners, said its strong leadership team is the key to the group's success, up 46.3 percent to \$31 million.

That group includes Kristie Kuhl and Fern Lazar in New York, Nicole Cottrill in Nashville, Alex Borisov in Washington, Joe Foster on the West Coast, Goel Jasper in Jerusalem, Shuchi Joseph in Singapore and the European team led by Chantal Bowman-Boyles.



Gil Bashe

Finn Partners made two key health-specific acquisitions in 2019—science-based PR/investor relations firm Lazar Partners in New York, and Medical & Health Consulting, a Paris-

based health and biopharma consultancy. "Our values-based culture, cross-practice collaboration and commitment to working hard and playing nice, is a plus for growth-oriented agency leaders," said Finn.

JPA bolsters biopharma roster

Carrie Jones, who heads No. 12 JPA Health Communications, said the firm strategically expanded its client roster with biopharma clients and professional societies.

The D.C. firm, which enjoyed an 11.2 percent rise in fees to \$10.3 million, also expanded its branding capabilities, producing award-winning creative, including the corporate rebrand for Milestone Pharmaceuticals.

Jones said JPA broke new ground with innovative digital campaigns, including the #NotAwkward campaign for Medicines360 that encouraged women to share stories about their reproductive health.



Carrie Jones

The firm also developed a program for The Physicians Foundation called "Vital Signs: Attend to Your Wellbeing," which empowered doctors, colleagues and loved ones to check on one another's wellbeing. Jones said that program gained traction in helping to destigmatize the negativity around physicians seeking help for their mental health.

Evoke KYNE completes integration

David Kyne said his 2019 focus was to integrate KYNE with Huntsworth's Evoke PR & Influence offering to become Evoke KYNE, a global, unified team with a singular purpose and mission.

"While that was happening, we continued to scale and diversify our roster of clients, including nearly 25 percent growth driven by strong legacy clients, tremendous organic growth and more than 15 new clients across sectors and geographies," he said.

Kyne said the firm made more than 30 new hires, invested in experienced strategic advisors and appointed a global head of digital to oversee the 15-plus team.

"We also grew our creative, earned media and public health teams globally, and invested significantly in our robust internal programs including health and wellness, corporate giving, volunteering and mentorship," Kyne said.

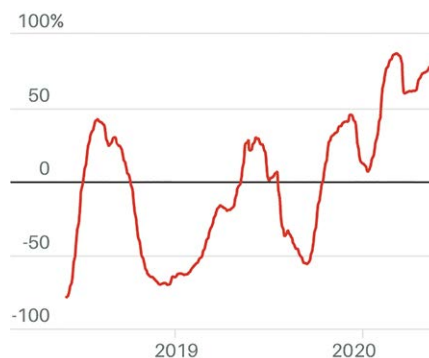
Crosby expands client relationships

Raymond Crosby, CEO of Crosby Marketing Communications, said health continues to be the lead growth driver at his Annapolis-based firm. The firm registered a 21.8 percent gain in health fees to snag the No. 7 spot on *O'Dwyer's* rankings.

In 2019, Crosby built on its more than 20-year relationship with Kaiser Permanente



David Kyne



O'Dwyer's healthcare PR rankings, pg. 36

— Continued on page 34



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Culture during times of crisis

What business leaders can do to strengthen their internal cultures as they manage through the COVID-19 crisis.

By Jennifer Prosek

When people ask what I'm most proud of about the agency I started, I never mention our growth, our client base or the work we do. My answer is always our culture. It's not that those other things aren't important. It's just that none of them would even be possible without the strong, supportive work environment we've built.

The COVID-19 crisis has tested our culture—and the culture at all businesses—like never before. Every move a CEO makes today is being watched. The best talent will judge companies on how they communicated and came together during these difficult times, and the organizations with strong cultures will ultimately benefit.

What can leaders do to strengthen their cultures as they manage through the crisis? Here are a few tips:

Overcommunicate on multiple levels

In normal times, most employees want to hear about two things: how the business is doing and the impact on their salary and benefits. Today, business leaders need to communicate about so much more—health, safety, empathy, government response, customer needs—and they have

to do it despite high levels of uncertainty. Giving honest answers is critical, including being honest about what you don't know. Anything less can lead to reputational damage from which you may never recover.

Show your human side

Leaders need to realize that everything is on display now. Five years ago, we started an employee benefit program at Prosek called "Up the Humanity." It was all about helping people form connections with one another. This is the most "Up the Humanity" moment I've ever experienced. We're seeing people's bedrooms on video calls and meeting their kids as they wander into the picture. While it can sometimes be difficult in the moment, embrace the opportunity it provides to get to know colleagues on a different level.

Create meeting equality

I've also noticed that large scale video calls make it easier for people at all levels to speak up. Instead of executives being at the head of the table, everyone is in the same little box on a computer screen. That creates what I call "meeting equality." Leaders should be thinking now about how to make sure that equality doesn't disappear once we

all return to the office.

Be the chief hope officer

While it's important to be transparent and honest with employees, you also need to give them a sense of optimism. We have weekly staff meetings, and during those meetings I talk candidly about both wins and losses.

I also give people tools and strategies they can use to make their own luck. When I first started doing this, some managers wondered if we were panicking junior staff. I asked a group of young people and it turned out that they wanted to hear the good, the bad and the ugly. Some had roommates whose leaders told them nothing—until one day they got laid off. People deserve the truth, along with a sense of hope and a course of action.

I believe our culture has made it possible for our firm to quickly adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, which will ultimately make us stronger in the future. But keeping that culture intact requires vigilance every day, now more than ever.

Jennifer Prosek is Founder and CEO of Prosek Partners. ○



Jennifer Prosek

Healthcare roundup

—Continued from page 32

and significantly expanded digital work with Shriners Hospitals for Children.

"We are also at the forefront of helping federal agencies communicate about the COVID-19 crisis, including work with the



Raymond Crosby

Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Defense," said Crosby.

The firm invested in digital marketing, analytics, and social content creation and community management during the past year. It also formally launched a military & veterans practice that leverages its expertise in engaging that community about important health care, wellness and family life issues.

Kivvit jumps 12 notches on list

Kivvit moved up 12 spots in the rankings to No. 27 with fees of \$3 million, up 103.9 percent from a year ago.

"We collaborated on several public awareness campaigns last year, including a project with the Illinois Public Health Institute and

the Chicago Department of Public Health to raise knowledge about pre-diabetes and increase enrollment in a diabetes prevention program among underserved communities in Chicago," said Zach Silber, Chief Innovation Officer.

Silber said Kivvit's healthcare unit has invested in leading-edge technology and innovative data analysis that enables clients to engage with finely targeted audiences.

"This work ranges from stakeholder mapping that visualizes policymakers' networks to building custom digital audiences of advocates, patients, and consumers via a robust series of proprietary, HIPAA-compliant audience datasets," said Silber.

JPC&H targets healthcare challenges

David Jarrard said Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock used 2019 to position for the rapid, unexpected and transformative shifts across healthcare.

"With the escalating cost of care, the advent of high 'surprise billing' and sto-

ries of hospitals suing patients for unpaid bills, the perception of healthcare providers had been evolving for some from beloved protectors of the community to collections-hungry, overcharging, faceless institutions," he said.

Jarrard said 2019 represented a year in which every organization that provides care underwent a level of redefinition as the relationships between various stakeholders shifted—mergers and acquisitions continued, disruption from non-traditional healthcare companies increased and regulatory adjustments affected the finances of healthcare.

JPC&H developed strategic communications solutions to guide leaders through executive transitions, patient experience initiatives and health services company growth acceleration goals.

Each of these areas has positioned the firm well for helping clients emerge from the COVID-19 maelstrom and either repair and rebuild or pivot as necessary. ○



David Jarrard



Zach Silber

Technology roundup

— Continued from page 24

an integrated marketing and PR program,” Nardone told *O’Dwyer’s*.

Nardone said one area in the agency’s technology practice that has experienced tenfold expansion is its measurement and analytics services. PAN has also witnessed an uptick in organic growth within its tech practice as brands that came to the agency for earned media now expand into content, social, digital and other integrated areas.

“When we began to ramp up our integrated practice five-plus years ago, this was the goal, and now it has become our reality,” Nardone said. “Tech brands are approaching PAN for insights into customer conversations within a crowded market, and our social listening and monitoring has played a critical role in delivering this data.”

Nardone believes the technology sector post-coronavirus will come back stronger than ever. Venture capital continues to raise large rounds of funding and seek out new areas of tech in which to invest. And clients are continuing to turn to agencies because they’re approaching PR with a different mindset than they were 10 years ago, as they now recognize integrated marketing’s ability to produce content that connects their product or service with the right audience.

More than anything, Nardone said tech’s continued success in light of the coronavi-

rus is predicated on the idea that the verticalization of technology isn’t just the “next shiny object.” As sectors that were once considered “traditional” now find themselves transformed by tech—everything from real estate, to legal and insurance—these industries find themselves increasingly relying on technology to bring new levels of experience to their customers.

Hoffman hits top ten

The Hoffman Agency entered *O’Dwyer’s* top ten for tech for the first time, leaping from the number-12 position with \$13.6 million in tech-related billings last year to \$15,005,000 this year to claim our number-10 spot.

CEO Lou Hoffman told *O’Dwyer’s* that the San Jose-headquartered tech agency’s “sweet spot, the area we believe there’s no agency on the planet better than us,” lies in running multi-country campaigns for tech companies.

“Last year saw us reach the tipping point as far as critical mass. More than win multi-country opportunities, we’re also seeing clients engage with us in a single geography and then later expand to other markets. A large percent of our revenue now comes from clients we support in two or more countries.”

Hoffman also points to the quality of service delivery at his global firm, which was founded in 1987, as a key factor.

“Clients assume that every agency can ex-

ecute. Not true. While not the glamorous part of our business, our ability to execute client programs month after month after month also differentiates us and explains why clients engage with us.”

Hoffman noted that the definition of a tech company has morphed in recent years, evolving from vendors to companies that depend on technology to differentiate their products or services.

As a result, Hoffman said one could make the argument that most companies today are now tech companies. And with COVID-19 cratering clients’ sales-lead process with the closure of conferences and trade shows, the crisis may actually accelerate tech agencies’ push into integrated campaigns, content marketing and lead-gen programs.

“That’s why I think demand for tech PR will continue to grow in coming years,” Hoffman said. “Big picture, the saying ‘necessity is the mother of invention’ has forced us to step back and take fresh eyes to how we can best support our clients. In a weird and ironic way, COVID-19 has delivered an opportunity to the tech industry to remind the world that it can be a force for good which is playing out right before our eyes.” ○



Lou Hoffman

Financial roundup

— Continued from page 28

Dukas Linden sticks to its roots



Richard Dukas

Dukas Linden, which kept the #7 spot it held last year, saw its revenues rise 16.8 percent to \$6.3 million in 2019, and agency chairman and CEO Richard Dukas attributes a big part of that to “sticking to our roots—media relations.”

Dukas says that while the agency does provide content creation, social media support, messaging and coaching services, its ability to get companies coverage in such outlets as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Barron’s*, Bloomberg and CNBC is what keeps clients coming back. Dukas adds that the firm secures 500 to 600 segments per year on top broadcast outlets.

Some of the new clients the agency has brought on in the last year are good indicators of where the opportunities lie in the new financial world. Dukas says those clients include: a firm that sells gold

(a hedge that is likely to keep its value), a company that roots out financial fraud, and a tele-medicine, tele-psychology services provider.

He also cites the expanding possibilities that video-conferencing technologies will offer, from the ability to do interviews at any hour of the day to the increasing ability of international companies to do interviews on U.S. networks.

Some potential down sides: lay-offs of key client contacts, bankruptcy and restructurings, and the propensity of stressed out executives to make mistakes.

“In one year from now,” Dukas said, “we will still be in a downturn.” However, he added that “there will always be opportunity for smart, resourceful companies to utilize PR effectively to grow their businesses and brands.”

Peppercomm ‘busier than ever’

Peppercomm returns to the list of *O’Dwyer’s* top financial firms this year, with its \$1.6 million in revenues snagging it the #21 spot.

Peppercomm Founder and CEO Steve Cody says his firm is “busier than ever in the financial sector.” Its projects over the past year included a wedding contest with

website The Knot for an insurance carrier and providing social media content for a UHNW (ultra-high net worth) wealth advisor.

Cody sees a paradigm shift in the way that communications will need to be carried out to ensure success in the near future. “The greatest opportunity,” he says, “is in rethinking old ways of connecting with audiences and developing new and innovative service offerings.”

He stresses the need for financial institutions to change which aspects of their operations they put front and center in their communications, bringing their skills in complex debt restructuring, bankruptcy and divestment into the spotlight. They will also need to “work long and hard on communication to restore trust” with their customers.

He also expects internal communications to grow in importance as companies “face the multiple challenges engaging the workforce during these unprecedented times.” ○



Steve Cody

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN HEALTHCARE

Firm	2019 Net Fees	Firm	2019 Net Fees
1. W2O Group , San Francisco, CA	\$218,883,000	35. Shift Communications , Boston, MA	\$1,472,202
2. Edelman , New York, NY	154,744,000	36. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	1,450,000
3. Spectrum , Washington, DC	33,900,000	37. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	1,249,665
4. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	31,556,300	38. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	1,235,239
5. Finn Partners , New York, NY	31,010,000	39. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	1,178,004
6. Evoke KYNE , New York, NY	25,149,453	40. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	995,984
7. Crosby , Annapolis, MD	23,420,131	41. L.C. Williams & Associates , Chicago, IL	932,222
8. IMRE, LLC , Baltimore, MD	20,995,000	42. Agency Ten22 , Cumming, GA	803,475
9. ICR , New York, NY	18,873,911	43. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms , Seattle, WA	665,954
10. M Booth Health , New York, NY	16,582,440	44. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	631,016
11. Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock , Brentwood, TN	12,416,807	45. Landis Communications , San Francisco, CA	601,000
12. JPA Health Communications , Washington, DC	10,305,362	46. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	593,655
13. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	9,800,000	47. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	590,182
14. Zeno Group , New York, NY	9,746,452	48. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	565,643
15. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	8,454,957	49. Singer Associates, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	511,025
16. Sam Brown Inc. , Wayne, PA	6,341,947	50. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	507,455
17. McCabe Message Partners , Washington, DC	5,789,127	51. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	382,105
18. Matter Communications , Newburyport, MA	4,859,956	52. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	377,000
19. SPI Group LLC, The , Fairfield, NJ	4,700,000	53. Rosica Communications , Fair Lawn, NJ	344,950
20. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	4,600,000	54. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	320,000
21. MCS Healthcare PR , Bedminster, NJ	4,372,952	55. Peppercomm , New York, NY	284,061
22. Bliss Integrated Communication , New York, NY	3,511,000	56. Perry Comms Group, Inc. , Sacramento, CA	273,675
23. Moore, Inc. , Tallahassee, FL	3,389,675	57. Serendipit , Phoenix, AZ	206,011
24. LaVoie Health Science , Boston, MA	3,270,282	58. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	193,000
25. PAN Communications , Boston, MA	3,149,102	59. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	155,000
26. MWWPR , New York, NY	3,145,208	60. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	154,768
27. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	3,024,369	61. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	152,772
28. Lovell Communications , Nashville, TN	2,952,973	62. WordWrite Communications LLC , Pittsburgh, PA	135,000
29. Hunter , New York, NY	2,950,000	63. Approach Marketing , Worthington, OH	134,943
30. MP&F Strategic Comms , Nashville, TN	2,816,689	64. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	111,540
31. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	2,656,882	65. Marketing Maven PR , Camarillo, CA	109,496
32. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	2,319,782	66. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	106,000
33. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	2,260,799	67. Bradford Group, The , Nashville, TN	61,584
34. Havas Formula , New York, NY	1,560,052	68. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	33,000

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Analytics and insights
power every facet of our
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and why.

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We always look for
solutions that make the
most sense and have the
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& Comms



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Branding



Intelligence

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **AGRICULTURE**

1. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	\$13,883,411
2. Edelman , New York, NY	10,133,000
3. Peppercomm , New York, NY	3,668,793
4. IMRE, LLC , Baltimore, MD	2,965,000
5. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	2,056,297
6. Zeno Group , New York, NY	1,827,427
7. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	1,652,375
8. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	531,890
9. Moore, Inc. , Tallahassee, FL	370,000
10. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	154,978
11. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	59,516
12. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	35,800
13. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	2,912

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **SPORTS & LEISURE**

1. Taylor , New York, NY	\$9,300,000
2. MWWPR , New York, NY	7,474,187
3. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	4,029,255
4. Berk Communications , New York, NY	2,030,195
5. Edelman , New York, NY	1,416,000
6. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	778,000
7. Konnect Agency , Los Angeles, CA	662,038
8. Havas Formula , New York, NY	655,188
9. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	600,000
10. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	536,085
11. IMRE, LLC , Baltimore, MD	350,000
12. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	310,821
13. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	302,881
14. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	200,000
15. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	183,000
16. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	151,649
17. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	148,429
18. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	112,470
19. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	35,000
20. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	33,636
21. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	33,367
22. Perry Communications Group, Inc. , Sacramento, CA	20,200
23. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	7,050
24. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	2,500

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **TRAVEL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$36,330,000
2. Finn Partners , New York, NY	12,498,000
3. Zimmerman Agency , Tallahassee, FL	12,000,000
4. J Public Relations , New York, NY	11,149,000
5. Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company , New York, NY	11,004,894
6. MMGY NJE , New York, NY	10,710,041
7. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI) , New York, NY	9,976,317
8. Lou Hammond Group , New York, NY	8,112,253
9. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations , New York, NY	6,000,000
10. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	4,806,932
11. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	4,487,319
12. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	3,568,936
13. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	3,000,000
14. Zeno Group , New York, NY	2,724,979
15. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	2,700,000
16. Moore, Inc. , Tallahassee, FL	2,465,825
17. Zapwater Communications , Chicago, IL	1,905,975
18. Hemsworth Communications , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1,800,000
19. Pineapple Public Relations , Chamblee, GA	1,336,144
20. Lion & Lamb Communications , New York, NY	999,000
21. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	791,390
22. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	625,256
23. Berk Communications , New York, NY	623,200
24. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	508,000
25. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	321,863
26. Violet PR , Montclair, NJ	314,189
27. Hunter , New York, NY	300,000
28. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	264,000
29. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	200,000
30. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	174,544
31. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	155,000
32. Marketing Maven Public Relations , Camarillo, CA	134,488
33. Singer Associates, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	132,068
34. Bob Gold & Associates , Redondo Beach, CA	110,700
35. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	100,000
36. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	54,500
37. Stuntman PR , New York, NY	35,000
38. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	15,449
39. Serendipit , Phoenix, AZ	8,531

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **BEAUTY & FASHION**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$82,624,000
2. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	6,366,720
3. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	5,400,000
4. Zeno Group, New York, NY	3,861,222
5. Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company, New York, NY	3,617,938
6. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	3,487,000
7. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,800,000
8. Havas Formula, New York, NY	2,630,991
9. Hunter, New York, NY	1,600,000
10. 360PR+, Boston, MA	1,295,201
11. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	1,140,465
12. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	952,574
13. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	848,000
14. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	836,915
15. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	754,250
16. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	694,989
17. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	543,612
18. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	459,000
19. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	319,692
20. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	200,000
21. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	147,812
22. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	146,000
23. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	136,714
24. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	128,331
25. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	123,726
26. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	123,000
27. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	108,097
28. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	102,500
29. Berk Communications, New York, NY	55,000
30. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	32,000
31. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	10,000
32. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	4,416

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **HOME FURNISHINGS**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$7,646,000
2. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	4,306,722
3. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	3,420,644
4. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	3,400,000
5. Hunter, New York, NY	2,950,000
6. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,000,000
7. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	1,800,000
8. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,374,085
9. Zeno Group, New York, NY	927,154
10. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	830,000
11. 360PR+, Boston, MA	659,434

Home Furnishings cont.

12. Havas Formula, New York, NY	642,304
13. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	415,302
14. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	408,110
15. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	363,613
16. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	303,000
17. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	240,095
18. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	236,086
19. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	209,359
20. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	172,000
21. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	166,767
22. Rosica Communications, Fair Lawn, NJ	78,000
23. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	35,329
24. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	10,000

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **ENTERTAINMENT**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$27,050,000
2. Finn Partners, New York, NY	8,602,000
3. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	5,481,574
4. Zeno Group, New York, NY	4,031,254
5. Taylor, New York, NY	3,700,000
6. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	3,056,891
7. 360PR+, Boston, MA	874,767
8. Havas Formula, New York, NY	730,472
9. Berk Communications, New York, NY	661,250
10. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	637,000
11. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	519,631
12. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	425,295
13. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	381,567
14. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	351,000
15. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	299,566
16. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	277,060
17. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	242,500
18. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	105,224
19. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	104,951
20. Hunter, New York, NY	100,000
21. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	92,550
22. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	85,472
23. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	79,763
24. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	65,500
25. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	49,950
26. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	39,728
27. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	27,592
28. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	8,840
29. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	7,250
30. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	6,000

**RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN
AUTOMOTIVE/TRANSPORTATION**

1. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	\$13,118,500
2. Zeno Group, New York, NY	5,493,631
3. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	3,400,000
4. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	2,595,000
5. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	2,383,000
6. Havas Formula, New York, NY	1,422,413
7. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	910,683
8. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	803,629
9. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	738,000
10. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	733,113
11. Peppercomm, New York, NY	575,999
12. 360PR+, Boston, MA	555,038
13. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	509,116
14. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	464,863
15. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	375,104
16. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	250,000
17. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	144,779
18. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	78,000
19. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	52,000
20. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	6,410
21. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	2,700

**RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN
ENVIRONMENTAL, SUSTAINABILITY & GREENTECH**

1. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	\$52,755,899
2. Edelman, New York, NY	20,678,000
3. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,220,000
4. Finn Partners, New York, NY	5,808,000
5. Cerrell Associates, Los Angeles, CA	3,637,398
6. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	2,396,450
7. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,129,323
8. Zeno Group, New York, NY	938,817
9. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	800,508
10. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	625,176
11. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	512,817
12. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	388,000
13. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	375,000
14. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	371,466
15. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	337,337
16. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	210,040
17. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	198,121
18. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	150,062
19. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	129,317
20. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	104,383
21. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	100,000
22. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	90,000

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN NON-PROFITS

1. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	\$5,298,276
2. Zeno Group, New York, NY	495,029
3. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	480,000
4. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	455,182
5. Rosica Communications, Fair Lawn, NJ	303,273
6. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	280,947
7. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	259,513
8. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	254,462
9. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	239,000
10. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	227,000
11. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	212,359
12. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	200,070
13. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	180,700
14. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	146,207
15. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	123,000
16. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	101,548
17. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	93,000
18. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	38,800
19. Bradford Group, The, Nashville, TN	38,691
20. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	37,527
21. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	34,250
22. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	31,504
23. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	25,975
24. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	25,459
25. FrazierHeiby, Columbus, OH	7,675

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN INDUSTRIAL

1. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	\$5,341,407
2. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	5,311,553
3. Zeno Group, New York, NY	4,226,285
4. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	3,169,201
5. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	1,738,000
6. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	1,041,810
7. Havas Formula, New York, NY	904,577
8. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	651,954
9. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	377,500
10. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	315,734
11. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	265,892
12. FrazierHeiby, Columbus, OH	163,204
13. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	150,000
14. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	150,000
15. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	108,757
16. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	32,444
17. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	16,356
18. Peppercomm, New York, NY	15,467
19. Rosica Communications, Fair Lawn, NJ	10,000

Firm	2019 Net Fees
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RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN EDUCATION	
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$12,900,000
2. Finn Partners , New York, NY	8,462,000
3. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	4,388,800
4. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	2,364,279
5. Lambert , Grand Rapids, MI	1,478,000
6. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	1,336,430
7. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	896,165
8. Zeno Group , New York, NY	891,384
9. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	869,505
10. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	634,665
11. Konnect Agency , Los Angeles, CA	622,375
12. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	478,000
13. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	370,075
14. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	343,807
15. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	259,000
16. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	178,769
17. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	166,814
18. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	160,000
19. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	134,874
20. Rosica Communications , Fair Lawn, NJ	134,695
21. Peppercomm , New York, NY	128,610
22. Approach Marketing , Worthington, OH	119,727
23. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	116,133
24. Butler Associates, LLC , New York, NY	110,138
25. Bradford Group, The , Nashville, TN	60,000
26. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	50,516
27. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	48,166
28. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	47,859
29. Bob Gold & Associates , Redondo Beach, CA	33,008
30. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	27,682
31. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	14,344

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN PURPOSE/CSR	
1. Finn Partners , New York, NY	\$3,320,000
2. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	2,586,614
3. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	653,676
4. Zeno Group , New York, NY	496,690
5. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	322,000
6. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	306,484
7. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	271,700
8. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	125,000
9. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	111,000
10. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	57,376
11. Approach Marketing , Worthington, OH	37,391
12. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	22,316

Firm	2019 Net Fees
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RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN REAL ESTATE/FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT	
1. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	\$1,530,537
2. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	1,432,734
3. Singer Associates, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	1,363,359
4. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	1,304,868
5. Serendipit , Phoenix, AZ	812,908
6. Zeno Group , New York, NY	804,159
7. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	697,000
8. Havas Formula , New York, NY	655,053
9. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	572,181
10. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	451,075
11. Zapwater Communications , Chicago, IL	427,761
12. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	338,267
13. J Public Relations , New York, NY	194,000
14. Butler Associates, LLC , New York, NY	177,570
15. Approach Marketing , Worthington, OH	117,320
16. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	100,374
17. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	85,000
18. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	72,230
19. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	54,000
20. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	53,176
21. Bianchi Public Relations , Troy, MI	32,109
22. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	21,843
23. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	18,000
24. SPM Communications , Dallas, TX	4,700

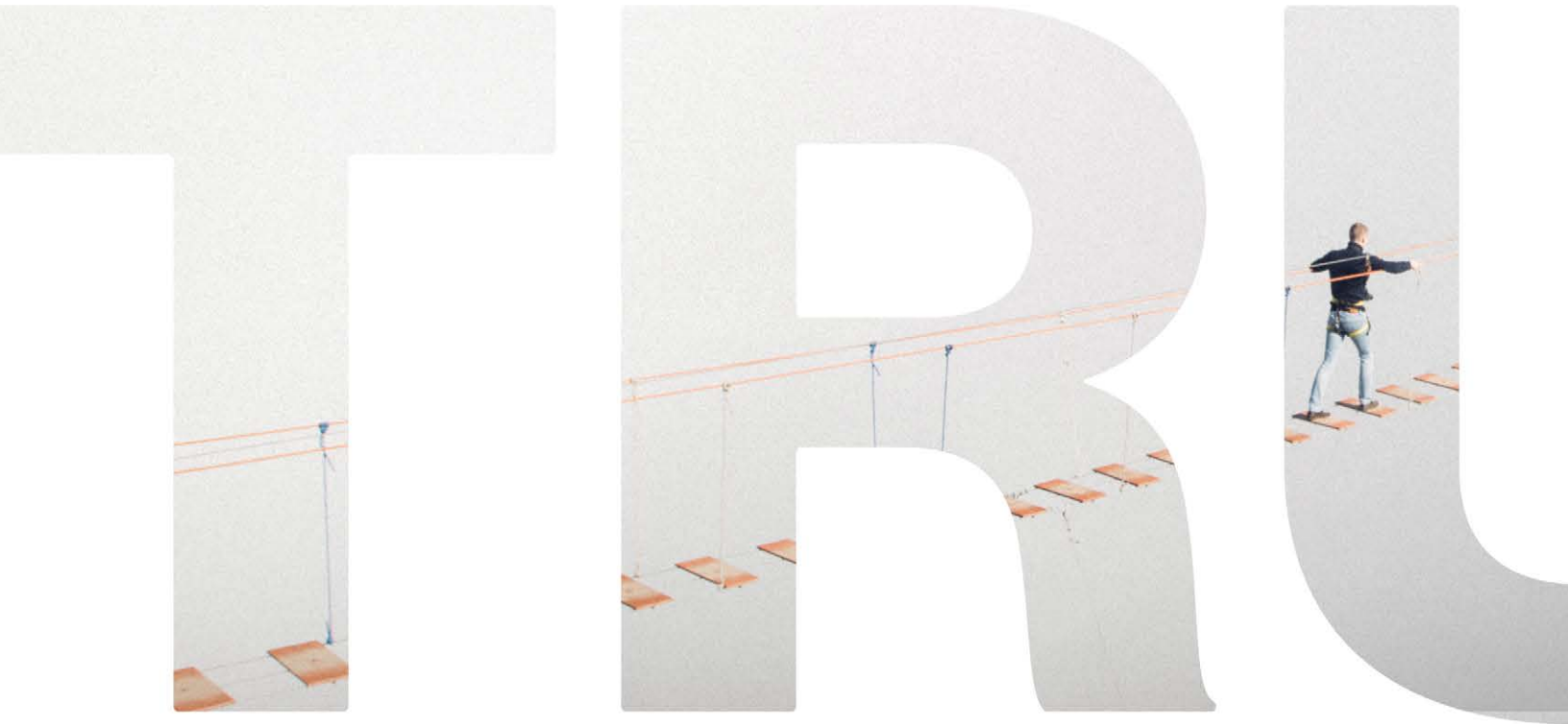
RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN ENERGY	
1. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	\$10,350,400
2. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	5,968,170
3. Singer Associates, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	3,021,698
4. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	1,129,746
5. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	978,042
6. Zeno Group , New York, NY	801,209
7. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	655,225
8. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	556,570
9. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	396,000
10. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	348,607
11. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	156,701
12. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	144,000
13. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	6,388
14. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	6,045

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Firm	2019 Net Fees	Firm	2019 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$83,834,000	27. Bradford Group, The, Nashville, TN	\$489,298
2. MWWPR, New York, NY	9,471,571	28. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	472,000
3. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	8,570,356	29. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	459,989
4. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	7,145,500	30. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	419,281
5. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	6,000,000	31. Peppercomm, New York, NY	415,546
6. Infinite Global, New York, NY	5,959,532	32. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	412,922
7. Bliss Integrated Communication, New York, NY	5,788,000	33. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	394,375
8. Finn Partners, New York, NY	4,146,000	34. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	380,426
9. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	4,018,129	35. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	379,535
10. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	3,600,000	36. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	343,500
11. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	3,441,154	37. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	245,305
12. Zeno Group, New York, NY	2,913,174	38. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	234,125
13. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc., New York, NY	2,499,532	39. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	229,668
14. Havas Formula, New York, NY	2,191,579	40. Hunter, New York, NY	150,000
15. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	1,966,466	41. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	150,000
16. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	1,732,988	42. FrazierHeiby, Columbus, OH	109,826
17. Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	1,677,532	43. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	89,700
18. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	1,467,000	44. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	77,000
19. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,418,000	45. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	43,000
20. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	1,387,769	46. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	32,625
21. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,204,435	47. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	30,050
22. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	1,119,000	48. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	26,500
23. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	920,000	49. Rosica Communications, Fair Lawn, NJ	20,000
24. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	885,320	50. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	16,287
25. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	569,780	51. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	6,175
26. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	519,231	52. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	1,050

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **FOOD & BEVERAGE**

Firm	2019 Net Fees	Firm	2019 Net Fees
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$109,260,000	24. Peppercomm , New York, NY	\$1,037,075
2. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	18,817,400	25. Berk Communications , New York, NY	936,500
3. Hunter , New York, NY	16,100,000	26. Approach Marketing , Worthington, OH	873,557
4. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	15,597,995	27. Zapwater Communications , Chicago, IL	660,379
5. Zeno Group , New York, NY	13,803,895	28. Stuntman PR , New York, NY	594,561
6. Havas Formula , New York, NY	9,335,758	29. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	450,000
7. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	7,660,000	30. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	388,676
8. MWWPR , New York, NY	7,637,440	31. L.C. Williams & Associates , Chicago, IL	375,354
9. Taylor , New York, NY	7,200,000	32. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	364,000
10. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	5,658,579	33. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	322,676
11. Finn Partners , New York, NY	5,085,000	34. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	309,000
12. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	4,600,000	35. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	300,000
13. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	4,030,009	36. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	239,465
14. Konnect Agency , Los Angeles, CA	3,551,959	37. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	231,401
15. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	3,395,408	38. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	139,348
16. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	3,298,872	39. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	133,139
17. Lion & Lamb Communications , New York, NY	1,869,000	40. Hemsworth Communications , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	125,011
18. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	1,784,792	41. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	99,579
19. Lambert , Grand Rapids, MI	1,605,000	42. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	99,400
20. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,254,000	43. J Public Relations , New York, NY	97,000
21. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	1,196,000	44. IMRE, LLC , Baltimore, MD	89,000
22. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	1,108,789	45. Rosica Communications , Fair Lawn, NJ	34,300
23. SPM Communications , Dallas, TX	1,041,861	46. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	19,799





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Independent PR firms grew 7.7% in 2019

The top 130 independent PR firms posted 7.7 percent average growth in 2019 to \$2.89 billion and a 6.0 percent jump in employment to 16,201, according to O'Dwyer's 2020 annual rankings.

By Kevin McCauley

The 25 biggest firms showed a 8.1 percent gain to \$2.2 billion in fee income and a 5.6 percent uptick in staff to 12,420.

Ninety-eight firms posted gains, while 27 reported declines in fee income.

Remaining firms were either flat or 2019 reported numbers not comparable with last year's, largely due to restructurings.

Edelman remains the top dog as net fees inched ahead 0.4 percent to \$892 million and employment rose 1.5 percent to 5,703.

That marks somewhat of a turnaround for Richard Edelman's firm following its 0.6 percent slip in fees to \$888.4 million in the 2019 rankings.

Finn sets pace

Finn Partners showed the biggest percentage gain among the Top Ten firms, up 35 percent to \$119.3 million.

It outpaced ICR (+27.6 percent to \$88.3 million), W2O Group (+26 percent to \$222.9 million) and Prosek Partners (+16.5 percent to \$54.8 million).



Peter Finn

Peter Finn said 2019 growth was driven by new business wins, expansion of existing clients, key senior hires and strategic acquisitions that bolstered capabilities in health, digital/creative, consumer,

and financial services.

He noted that the healthcare group led by Gil Bashe expanded from less than 10 employees and clients in 2015 to a group that now has more 120 staffers and 100-plus clients.

"Our values-based culture, cross-practice collaboration and commitment to working hard and playing nice, continued to attract top talent at all levels," noted Finn.

He's confident Finn Partners' senior leadership in health, sustainability, technology, integrated marketing, consumer and financial services will power future growth.

"Our 800 staff across 19 offices in the US, Europe and Asia, continue to deliver breakthrough campaigns rooted in analytics and insights and powered by strategy and creativity," said Finn.

A highlight in 2019: Finn Partners became the first general market PR firm to be honored with the New York Urban League's

Champions of Diversity award for its "Actions Speak Louder Diversity and Inclusion" initiative.

W2O hones analytics edge

W2O, which is the No. 2 ranked firm, furthered its goal of being the leading analytics-driven, digital-first healthcare marketing and communications company, according to Founder/CEO Jim Weiss.

The San Francisco-based firm, which has more than 100 analysts and data scientists, put its data-savvy to work as the COVID-19 crisis unfolded.

Weiss noted that collaboration with the California Life Sciences Association enables W2O to track COVID-19-specific conversations and trends across the health ecosystem, and an adapted relevance framework is helping clients understand how to build a new playbook to navigate these challenging times.

Following an investment by private equity firm New Mountain Capital, W2O made three acquisitions in 2019 to boost its science communications, medical education and scientific visualization capabilities.

APCO makes social impact

APCO Worldwide, which reported a six percent growth in fees to \$142.3 million, enjoyed double-digit growth in about a third of its global office network.

Margery Kraus, Founder/Executive Chairman, singled out expansion in Manama (Bahrain) and strong results in New York, Raleigh, Brussels, Rome, Milan, Riyadh and Tokyo.



Jim Weiss

Kraus said APCO, which ranks No. 3 on O'Dwyer's rankings, is "seeing immense pressure and expectations from clients in all sectors to go beyond their business objectives and make a positive impact on society, which has been an area of focus since our inception."

In early 2020, APCO acquired Tembo Group, a leading social impact advisory firm, to strengthen its approach to advising clients on social and environmental opportunities and risks.

The firm also launched a strategic partnership with Erie Street—a Chicago-based independent advisory firm—and appointed Erie Street CEO and Chairman Terry Graunke as Lead Director of APCO's board.

Kraus anticipates that strategic partnership will help position her firm to deliver more high-end consulting services that clients need the most and help it identify opportunities for acquisitions and continued growth in the advisory and communications market.

Noting that the war for talent is increasingly a hot topic in PR, Kraus said APCO has invested time and resources in hosting groups of students from leading universities.

It also held a career development event in partnership with ColorComm for 70 diverse industry professionals and participated in events centered on women's empowerment, such as the World Woman Summit, Women President's Organization Conference and the WBENC National Conference & Business Fair.

"We also invested heavily in expanding our training and development inside of APCO," said Kraus.

APCO's D&I Council launched unconscious bias training for senior leaders, partnered with ColorComm, and held engagements with select universities.

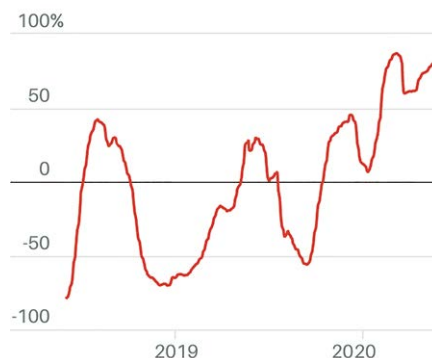
Coyne PR grows into documentary films

Tom Coyne's firm posted a seven percent gain in fee income to \$32 million, earning the 18th notch on O'Dwyer's roster.

"Our team members continue to grow as



Margery Kraus



O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms, pg. 48

Continued on next page

O'Dwyer's rankings

— Continued from page 46

professionals and lead the way with fully integrated ideas and breakthrough programs,” said Coyne. “We have also grown our offices by more than 40 percent and expanded our service offerings, including documentary films.”



Tom Coyne

Coyne PR produced its first documentary, GATEWAY, in a partnership with Pacira BioScience. It brought awareness of how opioids used post-surgery are often a gateway to lifelong addiction, according to Coyne.

Coyne noted that GATEWAY received more than a dozen awards from film festivals around the US.

The Jersey-based firm added clients such as Hilton, Otsuka, ASPCA, Yahoo Sports, Stevens Institute of Technology, Crook & Marker, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Lundbeck and Fox Factory.

“We modernized and streamlined our media monitoring efforts with intuitive dashboards, automated reporting and access to actionable, contextualized metrics beyond impressions,” said Coyne.

The firm's state-of-the-art digital platform empowers clients to monitor, measure and maximize their communications efforts through custom-built dashboards.

“The new end-to-end measurement system collects and organizes key data points across a robust stream of print, online, broadcast and social content to set benchmarks, attribute value and demonstrate earned media ROI in real-time,” said Coyne.

Transformation at Citizen Relations

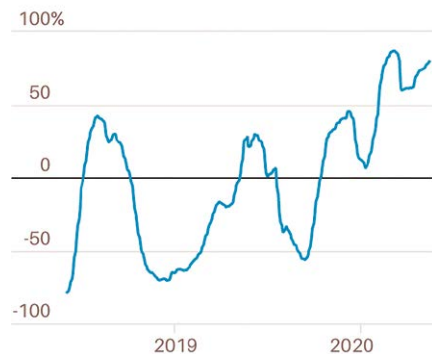
Citizen Relations President Nick Cowling said the firm underwent a transformation during 2019.

“Our new vision is to create consequential changes to attitudes, behaviours, perceptions and actions by designing the conversations our clients need with the people they care most about,” said Cowling.



Nick Cowling

He said the No. 16 firm with fees of \$32.6 million “combined its best research, platform and data partners into one solution to allow it to select the highest quality and best performing influencers and seamlessly measure the



O'Dwyer's rankings by PR specialty, pg. 38

impact of every action, quality of content and imagery, and the most detailed conversion tracking available.”

Cowling said 2019 was a “relatively stable year” because Citizen was selective in new business efforts, focused on clients that fit its vision, while parting with clients that didn’t.

“We continue to put our people first, with an emphasis on culture and training for existing employees and finding new ones that strengthen our group,” he said.

ICR makes big move in health, tech

ICR, No. 5 on O'Dwyer's list, enjoyed a “breakout year in 2019,” said CEO Tom Ryan.

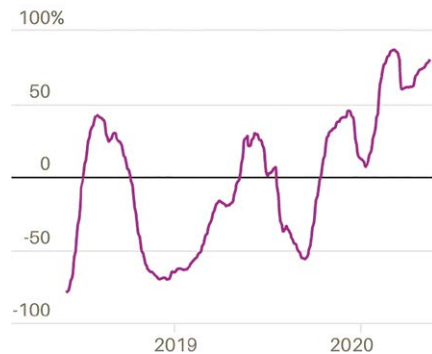
He said the acquisition of Westwicke Partners, a healthcare strategy firm based in Baltimore, bolstered financial-oriented ICR's depth and scale in healthcare and technology.



Tom Ryan

Ryan said ICR saw significant growth in traditional corporate communications, including business and financial media strategy, digital/social, crisis management and shareholder activist defense.

“We also launched ICR governance solutions, focused on advising boards and senior management teams on best-practice governance processes and structures, including environmental, social and gover-



O'Dwyer's rankings of firms by region, pg. 52

nance reporting,” he noted.

Ryan said Zoom, Peloton, Colgate-Palmolive, Heidrick & Struggles, IBM Watson Marketing, Northern Oil and Gas, Welltower, Adamas Pharmaceuticals and BioNTech AG were major account wins in 2019.

MWWPR invests for future

MWWPR, which recorded flat fees of \$42.7 million, accelerated investment in people and client services initiatives during the past year, said CEO Michael Kempner.



Michael Kempner

The firm launched new tools and offerings in search marketing, paid marketing and influencer marketing and a panel of Generation Z consumers.

He credited those initiatives combined with MWWPR's “core approach to PR rooted in earned-worthy content was instrumental in adding and growing client relationships with blue-chip brands from the food and beverage, retail, and sports and entertainment sectors.”

Zeno exceeds boundaries

Zeno Group CEO Barby Siegel said 2019 showed that “a mid-sized firm can exceed boundaries and be truly global.”

The No. 6 firm posted an eight percent spurt to \$79.3 million in 2019 fee income.

She said forty percent of Zeno's business stems from clients served in more than one region.



Barby Siegel

Key 2019 wins were Ancestry, Tinder, Virgin Voyages, Carhartt, Abbott Vascular, IBM Health, Electrify America and others.

Siegel, who said culture has always been a big part of Zeno's game plan, said the firm launched “Zeno Gives Back” during 2019.

That program resulted in staffers logging more than 3,800 hours of service at more than 25 charities.

The firm also expanded its focus on mental health.

Siegel said the “Be Kind to Your Mind” program launched by Zeno London acknowledges that PR is a high-stress profession and that topics such as depression and anxiety should not be taboo in the workplace.

The program includes free Headspace membership, an all-employee online forum for sharing comments and posts about mental health, as well as group activities, such as agency-wide meditation sessions. ○

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS WITH MAJOR U.S. OPERATIONS

Firm	2019 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2018
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$892,039,000	5,703	0.4
2. W2O Group, San Francisco, CA	222,865,000	923	26
3. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	142,262,200	786	6
4. Finn Partners, New York, NY	119,322,000	777	35
5. ICR, New York, NY	88,280,795	228	27.6
6. Zeno Group, New York, NY	79,269,860	489	8
7. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	78,000,000	702	12.9
8. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	54,738,707	181	16.5
9. MWWPR, New York, NY	42,741,686	178	0
10. Hotwire, New York, NY	42,161,713	285	14.3
11. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	37,327,206	194	-9
12. Spectrum, Washington, DC	33,900,000	116	3
13. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	33,830,327	158	4.4
14. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	33,334,000	158	52
15. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	33,087,699	105	36.7
16. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	32,577,578	206	NA
17. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	32,509,302	121	11
18. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	32,000,000	150	7
19. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	30,733,412	179	1
20. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER), Columbus, OH	29,504,385	193	0
21. Havas Formula, New York, NY	25,630,379	135	15
22. Evoke KYNE, New York, NY	25,149,453	107	24
23. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	24,844,375	140	-1.8
24. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	24,534,990	85	18.6
25. Hunter, New York, NY	24,300,000	121	1
26. Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	23,174,274	166	17.4
27. PAN Communications, Boston, MA	22,493,586	148	13.1
28. Taylor, New York, NY	20,200,000	85	-3
29. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	20,167,063	116	14
30. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	19,595,186	82	9.5
31. Regan Communications Group, Boston, MA	18,913,994	106	2
32. Walker Sands Communications, Chicago, IL	18,832,290	135	32.9
33. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	18,602,385	117	-3.5
34. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	18,337,000	81	-12
35. M Booth Health, New York, NY	16,582,440	50	NA
36. Shift Communications, Boston, MA	15,884,974	91	-9
37. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	15,447,216	80	14
38. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	15,400,000	48	1
39. Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	15,005,000	33	10
40. Bravo Group, Inc., Harrisburg, PA	14,548,629	74	-11.6
41. Bliss Integrated Communication, New York, NY	13,275,000	57	20.3
42. JeffreyGroup, Miami, FL	12,864,916	232	29
43. Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock, Brentwood, TN	12,416,807	42	7.1
44. J Public Relations, New York, NY	11,440,000	71	7.6
45. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	11,400,000	77	16.3
46. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,220,000	35	0
47. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI), New York, NY	11,136,484	58	10.8
48. MMGY NJE, New York, NY	10,710,041	63	14
49. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	10,570,000	56	5
50. 360PR+, Boston, MA	10,326,547	56	6
51. JPA Health Communications, Washington, DC	10,305,362	45	11
52. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	9,480,016	68	0
53. Vested, New York, NY	9,236,000	30	26
54. Peppercomm, New York, NY	8,971,064	34	NA
55. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	8,817,078	39	31
56. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	8,765,091	42	3.5
57. Lou Hammond Group, New York, NY	8,112,253	40	4
58. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	7,011,832	33	3
59. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	6,481,237	38	13
60. Sam Brown Inc., Wayne, PA	6,341,947	40	12.8
61. Dukas Linden Public Relations, New York, NY	6,318,683	24	17
62. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations, New York, NY	6,154,855	38	15.8
63. Infinite Global, New York, NY	5,959,532	23	9.4
64. McCabe Message Partners, Washington, DC	5,789,127	32	-6
65. Bospar, San Francisco, CA	5,692,505	29	28
66. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	5,483,657	18	-30
67. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	4,959,635	24	-11
68. Touchdown PR, Austin, TX	4,884,345	16	19.1

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS WITH MAJOR U.S. OPERATIONS

Firm	2019 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2018
69. SPI Group LLC, The, Fairfield, NJ	\$4,800,000	26	-6
70. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	4,730,468	28	15
71. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	4,728,220	25	1
72. March Communications, Boston, MA	4,693,059	33	12
73. Lumina Communications, San Jose, CA	4,505,079	22	8
74. MCS Healthcare Public Relations, Bedminster, NJ	4,372,952	23	4.3
75. Berk Communications, New York, NY	4,306,145	21	24.6
76. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	4,226,126	38	-17.3
77. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	3,740,011	23	13.3
78. BackBay Communications, Boston, MA	3,674,919	17	23
79. Cerrell Associates, Los Angeles, CA	3,637,398	15	-3.6
80. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	3,626,587	17	24
81. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	3,577,408	21	26.6
82. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	3,436,169	13	15.5
83. RBMG (RB Milestone Group), Stamford, CT	3,433,225	4	41.2
84. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	3,421,775	28	18
85. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	3,418,589	18	35
86. SourceCode Communications, New York, NY	3,342,813	22	112
87. Idea Grove, Dallas, TX	3,288,889	26	22
88. LaVoie Health Science, Boston, MA	3,270,282	15	31
89. Raffetto Herman Strategic Communications, Seattle, WA	3,225,950	19	-5
90. CashmanKatz, Glastonbury, CT	3,175,000	26	11
91. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	3,094,469	20	18.8
92. Crenshaw Communications, New York, NY	3,047,435	14	35.9
93. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	3,000,000	17	3.5
94. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,993,000	11	38
95. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	2,961,685	14	57
96. Lovell Communications, Nashville, TN	2,952,973	19	0
97. Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	2,922,102	16	10.8
98. Lion & Lamb Communications, New York, NY	2,868,000	21	38.8
99. Brandware, Atlanta, GA	2,795,237	16	2.1
100. Hewes Communications, New York, NY	2,761,129	8	13.6
101. ARPR, Atlanta, GA	2,631,389	27	16.3
102. Gatesman, Pittsburgh, PA	2,622,440	67	0
103. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	2,552,461	23	22
104. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,540,300	12	20
105. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc., New York, NY	2,499,532	8	13.3
106. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,423,198	10	-10.3
107. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,395,720	21	19
108. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	2,312,203	14	10
109. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	2,183,000	11	-9.5
110. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,077,286	10	19.5
111. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	1,993,272	14	1
112. Hemsworth Communications, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1,787,338	22	0
113. FrazierHeiby, Columbus, OH	1,733,479	10	15
114. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	1,559,003	8	-1.7
115. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	1,553,497	9	13.5
116. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY,	1,547,713	8	23
117. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,530,091	22	8
118. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,336,144	10	38.6
119. Bradford Group, The, Nashville, TN	1,286,045	11	4.4
120. Buttonwood Communications Group, New York, NY	1,212,200	9	-7.5
121. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	1,201,671	9	-10.3
122. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	1,140,465	7	71.4
123. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	1,100,000	11	-8.3
124. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	1,028,570	12	31.5
125. KCD Public Relations, Inc., San Diego, CA	989,089	7	-5.5
126. Rosica Communications, Fair Lawn, NJ	937,926	5	-27
127. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	812,541	6	-11
128. Agency Ten22, Cumming, GA	803,475	4	-2.3
129. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	781,509	4	-13
130. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	763,299	8	7.7
131. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	704,241	3	13
132. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	639,561	2	26
133. Novitas Communications, Denver, CO	550,578	3	32.7
134. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	542,409	7	-11.4
135. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	488,180	3	-45

Winning today's relevance challenge

Defining brand relevance in a post-COVID world.

By Erin Weinberg

Brands are being tested like never before amid a soft retail environment, supply chain disruptions and a new communications landscape. While there are bright spots—food and beverage, fitness, outdoor and some tech sectors—the impact is widespread, which has left marketers struggling to find the most appropriate way to connect and communicate with customers. But consumers are still paying attention, and brands that find ways to sustain—and even increase—relevance will be in a position to reap the benefits long term.

New research offers insight into how marketing leaders define and measure relevance, as well as challenges and solutions for ratcheting-up relevance. In early March 2020, just as news about the coronavirus began to pervade our daily lives, 360PR+ engaged Engine Group to survey 300 senior marketing executives, gauging opinions of their and other brands' relevance. These marketing leaders speak for a broad range of sectors, including technology, finance, health and wellness, fashion, entertainment, food and beverage, travel and automotive.

Adaptability is key

A dominating theme that surfaced from our research was adaptability. Respondents were clear that the ability to adapt, regardless of the circumstances, is undeniably critical to sustaining relevance. As one respondent stated, "The brand that is open to consistent change with the culture and environmental needs of the times is one that clearly demonstrates relevance."

'Relatability,' 'interest,' 'awareness' most associated with relevance

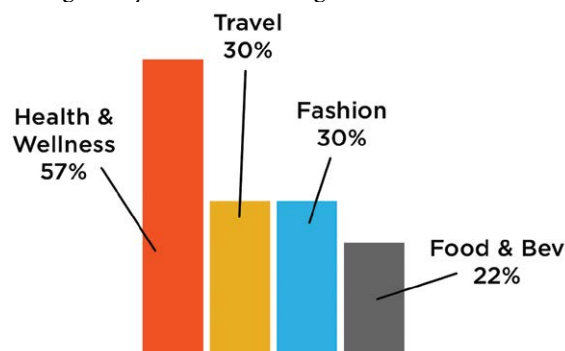
"Brands that have created relatable content and an experience that motivates customers to remain brand loyal are the ones winning the fight for relevance," explained another marketing leader who participated in the research.

Marketers cited sales, customer feedback and reviews as the most important metrics for tracking brand relevance, followed by brand recall and growth among new audiences. Related to customer feedback, larger brands are more likely than smaller businesses to associate engagement with relevance and believe that permission to innovate is the greatest benefit of relevance. Customer feedback and reviews are powerful forms of engagement and ones that PR can have a direct hand in driving for brands, teeing up the right content and

resonant messaging and putting that in the right places for consumers to access it, and adding third-party endorsements via media and influencers to propel engagement.

Survey participants spoke extensively about relevance being more than just products and services. They shared that beyond creating innovative products, the brands they felt were most relevant were innovative with their hiring practices and how they approach marketing.

It's important for PR teams to be brought in to product and organizational innovation discussions as they can provide platforms for thought leadership—elevating brands, businesses and executives in the marketplace. Such was the case with our vacation rental client Vrbo, which was planning to roll out a set of new tools, including a filter to make it easier for families to find ideal getaways within driving distance of their



Having a well-articulated and authentic purpose ranked high on the list for what makes brands in certain industries most relevant with customers.

own homes. The timely tool elevated Vrbo as a bellwether for the travel industry and gave vacationers reason to travel again, only a little closer to home.

Another relevance-building strategy emphasized by marketers entails creating more content for their owned channels. Tommee Tippee, the popular infant and toddler feeding brand (and an agency client), is giving parents new reasons to #SmileOn by helping them de-stress with resources like on-demand yoga classes and virtual museum tours.

Another example is Pete and Gerry's Organic Eggs (one of our clients as well). Like all grocery brands, its objective is to move product off shelves, but the brand is also sharing what it knows about raising free range, happy hens for consumers interested in the modern homesteading movement—a hot topic! The content reminds us how committed Pete and Gerry's is to sup-

porting small family farms and gives consumers real-world guidance and expertise on raising their own happy hens.

Being true to your brand

Understanding customer needs and wants was another powerful theme that resonated throughout the research. When asked what best describes how they measure their brand's relevance, half of respondents said it's understanding and knowing what customers need and what makes them happy. Executives shared that knowing what motivated customers means having a clearly articulated and authentic purpose. "Staying true to their brand and being interested in what is important to their customers sets them apart," stated one respondent. Having an authentic purpose was a top choice with executives in health and wellness, travel, fashion and food and beverage industries. "Brands need to adapt with the times while being consistently true to their core values," noted an executive.

Trader Joe's was cited as an example of a brand that's clear about what its brand stands for. This has translated to a passionate and engaged workforce and a customer base that spans generations with a cult-like status.

While the 300 marketing executives who participated in the survey shared their thoughts on how they plan to achieve relevance, they were equally candid about the barriers. Limited resources and competition from other brands topped the list of challenges. Fashion executives identified limited budgets as their top barrier, while those in travel cited a decline in consumer loyalty and increased brand competition. Finance and food and beverage marketers cautioned about not trying to be all things to all people.

Barriers to relevance

Amid the backdrop of COVID-19, marketing doesn't stop, but it must evolve. Now, more than ever, brands should be present in customers' lives even if their business has dramatically shifted. For the foreseeable future, that will mean re-imagining the brand experience as a virtual one—but that can be a boon to relevance as brands take advantage of more frequent mini-moments to be present in customers' lives.

Erin Weinberg is General Manager of 360PR+'s New York office. ○



Erin Weinberg

LEADING GAINERS AMONG PR FIRMS

Firm	2019 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2018
Firms in the top 25 (representing fees from \$24.3M to \$892M)			
1. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	\$33,334,000	158	+52
2. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	33,087,699	105	+36.7
3. Finn Partners, New York, NY	119,322,000	777	+35
4. ICR, New York, NY	88,280,795	228	+27.6
5. W2O Group, San Francisco, CA	222,865,000	923	+26
6. Evoke KYNE, New York, NY	25,149,453	107	+24
7. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	24,534,990	85	+18.6
8. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	54,738,707	181	+16.5
9. Havas Formula, New York, NY	25,630,379	135	+15
10. Hotwire, New York, NY	42,161,713	85	+14.3
Firms ranked 26 through 50 (representing fees from \$10.3M to \$23.2M)			
1. Walker Sands Communications, Chicago, IL	\$18,832,290	135	+32.9
2. JeffreyGroup, Miami, FL	12,864,916	232	+29
3. Bliss Integrated Communication, New York, NY	13,275,000	57	+20.3
4. Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	23,174,274	166	+17.4
5. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	11,400,000	77	+16.3
6. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	20,167,063	116	+14
7. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	15,447,216	80	+14
8. MMGY NJE, New York, NY	10,710,041	63	+14
9. PAN Communications, Boston, MA	22,493,586	148	+13.1
10. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI), New York, NY	11,136,484	58	+10.8
Firms ranked 51 through 100 (representing fees from \$2.8M to \$10.3M)			
1. SourceCode Communications, New York, NY	\$3,342,813	22	+112
2. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	2,961,685	14	+57
3. RBMG (RB Milestone Group), Stamford, CT	3,433,225	4	+41.2
4. Lion & Lamb Communications, New York, NY	2,868,000	21	+38.8
5. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,993,000	11	+38
6. Crenshaw Communications, New York, NY	3,047,435	14	+35.9
7. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	3,418,589	18	+35
8. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	8,817,078	39	+31
9. LaVoie Health Science, Boston, MA	3,270,282	15	+31
10. Bospar, San Francisco, CA	5,692,505	29	+28
Firms ranked 101 through 131 (representing fees from \$488K to \$2.6M)			
1. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	\$1,140,465	7	+71.4
2. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,336,144	10	+38.6
3. Novitas Communications, Denver, CO	550,578	3	+32.7
4. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	1,028,570	12	+31.5
5. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	639,561	2	+26
6. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	1,547,713	8	+23
7. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	2,552,461	23	+22
8. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,540,300	12	+20
9. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,077,286	10	+19.5
10. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,395,720	21	+19

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS BY CITY/GEOGRAPHY

Firm	2019 Net Fees	FT Empl.	Firm	2019 Net Fees	FT Empl.
CONNECTICUT			NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY		
1. ICR, Norwalk, CT	\$35,357,638	36	1. Edelman (includes Rochester)	\$204,314,000	152
2. Prosek Partners, Fairfield, CT	4,926,484	24	2. Prosek Partners	45,706,821	139
3. RBMG (RB Milestone Group), Stamford, CT	3,433,225	4	3. Finn Partners	39,511,000	245
4. CashmanKatz, Glastonbury, CT	3,175,000	26	4. 5W Public Relations	33,830,327	158
5. W2O Group, Ridgefield, CT	397,752	1	5. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	32,000,000	150
CHICAGO			6. MWWPR, New York, NY	30,366,222	91
1. Edelman (includes Detroit)	\$94,648,000	118	7. Havas Formula	25,630,379	135
2. Zeno Group	25,900,000	135	8. ICR	25,365,485	85
3. Walker Sands Communications	18,832,290	135	9. Evoke KYNE	25,149,453	107
4. W2O Group	18,530,055	46	10. Hunter	24,300,000	121
5. Finn Partners (includes Detroit)	12,189,000	59	11. Zeno Group	18,600,000	93
6. Kivvit	9,254,915	29	12. M Booth Health	16,582,440	50
7. Greentarget Global LLC	8,765,091	42	13. APCO Worldwide	15,021,800	58
8. G&S Business Communications	5,222,793	34	14. Bliss Integrated Communication	13,275,000	57
9. APCO Worldwide	4,767,300	20	15. W2O Group, New York, NY	12,719,265	422
10. L.C. Williams & Associates	4,728,220	25	16. Taylor	12,200,000	58
11. Public Communications Inc.	4,226,126	38	17. W2O Group, Florham Park, NJ	12,134,355	159
12. Zapwater Communications	3,421,775	28	19. J Public Relations	11,440,000	71
13. O'Malley Hansen Communications	2,183,000	11	19. Kivvit	11,368,635	30
14. MWWPR	2,075,678	8	20. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI)	11,136,484	58
15. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,530,091	22	21. G&S Business Communications	10,724,915	61
16. Taylor	450,000	3	22. MMGY NJF	10,710,041	63
17. Infinite Global	259,110	1	23. Vested	9,236,000	30
FLORIDA			24. Lou Hammond Group	8,112,253	40
1. rbb Communications, Miami	15,447,216	80	25. Kivvit, Asbury Park, NJ	6,404,525	20
2. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee	15,400,000	48	26. Dukas Linden Public Relations	6,318,683	24
3. JeffreyGroup, Miami	12,864,916	232	27. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations	6,154,855	38
4. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee	8,817,078	39	28. Peppercomm	5,207,069	27
5. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale	3,740,011	23	29. SPI Group LLC, The, Fairfield, NJ	4,800,000	26
6. Edelman, Orlando	3,427,000	12	30. MWWPR, E. Rutherford, NJ	4,416,617	38
7. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale	3,000,000	17	31. MCS Healthcare PR, Bedminster, NJ	4,372,952	23
8. Hemsworth Communications, Ft. Lauderdale	1,787,338	22	32. Berk Communications	4,306,145	21
9. Kivvit, Miami	854,687	5	33. Infinite Global	3,627,541	14
10. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa	542,409	7	34. SourceCode Communications	3,342,813	22
11. W2O Group, Tampa	323,810	4	35. Crenshaw Communications	3,047,435	14
BOSTON			36. Caliber Corporate Advisers	2,922,102	16
1. W2O Group	\$26,105,995	31	37. Lion & Lamb Communications	2,868,000	21
2. PAN Communications	22,493,586	148	38. Hewes Communications	2,761,129	8
3. Regan Communications Group	18,913,994	106	39. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc.	2,499,532	8
4. Matter Communications	18,698,070	138	40. 360PR+	2,391,213	12
5. Racepoint Global	18,337,000	81	41. Inkhouse	2,295,456	14
6. Shift Communications	15,884,974	91	42. Butler Associates, LLC	1,547,713	8
7. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	10,893,791	66	43. Buttonwood Communications Group	1,212,200	9
8. Finn Partners	10,000,000	41	44. AMP3 Public Relations	1,140,465	7
9. 360PR+	7,935,333	44	45. Rosica Communications, Fair Lawn, NJ	937,926	5
10. ICR	4,903,785	9	46. Lawlor Media Group	812,541	6
11. March Communications	4,693,059	33	47. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	704,241	3
12. BackBay Communications	3,674,919	17	48. Stuntman PR	639,561	2
13. LaVoie Health Science	3,270,282	15	49. Feintuch Communications	488,180	3
14. Prosek Partners	2,736,935	12	PENNSYLVANIA		
WASHINGTON, D.C.			1. Bravo Group, Inc., Harrisburg	\$14,548,629	74
1. Edelman	\$76,108,000	289	2. Gregory FCA, Ardmore	11,400,000	77
2. APCO Worldwide	37,311,700	164	3. Sam Brown Inc., Wayne	6,341,947	40
3. Spectrum	33,900,000	116	4. W2O Group, New Hope	5,010,192	103
4. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	33,334,000	158	5. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia	3,418,589	18
5. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	24,534,990	85	6. Gatesman, Pittsburgh	2,622,440	67
6. ICR, Baltimore, MD	12,988,560	14	7. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr	1,559,003	8
7. Finn Partners	12,090,000	59	8. WordWrite Comms. LLC, Pittsburgh	1,553,497	9
8. JPA Health Communications	10,305,362	45	MIDWEST CITIES		
9. McCabe Message Partners	5,789,127	32	1. Edelman (incl. Detroit) Chicago, IL	\$94,648,000	118
10. Kivvit	5,204,937	21	2. Fahlgren Mortine (incl. TURNER), Columbus, OH	29,504,385	193
11. Stanton Communications	1,993,272	14	3. Zeno Group, Chicago, IL	25,900,000	135
12. Raffetto Herman Strategic Communications	1,672,196	9	4. Walker Sands Communications, Chicago, IL	18,832,290	135
13. MWWPR	1,202,269	12	5. W2O Group, Chicago, IL	18,530,055	46
14. W2O Group	879,137	243	6. Finn Partners (incl. Detroit), Chicago, IL	12,189,000	59
			7. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	10,570,000	56
			8. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	9,254,915	29
			9. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	8,765,901	42

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS BY CITY/GEOGRAPHY

Firm	2019 Net Fees	FT Empl.
10. G&S Business Communications, Chicago, IL	\$5,222,793	34
11. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	4,959,635	24
12. APCO Worldwide, Chicago, IL	4,767,300	20
13. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	4,728,220	25
14. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	4,226,126	38
15. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	3,626,587	17
16. Beehive Strategic Comm., St. Paul, MN	3,436,169	13
17. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	3,421,775	28
18. Approach Marketing, Worthington, OH	2,961,685	14
19. O'Malley Hansen Comms., Chicago, IL	2,183,000	11
20. MWWPR, Chicago, IL	2,075,678	8
21. FrazierHeiby, Columbus, OH	1,733,479	10
22. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,530,091	22
23. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	781,509	4
24. Taylor, Chicago, IL	450,000	3
25. Infinite Global, Chicago, IL	259,110	1

TEXAS

1. W2O Group, El Paso	\$25,695,943	57
2. Edelman (incl. Dallas & Houston), Austin	22,836,000	199
3. Pierpont Communications, Houston	7,011,832	33
4. Touchdown PR, Austin	4,884,345	16
5. Champion Management Group, Dallas	3,577,408	21
6. Idea Grove, Dallas	3,288,889	26
7. TruePoint Communications, Dallas	3,094,469	20
8. SPM Communications, Dallas	2,312,203	14
9. BizCom Associates, Plano	763,299	8

SOUTHEAST

1. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	\$32,509,302	121
2. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	24,844,375	140
3. Edelman, Atlanta, GA	23,582,000	114
4. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	15,447,216	80
5. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	15,400,000	48
6. G&S Business Communications, Raleigh, NC	14,785,704	84
7. JeffreyGroup, Miami, FL	12,864,916	232
8. Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock, Brentwood, TN	12,416,807	42
9. Finn Partners, Nashville, TN	12,160,000	76
10. MP&F Strategic Comms., Nashville, TN	9,480,016	68
11. Taylor, Charlotte, NC	6,500,000	23
12. APCO Worldwide, Raleigh, NC	5,790,700	25
13. W2O Group, Atlanta, GA	5,544,072	9
14. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	4,730,468	28
15. Edelman, Orlando, FL	3,427,000	12
16. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	3,000,000	17
17. Lovell Communications, Nashville, TN	2,952,973	19
18. Brandware, Atlanta, GA	2,795,237	16
19. ARPR, Atlanta, GA	2,631,389	27
20. Hemsworth Comms., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1,787,338	22
21. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,336,144	10
22. Bradford Group, The, Nashville, TN	1,286,045	11
23. Kivvit, Miami, Florida	854,687	5
24. Agency Ten22, Cumming, GA	803,475	4
25. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	542,409	7
26. W2O Group, Tampa, FL	323,810	4

LOS ANGELES

1. Edelman (includes Beverly Hills)	\$31,795,000	1,260
2. W2O Group	29,131,297	28
3. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,220,000	35
4. Konnect Agency	6,481,237	38
5. Finn Partners	4,591,000	35
6. Cerrell Associates	3,637,398	15
7. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,993,000	11
8. MWWPR	2,971,189	16
9. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,540,300	12
10. Prosek Partners	1,368,467	6
11. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	1,201,671	9
12. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	1,100,000	11
13. Taylor, Los Angeles, CA	1,050,000	4
14. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	1,028,570	12

Firm	2019 Net Fees	FT Empl.
SAN FRANCISCO & NORTH CALIFORNIA		
1. Edelman (includes Silicon Valley)	\$48,204,000	195
2. W2O Group	29,131,297	101
3. Highwire PR	19,595,186	82
4. LaunchSquad	18,602,385	117
5. Zeno Group	16,100,000	63
6. Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	15,005,000	33
7. ICR	9,665,327	7
8. Inkhouse	7,230,736	36
9. Bospar	5,692,505	29
10. Singer Associates, Inc.	5,483,657	18
11. Finn Partners	5,047,000	23
12. Lumina Communications, San Jose, CA	4,505,079	22
13. Peppercomm	3,763,995	7
14. Edelman, Sacramento, CA	3,377,000	19
15. Perry Comms. Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,423,198	10
16. Karbo Communications	2,395,720	21
17. Landis Communications	2,077,286	10
18. Infinite Global	2,072,881	8

WESTERN CITIES

1. Edelman (incl. Silicon Valley), San Francisco, CA	\$48,204,000	195
2. Edelman, Seattle, WA	38,192,000	177
3. Edelman (incl. Beverly Hills), Los Angeles, CA	31,795,000	1,260
4. W2O Group, Los Angeles, CA	29,131,297	28
5. W2O Group, San Francisco, CA	29,131,297	101
6. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	19,595,186	82
7. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	18,602,385	117
8. Zeno Group, San Francisco, CA	16,100,000	63
9. Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	15,005,000	33
10. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,220,000	35
11. ICR, San Francisco, CA	9,665,327	7
12. Edelman, Portland, OR	7,629,000	35
13. Inkhouse, San Francisco, CA	7,230,736	36
14. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	6,481,237	38
15. Bospar, San Francisco, CA	5,692,505	29
16. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	5,483,657	18
17. Finn Partners, San Francisco, CA	5,047,000	23
18. Finn Partners, Los Angeles, CA	4,591,000	35
19. Lumina Communications, San Jose, CA	4,505,079	22
20. Finn Partners, Portland, OR	3,764,000	20
21. Peppercomm, San Francisco, CA	3,763,995	7
22. Cerrell Associates, Los Angeles, CA	3,637,398	15
23. Edelman, Sacramento, CA	3,377,000	19
24. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,993,000	11
25. MWWPR, Los Angeles, CA	2,971,189	16
26. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	2,552,461	23
27. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,540,300	12
28. Perry Comms. Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,423,198	10
29. APCO Worldwide (incl. employee presence from CA to CO), Seattle, WA	2,397,300	12
30. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,395,720	21
31. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,077,286	10
32. Infinite Global, San Francisco, CA	2,072,881	8
33. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms., Seattle, WA	1,553,754	10
34. Prosek Partners, Los Angeles, CA	1,368,467	6
35. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	1,201,671	9
36. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	1,100,000	11
37. Taylor, Los Angeles, CA	1,050,000	4
38. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	1,028,570	12
39. KCD Public Relations, Inc., San Diego, CA	989,089	7
40. Novitas Communications, Denver, CO	550,578	3

The firms ranked in the O'Dwyer Co. rankings of PR firms have satisfied O'Dwyer's ranking rules, supporting fee and employee totals with income tax and W-3 forms and providing a current account list. The O'Dwyer rankings should be regarded as an expression of our judgment of a firm's standing within the industry, and are not warranted to comply with any specific objective standards.

Firms are added to O'Dwyer's rankings throughout the year. Go to odwyerpr.com for an up-to-date version of the rankings.

How small business loan program put corporations, financial institutions in crisis crosshairs

Large, publicly-traded companies are facing immense backlash after taking millions in Paycheck Protection Program loans intended for small businesses. Now, the banks that processed these loans have become public targets as well, after a series of class-action lawsuits accused these lenders of deliberately pushing loans for corporations to the front of the line while leaving cash-strapped small businesses in limbo.

By Jon Gingerich

The Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program reopened in late April after Congress passed a second round of funding, offering an additional \$310 billion in small business relief.

These emergency loans give small businesses a second shot at surviving the COVID-19 pandemic after the U.S. government's initial \$350 billion federal relief program—part of the sprawling \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) stimulus package signed into law in March—fell short of helping most businesses impacted by the crisis.

The SBA loans, which are eligible for companies with fewer than 500 employees, provide more than twice a company's average monthly payroll costs—up to a maximum of \$10 million—and can be forgiven as long as companies agree not to lay off staff and use the money on payroll, rent or utility payments.

The problem? A backlog of applicants overloaded the system and the lending program was exhausted in less than two weeks, with very few small businesses receiving anything, leaving untold thousands of companies without the critical lifeline they needed to stay afloat. According to an April 22 LendingTree report, only five percent of the small business owners surveyed had received a PPP loan, even though 60 percent had applied.

What happened? The federal loan program was tapped out by large corporations—famously, restaurant chains Ruth's Chris Steak House, Shake Shack and Potbelly Sandwich Shop, as well as Harvard, Trump-connected data-collection firm Phunware and about 200 other publicly-traded companies—who made headlines when it was discovered they'd snatched up millions in emergency coronavirus loans meant for small organizations, essentially sucking the initial round of funding dry and leaving small businesses in the cold.

Some of these publicly-traded businesses were able to secure the PPP loans by taking advantage of a loophole that stated only that applicants must have fewer than 500 employees per location (as opposed to

companywide). Others were able to secure loans more than once, through the use of subsidiaries, taking far more than the PPP's \$10 million limit.

"While the program was touted as relief for small businesses, we also learned it stipulated that any restaurant business—including restaurant chains—with no more than 500 employees per location would be eligible," Shake Shack said in a statement posted to its LinkedIn page. "There was no fine print, anywhere, that suggested: 'Apply now, or we will run out of money by the time you finally get in line.'"

Call it a crisis within a crisis. In the average crisis manager's playbook, COVID-19 is a catastrophe of biblical heights, but now, an unlikely centerpiece of what has become both a public health emergency and an economic disaster are the national brands that find themselves in the spotlight for usurping a relief program that was intended to keep struggling businesses afloat, essentially profiting from a pandemic and widening the national income gap in the process.

Predictably, news that these national brands had taken valuable PPP funding from small businesses resulted in public outrage and calls for boycotts. In response to the backlash, Potbelly (which received \$10 million), Shake Shack (which received \$10 million) and Ruth's (which received \$20 million by applying through two subsidiaries) have each since returned the funds in a desperate attempt to change the narrative amid the mounting outcry.

"The fact that there are millions of small businesses across the country who were unable to get funds from the original round of PPP funding, while corporations like Shake Shack and Potbelly were approved will negatively affect these brands for at least as long as the crisis lasts," said Eric Yaverbaum, CEO of Ericho Communications and author of "PR for Dummies" and "Leadership Secrets

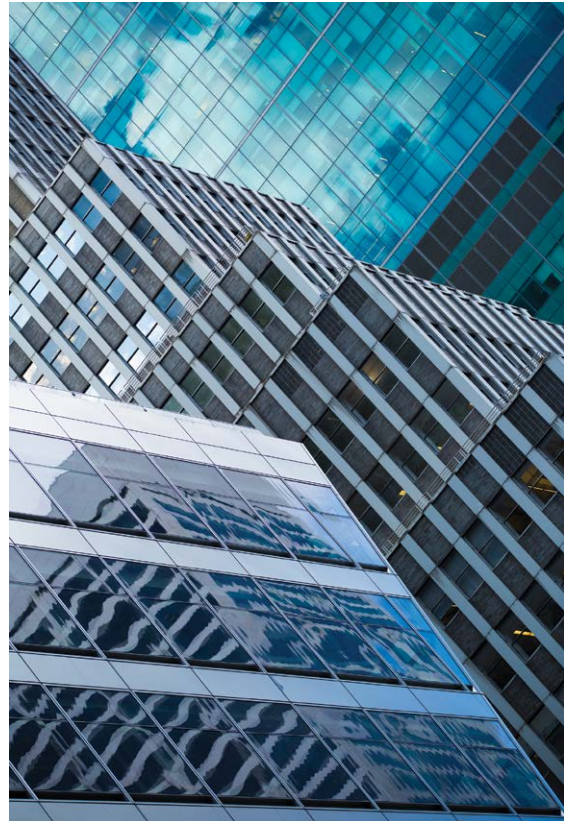


Photo: Pierre Hauser

of the World's Most Successful CEOs."

Yaverbaum told *O'Dwyer's* that despite apologies and public announcements of the loans' return, a lingering resentment among consumers and small businesses who missed out on the funds will probably linger "due to what can be framed as an instance of corporate greed." The public will also likely question the motive behind the return, Yaverbaum said, as most will recognize it for the PR opportunity it is, which could further influence purchasing habits when the country reopens.

"However, the quick turnaround on these returns and subsequent apologies by the brands means they'll recover more quickly than if they'd left it to fester," Yaverbaum said. "While they'll certainly feel the squeeze in the short-term, depending on how long this pandemic lasts, a sincere apology, cou-

— Continued on next page

pled with a grand gesture, can repair some of the damage done by applying for—and accepting—these loans. Don't be surprised if one or more of these companies takes the apology a step further by providing direct financial aid to hard-hit small businesses in the near future."

Wall Street over Main Street

Corporations aren't the only entities facing a backlash over their exploitation of the Paycheck Protection Program: the crisis has now put banks in the reputational crosshairs as well. Although the SBA is required to process the PPP loans it receives on a first-come, first-served basis, no such rules apply for the individual SBA-approved lenders that process them, essentially allowing banks the freedom to determine which applications the federal government sees first. According to data provided by the Small Business Administration, nearly half—45 percent—of the loans given out in the program have been in the amount of \$1 million or more.

"I have participated in at least three client board of directors meetings in recent weeks, and when the PPP issue was raised, the reaction from the leaders across the table has been scorn for some institutions, especially one who is among the biggest," said Tom Butler, President of Butler Associates, which represents multiple financial institutions, including community based and infrastructure lenders and those in the SBA space. "They were seeking solutions, but made clear that the banking-trust that they had appeared to be seriously fractured, and when the time was appropriate, might need to be reevaluated."

Now, a series of class-action lawsuits filed in California and New York—against Bank of America, Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase and U.S. Bank—allege these institutions unfairly gave priority to larger companies' loan applications over smaller ones, clients for whom banks are generally incentivized to lend money given that their higher-value loans bring higher commissions. According to data released by the SBA, approvals for smaller loans—those under \$150,000—surged near the end of the program's initial run, suggesting the largest loans had been "front-loaded," or pushed ahead so banks could maximize the payout they received while leaving small businesses in limbo. A recent analysis of financial records by National Public Radio found that U.S. banks have collected more than \$10 billion in fees from processing these loans.

"The internal cost structures and compensation programs of most banks will always favor larger SBA loans over a high volume of very small SBA loans," said Richard Lawless, a career banker and entrepreneur. "The cost, time and effort of processing a \$10,000 SBA

loan is very similar to the cost, time and effort to process a \$1,000,000 SBA loan. Loan officers are paid compensation based on a percentage of the loan amount, producing an understandable desire to pursue the larger loan requests first. All of these real world challenges should have been addressed in the legislation to encourage banks to treat all size loan requests with equal urgency. The program was not structured in a way to encourage banks to sacrifice time and manpower to facilitate solely the smallest loans."

K Street cashes in on relief funds

Aside from lacking the cash reserves of larger companies, your average mom-and-pop also typically doesn't have the influence or ability to make inroads with legislators, tools that many publicly-traded corporations use on a near daily business. *O'Dwyer's* counted nearly 40 companies and trade groups for the month of April so far that have hired K Street lobbying firms for the expressed purpose of revising the Small Business Administration's rules regarding PPP loans so that they might be expanded to include their respective industries.

Noticeably not-so-small business Hilton Worldwide retained lobbying support with Harbinger Strategies to inquire about the PPP and the Treasury Department's Exchange Stabilization Fund as they pertain to the hotel industry. Telecomm giant Sinclair Broadcast Group—which posted more than \$3 billion in revenue in 2018—is lobbying Congress as well as the FCC and the National Economic Council regarding PPP eligibility with respect to broadcast stations.

Then there are the trade groups. The International Franchise Association, the National Association of Home Builders, the Affordable Housing Developers Council, the Petroleum Marketers Association of America, the Small Business Investor Alliance, the Wireless Internet Service Providers' Association, the Consumer Credit Industry Association, the National Association of Federally-Insured Credit Unions, the New York Bankers Association, the Structured Finance Association, the American Shrimp Processors Association and the National Indian Gaming Association are among the industry associations that have hired lobbying firms in an attempt to advocate on Capitol Hill for a rewrite of small business loan rules, according to Lobbying Disclosure Act documents filed with Congress in April.

It's been a busy month in Washington. *O'Dwyer's* also identified more than 50 companies that had filed for lobbying representation between April 1 to April 15 alone in the hopes of gaining access to coronavirus stimulus dollars through the CARES ACT, representing virtually every business imaginable, from sporting goods stores (Dunham's), to department stores (Century

21, Aaron's), to clothing companies (Arell Apparel Group), to food giants (The Hershey Company), to entertainment (Ticketmaster), to book stores (Barnes & Noble), to schools (Culinary Institute of America), to fintech companies (C2FO), to casinos (Penn National Gaming), to medical staffing (ADEX), to airport restaurant management companies (OTG Management).

Bailout 2.0

Expanded additional rounds of federal funding offer a glimmer of hope for the estimated 100,000 small businesses that assumed they were near the finish line when they had their loan applications processed in early April, only to find themselves sitting in the pipeline along with countless others, waiting for the crashshot chance of getting the relief they need.

If the recent past is a reliable indicator, Paycheck Protection Program 2.0 will also undoubtedly run dry very soon, but in the meantime, the SBA has become a target of renewed criticism for other reasons. From the very beginning, the PPP has been plagued with problems, from website crashes to nigh-universal confusion regarding its cumbersome application process. And now the process has apparently hit a few additional snags, with the SBA's electronic filing system crashing within minutes of opening after it was flooded with a backlog of applications from the first round of loans on top of the new ones. These issues only compound an initiative that, so far, has remained out of reach for a majority of small and local businesses across the country.

"The government was forced to use the best tool available to them for the distribution of these rescue loans. That tool was the Small Business Administration," Lawless told *O'Dwyer's*. "The high volume of applicants that the current legislation encouraged has completely overshot the capacity of the SBA and their partner banks to respond effectively."

In an April 26 statement, the SBA issued new guidance for the next round of funding in an attempt to prohibit large companies from accessing the loans. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin additionally announced that there will be a mandatory review of any company receiving more than \$2 million in PPP funds before those loans are forgiven, to ensure they're being used in accord with the program's intent.

"I think it was inappropriate for most of these companies to take the loans ... we don't think they ever should be allowed to," Mnuchin told CNBC today. "I never expected in a million years that the Los Angeles Lakers—which I'm a big fan of the team—but I'm not a big fan of the fact that they took out a \$4.6 million loan. I think that's outrageous." ○

Earned media measurement essentials

Adding these seven digital metrics to your existing earned media coverage toolkit to capture better data and provide the insights that truly matter.

By Michele Frost

How likely are you to ask a roomful of your company's top sales professionals: "Are we making your life easier? Do we help you close business?"

If you'd hesitate to ask this question, the old adage "Don't ask a question you already know the answer to" may have sprung to mind.

Marketing communications professionals all need to be willing to ask that question. It's our true north and the only way to earn a top net promoter score from the sales organization. The current economic landscape brings heightened attention to this idea, increasing the pressure on marketers to deliver revenue-driven metrics and results.

There's a way to know the answer to the question before asking. Top sales professionals report using earned media coverage throughout the entire sales cycle. Capturing that direct revenue attribution is challenging and not the goal to chase. The air cover generated by increased brand awareness, strong media coverage, content marketing and organic social media flushes out prospects with intent to purchase. That we can measure.

The earned media measurement goal is to capture the correlation between coverage—air cover—and known digital metrics used to forecast the marketing and sales funnel, otherwise known as the pipeline. To do so, we recommend you partner with your digital analyst, web team or agency and ask them to build reports capturing the data that truly matters.

Once built, reports can be automatically sent at regular intervals or when key metrics indicate a change +/- 5% (or desired order of magnitude change). Tracking changes allows you to quickly flag and analyze potential earned media coverage.

Here are seven metrics that will help attribute your earned media efforts to the bottom line:

Branded search visibility. Branded search visibility represents the click-through rate of branded terms in organic search. It's an estimate of the percentage of clicks your site receives, based on the ranking positions across brand-only keywords. Earned media drives brand search volume.

Strategic search visibility. Search Visibility represents the click-through rate of strategic terms in organic search. Typically,

this is no more than a dozen keywords, and the strategic terms map to core services and products sold. It's an estimate of the percentage of clicks your site receives, based on the ranking positions across all keywords you are tracking. Earned media featuring product launches and thought leadership should increase rankings.

Organic web traffic with conversion. Organic traffic is the opposite of paid traffic, which defines the visits generated by paid ads. Organic web visitors find your website after using a search engine like Google or Bing, so they aren't "referred" by any other website. Web traffic with conversion data highlights web sessions that result in a conversion. Conversions are predefined actions—demo request, contact sales, downloads, video views—set up in your analytics application. Earned media coverage drives search traffic.

High-value page traffic. Percent of organic web traffic to top-10, prospect-centric web pages. It's critical to ensure overall traffic increase is reported relative to pages known to contribute to conversions. These are the pages designed to move a prospect to the next best step in the buyer journey. Earned media focus is often aligned to critical announcements, tracking impact on key related pages during strategic times demonstrates earned media attribution. The demand generation team has long tracked the correlation between campaign timing and increased traffic. Apply this methodology to capture the correlation between coverage and online search activity, which drives organic traffic to the website.

Key linking domains. Inbound and mutual links are a key metric in the Google search algorithm. Domain authority is a Moz-calculated metric for how well a given domain is likely to rank in Google's search results. Earned media links often have high authority. While not all media allows for links back to your site, the percentage that do allow you to track how PR links positively impact search visibility.

Referral web traffic. Referral traffic is Google's method of reporting visits from sources other than direct traffic, search engines and your social channels. This metric is the PR catch-all. Ask your colleague or agency to create a Google Analytics segment for traffic from specific media URLs, including Wikipedia. Wikipedia is often

the independent third-party site referenced in coverage. This allows you to report on traffic coming from coverage.

Social media SOV. Share of voice measures how much of the conversation your brand owns with target prospects versus what your competitors own. This analysis looks at social media channels. When your earned media coverage is integrated into organic social media, traffic to the site will rise.

Reviewing metrics early and often

When grounded in business goals and measurement, team members at all levels have the contextual stickiness needed to learn and manage revenue campaigns. With a focus and shared responsibility for moving the needle on these metrics, PR professionals can help solve the most pressing question in your organization: Do we have enough in market to hit our marketing attributed revenue goal?

The average sales cycle is too long for the likes of your C-suite and anyone with variable compensation tied to winning opportunities. They want more, faster. Adding these seven digital metrics to your existing earned media coverage allows you to provide insights and actions related to building pipeline velocity and marketing attributed revenue.

Good marketing captures the attention of those with the intent to purchase. If you don't grab them, your competitors will.

Michele Frost is Vice President of Integrated Marketing at PAN Communications. ◉



Michele Frost

PR news brief

Joele Frank works Penney's closure

Joele Frank is working the bankruptcy filing of J.C. Penney as the 118-year-old retailer blames the COVID-19 pandemic for spurring an accelerated financial restructuring program.

Prior to the pandemic, Penney had made progress on its "plan for renewal" strategy, according to CEO Jill Soltau, but the closing of stores due to the health emergency, "necessitated a more fulsome review to include the elimination of outstanding debt."

The Chapter 11 protection enables Penney to step up its store optimization effort, which includes reducing the "store footprint to better align its business with the current operating environment."

Soltau will close stores in phases during the restructuring, with the first shutdowns announced in the coming weeks.

COVID-19 brings continued client losses to PR sector

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in client terminations for 88 percent of U.S. PR firms, resulting in an upswing of lost revenues, staff layoffs and salary cuts, according to a report.

By Jon Gingerich

The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a devastating blow to the U.S. public relations industry, resulting in client reductions across the board and plummeting revenues that have agencies of all sizes cutting staff to make up for the losses, according to a new report by PR merger and acquisition consultancy Gould+Partners.

The Gould+Partners report, which sought to gauge the coronavirus' financial impact on the U.S. PR sector and how the industry is moving forward, found that 67 of the 76 firms polled (88.1 percent) said they'd lost client revenues as a result of COVID-19. More than a third of those firms (36.8 percent) reported losing more than 20 percent of their client revenues. A quarter (25 percent) lost between 10 percent and 19 percent, while an additional 26.3 percent experienced client terminations of 10 percent or less.

These figures actually show a slight improvement from a previous Gould+Partners report in April, which found that 88.5 percent of agencies surveyed said they'd lost

client net revenues due to COVID-19.

Firms across the board reported lost revenues, but they appeared to hit the smallest firms surveyed—those with less than \$3 million in revenues—hardest, where net revenues losses largely ran the gamut between 10 and 49 percent. Two firms in this category reported losing more than 50 percent of their net revenues due to COVID-19. The largest firms surveyed, meanwhile—those with revenues in excess of \$25 million—reported the smallest losses, with a majority of losses coming in at the 10 percent or less range.

"I am actually surprised that 100 percent of firms have not lost revenue from COVID-19. Every firm that I have personally talked to had terminations and/or a 'pause' in their retainers and projects," Gould+Partners Managing Partner Rick Gould told O'Dwyer's.

The good news: only 1.6 percent of the PR firms surveyed reported terminating staff in light of the COVID-19 crisis. The largest staff cuts came from the largest firms

surveyed—those with revenues in excess of \$25 million—3.8 percent of whom reported terminating staff. Staff terminations were lowest among the smallest firms surveyed—those with less than \$3 million in revenues—only one percent of whom reported cuts.

Staff furloughs, unsurprisingly, were more common, affecting 2.6 percent of the firms surveyed. Interestingly, the largest amount of furloughs came from the middle-sized agencies, or those with between \$3 million and \$10 million in revenues (5.1 percent). Firms with between \$10 million to \$25 in revenues were least likely to furlough staff (one percent). Agencies that issued a mandatory temporary leave of absence reported an average furlough time period of 1.9 months.

According to the report, every eligible PR firm surveyed filed for a small business loan under the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program. The average amount of time it took for agencies to receive the funds after applying was about two weeks (14.9 days).

Gould+Partners' "PR Firm Coronavirus Financial Crisis Report" surveyed 76 agencies across North America in May. ○

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Perceptions and preparations from the kitchen table

The COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed some communications fundamentals. Namely, that you should be prepared for whatever situation might arise, and you need to understand an audience's perceptions if you want your messages to reach and resonate with them.

By Brandon Stephenson

You can't overstate the impact COVID-19 has had on every aspect of our lives: physical, emotional, financial. It has exasperated our hyper-partisan environment, brought our once-bustling economy to a grinding halt and created new barriers for our interconnected society. And just as individuals are responding to the pandemic and our altered reality differently, the same is true for the communications industry.

Firms specializing in serving tourism, recreation and hospitality clients have obviously seen a drastic reduction in revenue as these sectors have been devastated since travel restrictions and Safer at Home orders were put in place. Conversely, firms that have more of a diverse or different clientele—health care, natural resources, transportation, technology, infrastructure—are in a better position to weather the storm.

But even for those of us fortunate enough to be at firms that have been able to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on its operations—or for those that have expanded their business—we've all had to make significant adjustments on the fly.

Successful communications professionals and firms have had to quickly adapt to this new normal, changing how we approach the internal and external aspects of our operations. Rightfully so, there's more of a focus on employee well-being and flexibility as part of ongoing retention and development programs. Client services and marketing efforts to secure new clients have taken on renewed importance as clients from all sectors tighten budgets and look to trim expenses. This is the new reality we find ourselves in. This is our new normal.

These two months have reaffirmed some foundations of successful communication programs; you must put yourselves in the shoes of your audience and understand their perceptions if you wish to truly reach them, and you must be prepared for whatever situation might arise as every organization finds itself on the front lines.

Understanding your audience

Our formula is tried and true: determine the best messages, messengers and delivery to engage our target audiences, educating them, influencing them, motivating them toward a certain action or position. It has always been and will continue to be about clearly and consistently communicating the "what's in it for me" to make our clients'

issues relevant to our intended audience, making our issue their issue. But figuring out the "what's in it for me" proposition in our new normal is radically different as people's perceptions have changed.

Just think about what life was like in January. Unemployment was at historic lows, the stock market continued to reach new heights and consumer confidence was high. People now see things through the lens of a societal shift that we haven't seen in decades, if not generations.

Recent polling by California-based survey research experts Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates details just how much COVID-19 is weighing on the minds of the public. Eighty-nine percent of respondents said the economic impact of coronavirus is an extremely serious/very serious problem, unsurprisingly outstripping issues that previously dominated surveys such as health care, housing and climate change. The same poll found that concerns about unemployment has shot up more than 24 percent in the last 12 months.

None of this should come as a surprise, but we must constantly remind ourselves that this is the mindset of the public and the concern of decision-makers that we're ultimately trying to influence. We must tailor public relations and public affairs strategies to this current climate. Understand where your audience is now coming from—their concerns, stress and fears—when developing how and when you'll communicate with them.

This is a delicate balancing act. Continue with your pre-coronavirus communications plan and you'll look tone deaf, like the property management company posting a celebratory post about the first day of Spring on the same day Los Angeles County announced its Safer at Home order. But at the same time, people are experiencing fatigue from the wall-to-wall COVID coverage. While we always want to be mindful of the current situation, we also need to make sure we aren't overwhelming anyone with coronavirus-related content nor can we get distracted from achieving the client's goals.

Preparing for what's next

Every day, you read about some COVID-19 crisis: a protest against government shelter orders, conflicts that spirals into confrontations at businesses that are trying to protect shoppers and employees, mass outbreaks of coronavirus at large employers' worksites,

workers demanding better protections and casting businesses in a negative light as being uncaring or unresponsive.

What's amazing is how many businesses, regardless of size, still don't have crisis communication plans, nor the trained team to implement those plans, in case of an incident that could hurt a company's reputation. These companies risk having their story be told by someone else if they don't rapidly deploy a program to providing timely and accurate information.

This goes without saying, but since so many people and organizations are unprepared it can never be stated enough: good crisis planning, preparation and execution, even in the middle of a pandemic, is vital. Companies that are ready to respond to various scenarios have the internal-consultant team in place who own the crisis communications plan, with messaging and trained spokesperson(s), ready to communicate rapidly and across a broad spectrum of channels.

This includes social media, which is still seen as an afterthought by too many traditional leaders and organizations. Sure, social media can be your best friend or your worst enemy. But in a time of crisis, it's often the very first place people turn to get the latest information. Social media should be one of the first places you disseminate information. Use your social channels often, monitor and respond to comments, and push out essential information in a consistent and timely manner, just like you'd do with traditional press releases and press conferences.

You need to hope for the best but plan for the worst. We know that one day this pandemic will end. We hope it ends soon, but we have to plan that this new normal will last for the foreseeable future. And as our offices and conference rooms have become kitchen tables and Zoom virtual meetings, we still need to develop strategies and solutions to tackle complex problems. Through persuasive storytelling, understanding our audiences and being prepared to rapidly respond to crises, communications firms can continue to help our clients meet their goals.

Brandon Stephenson is Chief Strategic Officer with Cerrell Associates. ○



Brandon Stephenson



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The end of mediocrity

The COVID-19 crisis forced a raising of the bar, but it also proved what people can do when they know there's no choice but to avoid failure, showing that keeping the bar high can challenge us to improve at every level.

By Christine Barney

For communications professionals, a silver lining to the COVID-19 pandemic is that it brought an abrupt end to the acceptance of mediocrity. When, overnight, your company must cull 75 percent of its workforce or reduce expenses by half, it becomes suddenly much easier to distinguish between excellence and everything else.

The questions ask themselves: "Is this person really performing well? Do I need this particular technology tool? Is my agency really delivering?"

Communications is an industry that's ripe with mediocrity. Anyone can hang out a shingle and start offering consulting services. There's no certification or licensing required and voluntary honorifics like PRSA's Accredited in Public Relations have barely made a dent in the population of practitioners. (Note, I proudly tag APR after my name and am glad I took the time to earn the designation, but can't remember a time when it made a difference in whether someone decided to do business with me or work for me.)

Corporations often promote to incompetence, take the safer route to avoid failure and measure outputs vs. outcomes. But in our new world of rampant unemployment and uncertainty, the mediocre will not survive.

Mediocrity loses to those trading up

Organizations that follow Six Sigma or Top Grading philosophies are comfortable with the idea of categorizing employees as A or B players who are rewarded if they're in the top 10 percent and expendable if in the bottom 10 percent.

Many organizations are uncomfortable with this "Hunger Games" like approach to weeding out lesser performers, and that's why so many C players linger and even get promoted. It's easy to fire those who are terrible. But those who might have a few really strong skills? Or those who are liked by that one client or that one manager? Firing that person is harder, until, of course, you're forced into the lifeboat and there isn't enough room for everyone. Suddenly, that decision is a whole lot easier.

So, in the wake of COVID-19, not only did many mediocre people suddenly find themselves cast out, but organizations

looking at their people assets now saw an opportunity to trade up. Some very good talent was jettisoned by industries that were decimated. The top digital strategist at a cruise line who last year wanted double what you were willing to pay is now willing to accept 20 percent less than their most recent salary just to find a safe port.

You feel like your biz dev person isn't delivering enough ROI? Play the field. You let people go and then got Paycheck Protection Plan funds and now must get your headcount back up or be penalized on the forgiveness of the loan? Why not invest in hiring to add some new capabilities like a videographer or content creator. If you're like me, your LinkedIn has exploded with communications people looking to connect. Some who are unemployed, smart stars who are looking for a stronger employer and yes, even the mediocre. My recruiter has never been busier.

The bar just got higher

No matter where you sit in the communications industry, everyone's demanding more. When resources are scarce, you can't afford to keep mediocre performers. Say you have a tool that was supposed to enhance your productivity by 50 percent but delivered only 30 percent. In the past, the argument might be made that, well, 30 percent is still good and the scale would tip toward the easier path of doing nothing versus the more involved steps to make a change.

No one wants to admit they accept average or less, but I believe every organization has a person, tool or vendor that just isn't delivering at expected levels and only gets away with it because mediocrity is easy to ignore. However, in today's new environment, we have permission to be—or in fact are being forced to be ... brutally honest. Now, your first thought is, "do I need this tool at all" and your second is, "can I get a better tool for a better price from someone else?"

The current crisis forced the raising of the bar, but it also brought opportunity and accelerated change. If someone had asked you to put on a virtual conference in 2019, you might have said you needed at least six months to plan. Yet thousands of organizations switched gears with mere

weeks of planning to salvage conferences and stay relevant to their audiences. Many of them had no technology platforms, but they went from zero to 60 because they had to. What's the old expression: what would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? Well, we've just seen what people can do when they know there's no choice but to act to avoid failure.

Ultimately, it's clear that mediocrity isn't a fixed state. Any single person, company or technology can choose to rise above mediocrity with effort, inspiration or perhaps a kick in the pants. Having the bar higher should challenge all of us to improve at every level.



Christine Barney

Will mediocrity come back like a weed?

Once this pandemic is no longer top of mind, will we go back to our lazy ways? Maybe, but just like working from home is now a mainstay of many organization—and predictions say lots of these folks will never go back—once you get a taste of realizing the power of eliminating mediocrity, and see the impact on the bottom line, my guess is it will be hard to give that up.

We'll live in the shadow of COVID-19 for quite a while; we'll wonder when it will ramp up or mutate or if some other devastating event will come along. The apple cart was upset so quickly, it will be a long time before we feel safe enough to become complacent again.

This residual fear is why I still clip coupons years after I no longer need to. I remembered those times when I had no choice but to watch every penny and each decision was carefully evaluated against that high bar I mentioned earlier.

So, if every action requires you to take a mediocrity test, chances are we in the communications industry will be less willing to fail that test. It will be those with agility, drive and flawless execution who will succeed while the mediocre will be forced to up their game or be watching from the sidelines.

Christine Barney is CEO and Managing Partner of rbb Communications. ●

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PR agencies learn tough lessons

What PR agency leaders can do to improve their balance sheets and maintain a more proactive, aggressive stance as we gradually begin to move into the pandemic recovery stages.

By Art Stevens

Just like every other organization in the communications industry, public relations firms have been forced to dramatically alter how they operate in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While I could wax philosophical about how this ongoing catastrophe continues to affect virtually every sector of the global economy, I'll instead focus on what PR agencies should learn when it comes to running their businesses going forward.

If there are any positive aspects that result from these challenging times, it's that agency leaders are being required to better reassess and clarify goals, review team and staff roles and much more.

In fact, many leaders are now reshaping and reprioritizing 2020 strategy plans in the form of stabilizing and taking care of employees, connecting with clients to keep vital services going, preserving as much of the current business as possible and observing the competition for opportunities to succeed in the pandemic recovery stages.

Of course, there will be post-pandemic winners and losers, and for the agencies that can keep their doors open, they may be able to gain market share as the competition plummets.

If you were caught off-guard in recent months—especially if you're a niche agency specializing in areas like travel or tourism, for example—it's time to step back and reassess. Here are several lessons learned from the pandemic to consider as we regroup and aim to get businesses gradually back on track:

Have a line of credit established with your bank (whether you need it or not). Cash set aside, or a line of credit that's set up in advance could be a useful backup plan in an emergency situation, such as a pandemic, recession or natural disaster. Now is a good time to review your agency's profitability and stress test your business to see how you can handle a drop off in revenue.

Always have three months operating cash in the bank. Perhaps you've had to furlough or terminate employees during these uncertain times. Most financial experts recommend putting away a minimum of three to six months of operating expenses in the bank for a "rainy day." The bottom line: take as much cash out of your agency as possible

during good times and squirrel it away. Unfortunately, "rainy days" do come.

Encourage transitioning to a virtual agency. The concept of office space is a major consideration looking ahead. In many cases, rent expenses can equate to 10 percent of your overall revenue. Not only can you save a lot of money on rent by working from home, but you can also cut back on overhead and travel expenses. More agency buyers recognize that brick and mortar isn't what necessarily defines a modern PR business. And, if you do want office space, take less space than you need for all your employees and sign minimum year agreements: three years at the most.

Try to have one-year agreements with clients rather than 30-day, 60-day or 90-day termination provisions.

Diversify. It's no longer fashionable to put all of your eggs in one industry basket or niche. For example, if you're in the travel space, consider exploring complementary niches like consumer products. Those PR firms that are more diversified and increase their bandwidth tend to weather a crisis better than niche firms.

Put crisis provisions in your employment agreements that can enable you to reduce salaries or furlough people if the situation warrants it.

Don't lay out large sums for your clients in the form of reimbursable expenses. Instead, have clients pay for any expense directly that's over \$500 in advance.

Make it clear to your various vendors that you're not responsible for costs incurred on behalf of your clients.

A few final thoughts

The PR agencies that survive any type of massive crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic are the ones who can quickly adapt to change. I urge PR leaders to be as proactive as possible in reaching out to clients to learn how to best support them right now.

I believe it's vital to learn how to communicate via the latest technology and tools, including social media and any other virtual communication platforms like Zoom and GoTo Meeting.

It's also wise to use any free time well: consider staying active mentally by registering for online courses and webinars that can help you hone your skills and grow in your career. Staying in touch with how your

clients are impacted, their emerging needs and the latest trends in the market's future recovery can help you determine what skills to develop at this time.

We're all working to process an abundance of constantly-changing information about the virus and its impact, adjusting to unavoidable changes in our professional and personal lives and taking precautions to be safe and healthy.

And no one thing, by itself, can clear the gray cloud of uncertainty instantly or significantly lessen its impact. However, if agency leaders can assume a more proactive, aggressive stance, they boost their odds of maintaining a better balance and shaping their future once we do eventually come out on the other side.

Art Stevens is Managing Partner of The Stevens Group, consultants to the PR agency profession. ○



Art Stevens

News brief

Chinese business leaders target U.S.

Despite trade tensions with the U.S., Chinese companies consider America their No. 1 growth market, according to a survey by Brunswick Group.

There's room for growth, as Brunswick reports that 128 countries do more business with China than the U.S. does.

Thirty-nine percent of Chinese business leaders said the US is their top overseas growth target, up four percent from a 2018 study.

At 45 percent, the US ranks near the bottom in the developed nations polled by Brunswick, only topping Canada (44 percent) and Japan (41 percent). They may face an uphill battle in their bid to crack the U.S. market as their country's favorability rating lags here.

Germany (64 percent), France/Singapore (61 percent), Czech Republic (60 percent) and UK (55 percent) have the most positive opinions about China.

Overall, China enjoys a much stronger favorability score (84 percent) in emerging nations than the average 53 percent score in developed countries.

Brunswick found that developed countries agree that China will surpass the U.S. as the world's leading technological and economic power during the 2020s.

Currently, the U.S. holds a 40 percent to 37 percent edge over China in the technology sector. Those numbers will flip to 43 percent to 31 percent in China's favor.

The US today tops China (51 percent to 35 percent) on the economic front. It will trail 47 percent to 30 percent with the dawn of what Brunswick calls "The China Century."



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O'Dwyer's guide to RANKED PR FIRMS



At a launch event for 360PR+ client Trek Bicycle.

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Matthew Caiola, President, Corporate & Technology Practice

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

5WPR's notable clients include Sparkling ICE, SodaStream, Welch's, CheapOAir, It's a 10 Haircare, Jane Iredale, L'Oréal Professional, SAP NS2, VIZIO, The Trade Desk, CareerBuilder, Santa Margherita, Paris Baguette, &Piz-za, Lifestyles, SMEG and Zeta Global. Our innovative work has been awarded PR Agency of the Year, PR Executive of the Year, Product Launch of the Year and Business to Business Program of the Year.

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The world today is ultra-connected, new trends emerge, media entities rise and fall, competitors come in and shake things up and customers expect more from the brands they love. Many brands struggle to stay relevant in this climate. That's where 360PR+ comes

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360PR+ is an award-winning, creative, independent agency, ranked as a Top-50 PR firm nationally. 360PR+ has been recognized as an Agency of the Year and Best Place to Work and is a partner in PROI Worldwide, offering clients in-market resources in 100+ cities.

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A national content-driven marketing, public relations and social media firm, we articulate and promote business growth stories. We specialize in financial services and commercial real estate, and offer an emerging cannabis practice. We write to inspire individual people to action: clients, prospects, media and influencers alike. We speak the language of business—and can translate to B2H (Business to Human) in ways that connect investors, clients and companies.

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APCO Worldwide is an advisory and advocacy communications consultancy helping leading public and private sector organizations act with agility, and build organizational reputations, brands, relationships and solutions to succeed.

APCO is an independent and majority women-owned business.

Most importantly, we are a trusted partner to our clients. We help them anticipate, plan, execute and secure impact through our curiosity, insights and diverse expertise.

Our clients benefit from APCO leaders who have the pulse of the dynamically changing global environment that defines the marketplace; the first-hand experience of having faced significant issues or opportunities; the ability to harness the power of data, insights and technology; and the passion to deliver unparalleled results.

Our expertise and integrated approach enable us to provide a full range of services, across industry sectors and global markets, allowing us to offer effective counsel and programs for boards of directors and CEOs. We meet the evolving needs of executives and their teams in communications, public affairs, government relations, legal, risk, organizational transformation, international relations, corporate responsibility and brand marketing.

We measure success in the transformations we help to catalyze, our clients' impact on society and their continued profitable growth.

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Bill Haynes, Founder & CEO

BackBay Communications is an integrated public relations, content development and digital marketing firm focused on the financial services sector. BackBay specializes in private equity and venture capital, asset management, fintech, and impact investing. With offices in Boston and London, BackBay serves companies in North America, Europe, and elsewhere, leveraging global partners.

BackBay takes a brand-centric, content-driven approach to developing and executing integrated communications programs for financial services firms including marketing strategy, content development, media relations, brand research and message development, creative design and multi-channel distribution of company news and perspectives to build brand awareness, credibility and drive new business for our clients.

Solely focused on financial services since its founding in 2005, BackBay has unparalleled industry expertise and strong relationships with the business and financial media. At BackBay, every client account is staffed with senior team members dedicated to providing clients a high-touch, results-oriented experience.

BackBay was recently ranked #1 in Boston for financial services PR by *O'Dwyer's* for the fourth year in a row and was recognized as Communications Firm of the Year by M&A Advisor. BackBay also consistently ranks as a top 10 global PR Agency in *The Deal's* private equity league tables.

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Matt Kovacs, President

BLAZE is the trusted partner of choice for lifestyle challenger brands hungry for a real piece of the marketshare. BLAZE has been retained by a growing number of savvy clients who want integrated PR, influencer and social media strategies—and flawless execution. BLAZE senior level professionals play a hands-on, day-to-day role with clients. With more than two decades of relationships and a solid team founded in strategic approaches, BLAZE is adroit in advancing client objectives and nimble to the quick-changing pace of media.

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Bliss Integrated Communication is a 45-year old integrated marketing communication agency that partners with top-tier healthcare, financial and professional services companies—and those who live “in between”—to build reputation and sales through strategic PR, thought leadership, targeted digital media and analytics. Bliss focuses on finding the whitespace that makes each business unique, driving toward business goals and securing real results. Clients include some of the most respected names in the industries served; average tenure among large clients is eight plus years. What sets Bliss apart is its dedicated and experienced executives, an understanding of how to forge deep, long-lasting client partnerships and an unwavering commitment to success.

BOB GOLD & ASSOCIATES

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Bob Gold, President

PR and marketing agency, Bob Gold & Associates provides guaranteed results in every contract. The agency was founded in 1997 and along the way, Bob has been named Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA-LA) 2019 Communications Professional of the Year and inducted as a Cable TV Pioneer.

The company has launched or grown more than 20 TV sports networks, numerous streaming services, many major cable TV operators and vendors and associations in the industry. Widely recognized as a specialist in the space where technology meets entertainment, the agency is also called upon when reputations need to be enhanced or even saved.

With offices in Los Angeles and New York City, Bob Gold & Associates co-founded WIN PR Group, an international association of independently owned hi-tech PR

agencies, offering clients immediate global resources for projects or campaigns with consistent pricing and centralized management.

Clients Include: Anthem Sports & Entertainment, Cisco, Content Delivery & Security Assn. (CDSA), Corning Optical Communications, Immersion Neuroscience, Media & Entertainment Services Alliance (MESA), Nice Label, Open Gear, Plume, The Cable Center, Viamedia.

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Hey—can we talk to you for a second? Yeah—you—the person reading these descriptions.

Is it us or does this copy all seem the same? We bet nearly every agency description says “we’re award winning” and “tech blah, blah, blah” and you’re left wondering: who do I pick?

Here’s our advice: pick an agency that is the right size to care about you passionately with the right team to get it done.

We of course think that’s us! Bospar was named *PRWeek's* Outstanding Boutique agency for the second year in a row, because we offer the best of big and small.

Like a big agency, Bospar has seasoned professionals across the country, based in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Orange County, San Diego, New York, and Washington, D.C. Its content department provides blog posts, case studies, ghost-written articles, messaging, positioning, press releases, social media content, website copy, infographics, research projects and videos.

But like a boutique, you will get attention from the most senior staff and a team of people who have worked together for years.

— Continued on page 66

The July issue of *O'Dwyer's* will profile Travel & Tourism PR firms. If you would like to be profiled, contact Editor Steve Barnes at 646/843-2089 or steve@odwyerpr.com



Bospa's team of professionals are where you need them: San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Washington D.C. and San Diego.

BOSPAP

Continued from page 65

Bospa's staff includes journalists who know how to reverse-engineer media coverage from a client's needs and provide intensive media training with an insider's perspective. Bospa supports its media efforts with analyst and influencer relations, customer and third-party relations, case histories

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We are committed to continuous innovation that puts our clients at the forefront of the industries they serve. We develop relationships at scale, unify intelligence, simplify performance and accelerate growth, driven by in-house capabilities in research, communications, digital marketing, creative, advocacy, government relations, media relations and media planning and buying.

Our partial client roster includes American Cancer Society, Aqua, Commonwealth Charter Academy (CCA), Comcast, CVS Health/Aetna, Enterprise, Genentech, Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP), Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Pennsylvania Turnpike, Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), PPL Electric Utilities and Energy Transfer.

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Founded in 1998, Buchanan Pub-

lic Relations LLC is an award-winning, dog-friendly, national communications agency based in Philadelphia. We specialize in media relations, digital, and crisis communications, with expertise in healthcare, life sciences, financial services, professional services, not-for-profit, real estate and consumer goods.

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A founding member of the Public Relations Global Network (PRGN), we offer clients access to 50 top-tier, independent PR firms around the world.

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2019 Winner of PRSA-NY's Best of the Best. Recent winner of other top PRSA-NY accolades: Best Legal Campaign & Best Business Communications Campaign & Best Public Affairs Campaign, as well as PR News Agency Elite Best Public Affairs Campaign. Other accolades include Best PR & Political Messaging Campaign in U.S./Canada from the International Association of Fire Fighters. Butler is ranked among New York's top agencies for its business, financial, professional services, public affairs, environmental, legal and crisis management practices. Butler Associates

Continued on page 68

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Among its clients, Butler Associates represents the Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association, which owns and produces the New York International Auto Show.

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— Continued from page 66

is a communications strategy and research team with a proven track record of high-impact results.

Butler Associates campaigns range from victorious *Fortune* 50 shareholder proxy battles, directing messaging for public affairs, legal, crisis and public safety awareness campaigns, to visibility and multi-channel, content development and messaging for organizational CEOs. The Butler group includes seasoned media and communication pros, committed to their clients, who deliver consistently. Its Litical Solutions division delivers online engagement and results via broadcast and digital.

Clients Include: 2020 Irish American Presidential Forum, American Triple I Partners, Association of BellTel Retirees, Inc., Barasch McGarry P.C., Cognitive Assessment Group, Core Theatre Company, Davidoff Hatcher Citron LLP, De Caro & Kaplen LLP, Election Systems & Software, Fleet Financial, FDNY EMS Local 2507, Friars Club, Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association, Greenport Harbor Brewing Company, Home Health Care Workers of America, Home Health Care Employers Association of New York, Hooks for Heroes, Hunts Point Cooperative Market, Knights of Saint Patrick of New York City, Mechanical Contractors Assn. of New York, M-Fire Suppression, Inc., Metropolitan

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Cerrell builds strategic communications and advocacy programs to meet our clients' needs.

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As 2019 Creative Agency of the Year, Coyne PR delivers programs built on a foundation of stand-out creative, integrated thinking and activation capabilities to effectively convey messages across paid, earned, shared and owned channels for its clients. These programs have been recognized with more than 1,000 industry awards since the agency's inception in 1991 and led to the agency being one of the top 15 independent PR firms in the U.S. In addition to its offices in New York and New Jersey, the agency's footprint spans across 115 cities, in 49 countries on six continents through its partnership in The Worldcom Public Relations

Group®.

That's a bit about who we are and what we do, but we still believe the most important question to always ask is, "why?" At Coyne PR, we like to say Y is at the center of Coyne—both literally and figuratively. This simple observation led us to ask ourselves: Why? Why does Coyne exist?

We believe great communication can change the world. We believe that it is both "what we say" and "how we say" it that matters immensely. Communication can fund charities, save factories, inspire a movement, defend the righteous and give a voice to the voiceless. Communication inspires, explains and provides a real understanding. It helps end conflicts amicably, with a sense of fairness. It brings people together to work toward common goals and aspirations. Communication is the multiplier that drives success whether it be between two, two hundred or two million people that allows for collaboration and contribution toward a better existence. Great communication is what makes us the best versions of ourselves. Therefore, we choose to pursue communication because we choose to make the world a better place.

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The Crosby team is passionate about helping clients Inspire Actions That Matter™—actions that positively impact people's lives and contribute to the greater good.

Crosby helps clients make powerful connections with their customers, constituents, and communities to shape attitudes, inspire behavior change, and motivate action. The firm's award-winning campaigns, which integrate paid, earned, shared and owned media, have touched the lives of virtually every American.

The firm has specialized practices in Healthcare, Government, Non-profits and Causes, and Military



As 2019 Creative Agency of the Year, Coyne PR is a public relations firm with expertise in PR, social, advertising and digital with more than 150 full-time professionals.



Crosby staff members support the company's mission of "Inspiring Actions That Matter" by donating time and money to worthy charities and nonprofits.

and Veterans. Clients include the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), Dept. of Defense/Military OneSource, ENERGY STAR, Kaiser Permanente, OrganDonor.gov, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Social Security Administration, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Veterans Health Administration, and The Wallace Foundation.

Crosby is #24 on *O'Dwyer's* national ranking of PR firms, #7 for healthcare PR, and is a member of the PR Council and American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As). The firm has offices in Maryland's state capital of Annapolis and in Washington, D.C.

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Dukas Linden Public Relations (DLPR) is a communications partner for leaders in finance, asset management, professional services, fintech and B2B technology. We create compelling narratives that expand our clients' share of voice, enhance their brand value and—most important—engage key audiences in a global marketplace.

Ranked #7 on *O'Dwyer's* list of top financial PR firms, we're driven by a passion to deliver targeted strategies and creative solutions that provide measurable benefits to clients—and help their businesses grow and succeed. Our full

suite of integrated communications services includes: comprehensive messaging and media relations across multiple platforms, content creation, media and presentation coaching, crisis and special situations communications, online reputation management and internal communications.

DLPR's clients include well-known, large and middle-market companies in key areas of finance, including: institutional investing, mutual funds, ETFs, wealth man-



From top: DLPR Chairman & CEO Richard Dukas, President Seth Linden.

agement, alternatives and private equity, and investment and community banking. DLPR has proven professional services experience within accounting, business consulting, compliance, cybersecurity, economics, risk management, management consulting and law. DLPR also has strong experience in fintech and B2B technology.

DLPR has an exceptionally strong broadcast group that, on average, secures approximately 50 bookings per month, primarily on CNBC, Bloomberg, Fox Business and Yahoo! Finance.

Clients Include: ARK-Invest, Adams Street Partners, BlueMountain Capital, Brandes Investment Partners, Brightstar Capital Partners, Brown Advisory, Crossmark Global Investments, Duff & Phelps, EisnerAmper, Global X Management, JMP Group, Kearney, Livingstone Partners, Navigant, Neuberger Berman, OceanFirst Bank, Raymond James and Robeco Global.

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

FAHLGREN MORTINE

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Fahlgren Mortine is an integrated communications company helping brands engage in ways that are precise and meaningful. Locations include Columbus (headquarters), Cleveland and Dayton, Ohio; Charleston, W. Va.; Boise, Idaho; Denver, Colo.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Miami; Chicago and New York City. The agency is a member of the global IPREX network.

Industry expertise includes B2B, CPG, economic development, healthcare, higher education, manufacturing, logistics, retail, technology, and travel and tourism.

Fahlgren Mortine helps brands get to precisely what matters using a powerful combination of data, design and creativity. Doing work that dares to make a difference and remaining accountable for getting measurable results is one of the many reasons clients choose to stay with the company at a tenure 182% longer than industry average.

Fahlgren Mortine regularly earns Best Place to Work and Agency of the Year honors from various trade organizations, as well as industry-specific recognition for campaign excellence.

TURNER, a travel, tourism and active lifestyle public relations agency, is a Fahlgren Mortine company.

FEINTUCH COMMUNICATIONS

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Henry Feintuch, President
Rick Anderson, Senior Managing Director
Doug Wright, Senior Account Director

Looking for highly experienced practitioners to manage, hands-on, your critical PR campaign? Let's open a conversation together.

Feintuch Communications is an award-winning technology and financial services firm offering senior counsel, experience and tactical support to a broad range of organizations—from the *Fortune* 500 to emerging companies, non-profits and associations.

Key market segments include AV, adtech/martech, cleantech, consumer electronics, e-commerce,

— Continued on page 70



FrazierHeiby owners Lauren Parker, Whitney Somerville and Ann Mulvany at the agency's headquarters.

FEINTUCH COMMS.

— Continued from page 69

fintech and financial services, industrial tech, professional services and start-ups.

Our focus is on business results—helping our clients build distribution, sell more products or services, improve their corporate or brand image and achieve other business outcomes. Every client engagement is managed—hands-on—by a senior practitioner responsible for results.

We provide clients with an integrated blend of public relations, social media, advertising/marketing, investor relations, web/digital marketing and other services. Our firm serves on the board of PR World Alliance (www.PRWorldAlliance.com), a global partnership of premier independent communications consultancies.

Our goal is to provide the expert service, experienced counsel and hands-on support that our clients need to meet their business objectives. Our commitment is to be a superior business partner in each and every client engagement.

Clients include: BasisCode Compliance, HDMI Licensing Administrator, Leclanché, NCSolutions, Nexans, Silicon Line and ZeeVee.



Henry Feintuch receives PRSA-NY's President's Award from 2019 Chapter President Leslie Gottlieb.

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Peter Finn, Noah Finn, Dena Merriam, Richard Funes, Alicia Young, Dan Pooley, Howard Solomon, Mark Singer, Scott Widmeyer, Founding Mng. Partners
Gil Bashe, Mng. Partner
Marty Ettlemeyer, CFO

Finn Partners Best Year Ever. Finn Partners unprecedented 35% growth in 2019 was driven by new business wins, expansion of existing clients, key senior hires and several strategic acquisitions that bolstered the firm's capabilities in health, digital/creative, consumer, and financial services. High growth practice areas included health, technology, financial services, and integrated marketing, and the firm's New York, London, and US midwestern and southeastern regions also experienced significant expansion. "Our values-based culture, cross-practice collaboration and commitment to working hard and playing nice, continues to attract top talent at all levels," said Peter Finn, Founding Partner, Finn

Partners. "The senior leaders who joined us last year in health, sustainability, integrated marketing, consumer and financial services made significant contributions to our growth and, with our senior leaders across our global network, will support our trajectory moving forward." Finn continued to be recognized with industry awards, including being the first general market PR firm ever to be honored with the New York Urban League's Champions of Diversity award for its Actions Speak Louder Diversity and Inclusion initiative. "Our 800 staff globally across 19 offices in the US, Europe and Asia, continues to deliver breakthrough campaigns rooted in analytics and insights and powered by strategy and creativity," continued Finn.

FISH CONSULTING

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

Founded in 2004, Fish is a national PR agency supporting communications strategies for a variety of nationally recognized brands including Dunkin', Best Western Hotels & Resorts, Neighborly, FOCUS Brands, UFC Gym, Chicken Salad Chick, Regus and more. Our core services and capabilities range from national consumer and business media relations, franchisee recruitment and internal communications to crisis communications, social influencer marketing and grand opening support.

With a maniacal focus on our team, we have been able to successfully attract and retain smart, strategic and creative PR pros, who in turn, produce stellar work for all of our partners. We're incredibly proud of the five Best Places to Work awards we've received over the past year recognizing the magnetic company culture we've built here at the agency. Investing in our people and their well-being has always been a top priority, and it's an honor to have our efforts celebrated at a national and local level by some of the industry's most prestigious rankings including *Inc.*, *PRWeek*, *PR News*, *PROvoke Media* and the *South Florida Business Journal*.

Based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Fish has operations in Dallas, Washington D.C., and London.

FRAZIERHEIBY

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Ann Mulvany, Sr. Partner, Marketing + Operations
Whitney Somerville, Sr. Partner, Client Experience

FrazierHeiby is an award-winning, intelligent communications consultancy based in Columbus, Ohio. In operation since 1983, the team of curious minds, creative thinkers and collaborative partners uses evidence-based communications to guide and support organizations that propel the economy. Specialties include agriculture, energy, manufacturing, healthcare, professional services and economic development.

Rooted in research and inspired by insight, FrazierHeiby creates tailored marketing communications programming that helps drive business objectives. Services include strategic planning, branding and positioning, public relations, social media, marketing services, content, media relations, crisis and reputation management, employee engagement, creative design and measurement.

In early 2020, FrazierHeiby returned to its roots as a female-owned business with president and CEO Lauren Parker, senior partners Ann Mulvany and Whitney Somerville taking over agency operations. With employees in Columbus and New York City, this next generation of FrazierHeiby leadership is reinventing the agency to meet the changing needs of CMOs in the digital age. For more information, please visit www.frazierheiby.com.

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Rick French, Chairman & CEO
David Gwyn, President / Principal
Natalie Best, Chief Operating Officer / Principal

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency. Firmly entrenched among the country's 20 largest PR firms (2020 *O'Dwyer's* Ranking of Top U.S. PR Firms), FWV was winner of the *Bulldog*

Reporter Best PR Agency of 2019. FWV is the only N.C.-based public relations firm to capture National Agency of the Year honors, something it has now done 20 times over the past two decades.

Founded in April 1997, the firm is led by Chairman & CEO Rick French, President David Gwyn and Chief Operating Officer Natalie Best. Among its operating divisions are: FWV Fetching, a pet and veterinary PR and marketing agency based in Tampa; AMP3 PR, a fashion, beauty, luxury and lifestyle PR firm based in New York City; CGPR, an active lifestyle, outdoor, ski, fashion, technology and travel PR and consumer brand marketing agency based in Greater Boston; and Prix Productions, the company's longform content feature and documentary film division, with offices in Raleigh and L.A. FWV employs more than 120 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C. headquarters and other offices around the country.

In addition to ranking FWV 17th nationally in audited annual fee billings, *O'Dwyer's* ranks FWV #1 in the Southeast, a position it has occupied for more than 15 years. Among the top agencies, FWV ranks second in Beauty & Fashion, third in both Entertainment Marketing and Sports, seventh in both Agriculture and Energy, eighth in Purpose/CSR, ninth in Environmental/Sustainability and 10th in Real Estate. The agency's work in Travel & Economic Development, Industrial, Automotive/Transportation, Education, Home Furnishings, Professional Services and Food & Beverage also earned category rankings in the top 20.

FWV has been recognized over 1,000 times with awards on behalf of clients such as Wrangler, Pendleton Whisky, the Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau, ABB, Teen Cancer America, LS Tractor and numerous other industry leading companies and brands.

It has also become one of the nation's go-to agencies for issues management and crisis counseling work, having defended the reputation of dozens of high-profile individuals, institutions, companies and associations.

GREENTARGET GLOBAL GROUP

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Aaron Schoenherr, Founding Partner
John Corey, President & Founding Partner
Laura Miller, Executive VP

Greentarget is a strategic public relations firm that helps professional and financial services organizations create unique positions of authority to participate skillfully in the conversations that matter most to their key stakeholders. Our multi-channel communications strategy empowers firms to increase market share, attract leading talent and achieve a higher purpose.

Founded in Chicago, Greentarget has grown into a world-class team spread across five offices and infused with the same entrepreneurial spirit that led to the firm's creation. Our culture reflects Greentarget's core values: hard work, risk-taking, authenticity, creative thinking and individual and team growth.

We deliver a mix of earned media, content, research, digital and special-situations counsel to help clients communicate and influence through normal business cycles and in times of crisis. This powerful combination positions our firm to elevate the brands and reputations of clients across earned, owned, shared and paid media channels.

Through our proven client engagement process, we empower clients to direct conversations that influence their audiences, drive business objectives and create value.

HAVAS FORMULA

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Michael Olguin, CEO

Founded in 1992, Havas Formula is an award-winning, national public relations agency headquartered in New York, with offices in Los Angeles, Chicago, San Diego, and Miami. Part of Havas, the agency is committed to making a meaningful difference to brands, businesses and people. Havas Formula specializes in general market and Hispanic PR, social/digital and experiential marketing. Its corporate philosophy—Be Brave—stems from the belief that for a brand to truly differentiate itself in the marketplace it must exhibit bravery. The agency's core practice areas include consumer, lifestyle, consumer technology, high-tech, B-to-B, travel/

hospitality and entertainment, with category expertise in food and beverage, retail and restaurants, beer/wine/spirits, sports/leisure, consumer packaged goods, home, and beauty/fashion.

Clients include: Jaguar Land Rover, JPMorgan Chase, Panda Express, Jim Beam, Maui Jim, Wholly Guacamole, Sun-Maid, Schlage, Justin's, Shure, RE/MAX, TurboTax, Golden Boy, Republic Services.

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Lydia Lau, CFO / EVP of Global Operations

Defining communications broadly to include digital, content marketing, thought leadership as well as traditional PR, The Hoffman Agency knows how to differentiate brands and deliver air cover for sales. With heritage in the technology sector, the firm's work today cuts across a range of industries.

While campaigns vary by client and industry, all share one theme: the creation of content that reflects the tenets of storytelling. This means developing narratives that prompt journalists to write and target audiences to read—a far cry from the “corporate speak” that satisfies internal stakeholders. Toward this end, the firm conducts storytelling workshops for internal communicators, executives and employees.

For clients with global needs, the company operates in Asia Pacific, Europe and the United States. Unlike traditional agencies handicapped by their silo structure, The Hoffman Agency applies a collaborative approach to implementing multi-country campaigns. This leverage of content and thinking across geographies ultimately generates better results.

Sample Clients: Axis Communications, Baidu, Blackberry, Cypress, City of Fremont, Flex, KaiOS, Lam Research, Lenovo, Lumileds, Nautilus, NextFlex, Nokia, Nutanix, OSIsoft, Rambus,

Revation, SmartSens, SpinTransfer, SuperMicro, Syniverse and Tealium.

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Hotwire is a global communications consultancy that helps businesses better engage and connect with their customers. From Sydney to San Francisco, we operate with a borderless mindset across 12 locations covering the US, UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Australia, together with a partner network spanning 29 cities around the world.

THE HOYT ORGANIZATION

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The Hoyt Organization, Inc., is a full-service strategic public relations and integrated communications agency that specializes in the development of real estate, architectural & construction, financial and professional services, technology, healthcare and consumer lifestyle programs on a national and regional basis. Based in Southern California, the 30 year-old firm also provides global coverage through its partner agencies in the Public Relations Global Network (PRGN.com). Specialized services include media relations, social media, digital media, content generation programs, media training, and crisis communications.

— Continued on page 72



HUNTER provides an integrated suite of marketing services for Pompeian, now the #1 brand of olive oil in the US, and manages all owned, earned, and paid media. HUNTER was tasked to help Pompeian break away from other olive oil brands and created a 360-degree integrated campaign which repositioned Pompeian as "The Olive Oil People" through digital creative, educating consumers on what makes Pompeian different: its farmers, craftsmanship and quality.

THE HOYT ORGANIZATION

— Continued from page 71

Clients include: Aesthetica Medical, ACE Mentorship Program LA/OC, Auction.com, Auto-gravity.com, Calmwater Capital, CIRCA, CREW-LA, Elevé, Forté Specialty Contractors, Four Season Private Residences (FSLA), Gage Academy of Art (Seattle), Hankey Investment, Heartfulness Institute, HGA Architects & Engineers, Hofer Wysocki, Kennedy Wilson Mountain Real Estate Capital, Los Angeles Headquarters Assn., LYFE Kitchen, Nadel Architects, New Vista Behavioral Health, NxGen, PatientPop, Pinnacle Treatment Centers, Phoenix Realty Group, Quantimetrix, Inc., Rainbow Housing Assistance Corp., Retail Design Collaborative/Studio-111 (RDC-S111), Riaz Capital, South Bay Hospital, South Bay Independent Physicians Medical Group, Inc., Southern California Development Forum, Starpoint Properties, Ten-X, Torrance Memorial Home Health & Hospice, Torrance Memorial Medical Center, Urban Land Institute, Los Angeles District, USC Judith and John Bedrosian Center, USC Lusk Center for Real Estate and Water-ton Investment.

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Grace Leong, CEO
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Gigi Russo and Erin Hanson,
Partners

HUNTER is an award-winning consumer marketing communica-

tions firm with primary offices in New York, Los Angeles and London and a footprint across North America. Beginning with research-driven consumer insights, HUNTER executes strategic, integrated programs that build brand equity, increase engagement and drive measurable business results for consumer products and services. The 130-person firm employs a powerful blend of marketing solutions including strategic planning, social and digital media, talent and influencer engagement, media relations, experiential, multicultural, and content creation and distribution for all platforms and channels to earn consumer attention on behalf of some of the world's best known and most beloved brands.

Founded over 30 years ago with a specialization in food and nutrition, HUNTER has grown into one of the most respected and awarded mid-size marketing communications firms in the country, proudly serving a broad range of esteemed companies and brands across Food + Beverage, Wine + Spirits, Health + Beauty, House + Home, Retail + Ecommerce, and Education.

Our motto is "we earn it," and at Hunter we focus on doing so in three key areas: earning consumer attention, earning client relationships and earning staff dedication. Our creative approach and client service-orientation has led to some of the most enduring client relationships in the business including TABASCO® Pepper Sauce (31 years), 3M (24 years), Diageo (15 years), Church & Dwight (15 years), and Johnson & Johnson (14 years).

ICR

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Established in 1998, ICR partners with companies to execute strategic communications and advisory programs that achieve business goals, build awareness and credibility, and enhance long-term enterprise value. The firm's highly-differentiated service model, which pairs capital markets veterans with senior communications professionals, brings deep sector knowledge and relationships to more than 650 clients in approximately 20 industries. ICR's healthcare practice operates under the Westwicke brand (www.westwicke.com). Today, ICR is one of the largest and most experienced independent communications and advisory firms in North America, maintaining offices in New York, Norwalk, Boston, Baltimore, San Francisco, San Diego and Beijing. ICR also advises on capital markets transactions through ICR Capital, LLC.

Clients: Abbott Laboratories, Adamas Pharmaceuticals, Beyond Meat, BJ's Wholesale, Boot Barn, Brainstorm Cell Therapeutics, Capri Holdings, Cardlytics, Inc., Cardtronics, CareDx, Inc., Chunghwa Telecom Co. Ltd., Colgate-Palmolive, Darden Restaurants, Green Dot, Freshpet, Genuine Parts Co., Harman, Heidrick & Struggles, Herbalife Ltd., The Hershey Company, Mobileye Inc., Jamieson Laboratories Ltd., Knopp Biosciences, Legg Mason & Co., LLC, lululemon athletica, MongoDB, Inc., New Relic, Osram, Paramount Group, Inc., Peloton, Planet Fitness, Red Hat, Inc., Rite Aid, Shake Shack, Starwood Property Trust, Tencent, Tilray, Waitr, Welltower, Workiva and Zoom.

IMRE

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Dave Imre, CEO & Founder
Mark Eber, Partner & President
Crystalyn Stuart, Partner
Jeff Smokler, Partner & President

Earning a seat at the strategic table. Fiercely independent agency, imre, had the largest growth percentage among the top 80 firms on our annual listing, up 52 percent to \$33.3M in 2019.

CEO, Dave Imre, attributes the



imre Founder and CEO Dave Imre.

agency's 2019 growth to an investment in people and reimagining across the agency. "Growth like this can only happen when you retain and attract exceptional talent. That starts with a company culture people want to brag about," Imre said.

In 2019, the agency brought in 48 new employees across all functions of its business, with the large majority joining across the Creative team and its Creators practice (Digital/Social, PR, User Experience, and Analytics & Reporting.) It also added Shinee Cohen, EVP of Consumer, to its Executive Committee.

Alongside talent, Imre singled out the agency's Strategy & Insights team as the key differentiator. "Empathy & Optimism are the twin values that power our culture, but the secret sauce is how they're represented in our approach to client briefs. That team has leveled up our work for long time clients like John Deere and Travelers, and we're beginning to see it bring new clients into the fold," he said.

In 2019, the agency recorded a tremendous 71% win rate across new business, which includes adding giants like GSK, Pfizer, Bausch & Lomb, and Major League Soccer to its client roster.

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— Continued on page 74

WHEN EVERYTHING IS ON THE LINE WHO DO YOU WANT REPRESENTING YOU?

“The City’s Most Prominent Crisis-Management Firm.” – *New York Times*

“The crew from the television magazine is banging on your door. You can have the security guard throw them out and know they’ll trash you. Or you can sit down with them and figure that out of the hour you give them, they’ll use only 40 seconds on air. And those 40 seconds will make you look very guilty. Better solution, call Mike Sitrick.” – *Forbes Magazine*

“The Winston Wolf of public relations had arrived. Wolf, you will recall, was the fixer in *Pulp Fiction*. Played by Harvey Keitel, he washed away assassins’ splatter and gore. Sitrick cleans up the messes of companies, celebrities and others, and he’s a strategist who isn’t averse to treating PR as combat.”—*Fortune Magazine*

“Now (they) have hired Michael Sitrick, whose Los Angeles (based) public relations firm is known for going atomic on opponents, using “truth squads,” “wheel-of-pain” tactics and high profile journalists (to write profiles...That’s unbelievable (said the head of the PR firm for the opposing entity). This is the heavy artillery.” – *BusinessWeek*

TechCrunch: “When it comes to handling crisis situations in particular, Sitrick is as well regarded as they come.” “We’ve been in a tricky position a number of times and the thinking (in Silicon Valley) has historically been to ignore reporters, says one Bay Area tech founder. “Sitrick takes the opposite approach. You’re made to get into the trenches and engage.”

“You cannot put your firm’s interests ahead of the client’s interests,” **Michael Sitrick as quoted in the *New York Times*.**

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INKHOUSE

Continued from page 72

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InkHouse is an integrated PR agency for innovative thinkers, creators and leaders who believe in the power of stories to effect positive change. We translate complex ideas into accessible stories that move innovation and culture forward. We were founded in 2007 and are one of the fastest growing agencies in the country. Find us in the real world in Boston, New York and San Francisco, and in the digital one at www.inkhouse.com.



InkHouse CEO and Co-Founder Beth Monaghan.

Client list: Blume Global, Carbon Black, Cockroach Labs, Fuze, Gigaamon, Harvard Graduate School Inrupt, Inc., InterSystems, Lendlease Development, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, MindEdge, Neo4j, Nextthink, Nucleus Research, Nutanix, Okta, PatientKeeper, Raytheon, Recorded Future, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, Rockland Trust, Thermo Fisher, Wasabi Technologies, Inc. and Wistia.



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

J PUBLIC RELATIONS

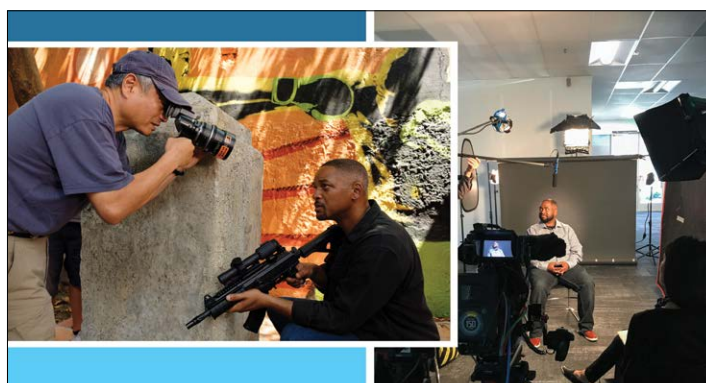
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Jamie Sigler O'Grady and Sarah Evans, Partners

J Public Relations (JPR) is a global communications, influencer management and social media agency specializing in travel, destination, consumer, real estate, well-being and sustainable brands. With four offices in New York City, London, Los Angeles and San Diego, along with additional locations in Toronto, Denver, Nashville and Arizona, JPR is a trusted leader in integrated media relations and brand strategy, brand launches, trend forecasting, guest programming, brand partnerships, experiential activations, influencer engagement, crisis communications and social media strategy. Always innovating, JPR was the first agency in its space to launch a podcast in 2018, *Priority Status*.

Established in 2005, JPR has consistently risen to become one of the world's fastest growing agencies. The company's global portfolio includes clients in the U.S., U.K. and throughout Europe, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai, New Zealand, Asia and more. The agency represents destinations such as North Carolina and Utah as well as worldwide brands including Relais & Châteaux, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Vail Resorts Hospitality, Vail Mountains and multiple Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts.

For the past four years in a row, JPR has been listed on the Observer's annual "PR Power 50" as one of the country's most powerful PR firms and in 2019 Crain's "Best Places to Work in New York City." The agency also garnered "Top



Karbo Communications managed the creation of a customer video highlighting how client Penguin Computing's technology brought Gemini Man director Ang Lee's vision to life.

Places to Work" by *PR News* and "Agency of the Year" by *Bulldog Reporter* in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success. JPR's client campaigns have won multiple HSMIA Adrian Awards and named a finalist in The Shorty Awards.

Sampling of clients: Adare Manor, Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort, Hotel Chateau du Grand-Lucé, Chewton Glen, Cliveden House, Discover Baja California, Dream Hotel Hollywood, Four Seasons Resort Lana'i, Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Great Wolf Lodge, Helena Bay, Hotel del Coronado, Iconic Luxury Hotels, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, InterContinental, Washington DC—The Wharf, L'Auberge de Sedona, Perry Lane Hotel, Rancho La Puerta, Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa, The Palms and The Shore Club and Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal.

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Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock, Inc. is a top-10 strategic communications consulting firm devoted to helping the nation's health systems and health services companies nav-

igate confidently through change, challenge and opportunity. With offices in Nashville and Chicago, Jarrard Inc. has guided leaders at more than 500 healthcare organizations across the country through high-stakes moments, including leading communications and political strategy for more than \$60 billion in announced M&A. Our team of former journalists, political operatives and healthcare executives works alongside every client to build a custom strategy that delivers measurable results in the areas of M&A, issues and crisis management, strategic positioning opportunities and systemic change management. For more information, visit jarrardinc.com.

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Julie Karbo, Founder & CEO

Are you looking for a respected and inventive global agency with a track record of delivering revenues, industry leading stature, partners and funding? Karbo Com's services combine successful communications and content with the newest in digital marketing. Startups to global *Fortune* 500 enterprises trust Karbo Communications for our industry knowledge, strategic thinking, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. Everything we do is designed to create and amplify market leadership and help companies out-perform competitors.

Unlike most other agencies, Karbo Com ensures client teams are always led by senior people on a day-to-day basis. You won't get bench players. A varied and multi-talented team synthesizes the worlds of PR,



Konnect Agency: Carmen Hernandez, Sabina Gault and Amanda Bialek.

journalism and digital marketing—with a Silicon Valley ethos. Our teams have ushered in technologies such as the cloud, SaaS, AI, the Internet of Things, data analytics, mobile, security, networking, augmented reality and wearables.

We've worked extensively with both B2B and consumer tech companies ranging from small startups to global, billion-dollar brands, including: Apple, Cisco, Hootsuite, eBay, Equinix, Fog World Congress, RTI, GoDaddy, Intel, Juniper Networks, TIBCO, the IoT World Conference, The National Geographic app, NerdWallet, and Oracle.

Clients include: 500 Startups, Alpha Group, Harmony Helper, Hootsuite, In Loco, The Lazaridis Institute, Logitech, Penguin Computing, RTI (Real-Time Innovations), Subtext and TDK.

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Kivvit is one of *O'Dwyer's* top-ranked and fastest-growing independent strategic communications and public affairs firms in the United States. Our motto is "Insights Drive Results" because the heart of our work integrates cutting-edge data tools and technology to create impactful strategies and measurable outcomes for our clients.

At Kivvit, we don't have silos. We integrate our full suite of strategic communications and data-driven advertising capabilities in order to run hyper-targeted campaigns that take advantage of our wide-ranging expertise. Our relentless focus on

measurement means that our work utilizes resources in the most efficient fashion, maximizing results and achieving our clients' goals.

We are committed to building the agency of the future and have invested in creating a best-in-class culture that fosters collaboration, creativity, and innovation across our teams.

Our success delivering on these priorities has earned Kivvit significant recognition in 2020 as Public Affairs Firm of the Year (Reed Awards), Most Innovative Agency (Bulldog PR Awards), a top 5 Digital PR Agency in North America and a Best Agency to Work For (Provoke). We also lead *O'Dwyer's* national rankings across multiple categories, including #1 for Non Profits, #2 for Energy, #2 for Real Estate, #2 for Corporate Social Responsibility, and #4 for Education.

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Carmen Hernandez, EVP, Digital Strategy
Sabina Gault, Founder & CEO



LCI receiving its award this year from PRSA San Francisco as the best small agency of the year in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Amanda Bialek, EVP, Public Relations

Konnect Agency is a fully integrated agency that represents pre-eminent brands in the food & beverage, lifestyle, family, and franchise spaces. For more than a decade, Konnect has created unrivaled holistic brand programs that support the vision and growth strategies of the innovative businesses they serve. Utilizing elements of earned and paid media, social media, digital strategies, marketing, and experiential activations, Konnect delivers distinguished campaigns with long-lasting impact. Made up of a team of over 40 communications and digital experts, Konnect Agency works with national and international clients via offices in Los Angeles, New York, Denver, CO, and Austin, TX. Clients include Lyft, Dave & Buster's, KRAVE Jerky, Sky Zone, Mrs. Fields and ONE Brands, to name a few.

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Jordan Hoyer, General Counsel
Michelle Olson, Partner, Auto & Mobility Chair
Matt Jackson, Partner, Food & Beverage Chair
Mike Houston, Partner, IR & Capital Markets Chair
Joe DiBenedetto, Managing Director, Education and Social Impact Chair
Heather Lombardini, Managing Director, Public Affairs Chair

Lambert & Co. is Michigan's top-ranked PR firm and a top-10 investor relations firm in the U.S.

with offices in Grand Rapids, Detroit, Lansing, Phoenix and New York City. Posting more than 20 years of growth, Lambert is a top-50 agency in the U.S. and top-10 in Automotive & Mobility, Education and IR/Financial Communications (*O'Dwyer's*) as well as the #4 PR firm for M&A and private equity (*The Deal*). Lambert also made three acquisitions in the past year, adding a Phoenix PR office, New York investor relations firm Casteel Schoenborn and Michigan ad and branding agency Fairly Painless. Lambert has earned firm of the year honors from *PR Week* and *PRNews* and is the reigning winner of the Sabre Crisis Campaign of the Year. Lambert is also a global partner in PROI Worldwide, the largest partnership of independent PR firms in the world spanning 120 cities on five continents.

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David Landis, CEO
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Named America's #1 PR Agency (Small Firm) (*Ragan's*), the #1 Healthcare PR Agency in America (*Ragan's*) and the firm PRSA San Francisco named "Agency of the Year," San Francisco-based Landis Communications Inc. (LCI) is celebrating 30 years in business. LCI also is a two-time Gold Quill IABC Award winner, a PRSA Silver Anvil national award winner and has been named a top U.S. Social Media, Reputation Management and Media Relations Agency by TopPRagencies.com.

LCI is an integrated public relations, digital/social media and marketing communications agency that specializes in healthcare, real estate, environmental, consumer, consumer technology, technology, educational, B2B, corporate and institutional public relations campaigns that help support each business' identified goals. Through its Promised Results® return-on-investment program, LCI provides tangible metrics for your PR dol-

Continued on page 76

LANDIS COMMUNICATIONS

— Continued from page 75

lars. Among LCI's services: public relations, marketing, content marketing, social media, digital strategies and marketing, advertising, email marketing, video production, crisis communications, media and presentation training and more. Clients include: Velodyne Lidar, Sutter Health, Evoco Labs, Raycop vacuums, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, UCSF, Global Alzheimer's Platform, Walmart, Match.com, California Bank & Trust, Brain Health Registry, Carrington College, Save the Redwoods League, Peninsula Open Space Trust, MetLife, Whole Foods Market and more. LCI is a proud member of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, is an official Corporate Diversity Supplier and is certified as a Small Business Enterprise by the City of San Francisco. LCI is the San Francisco member agency of the Public Relations Global Network, with 50 affiliate agencies worldwide.

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LaunchSquad is an award-winning public relations and creative communications agency with offices in San Francisco, New York, Boston and Chicago. LaunchSquad is a group of dynamic storytellers who build meaningful brands by creating and sharing stories of change-the-world companies.

LaunchSquad takes a customized, holistic approach to storytelling. Over the past two

decades, they have built long-lasting, powerhouse brands. Much like the disruptors they represent, they like to do things differently. LaunchSquad's expertise spans both consumer-facing and B2B clients in a variety of industries including consumer technology, enterprise technology, entertainment and media, e-commerce, education, gaming, finance, fashion, retail, energy and more.

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LaVoieHealthScience partners with leading health and science brands to build value for their companies, attract capital and reach key stakeholders through integrated communications, access and marketing. With two decades of industry-tested counsel to more than 375 clients, we provide public relations, investor relations and strategic consulting to build recognition and increase sales and value for health science innovations.

The agency has received over 50 awards in recognition of the work it has done helping health and science innovators, from development to launch and commercialization, to connect with key stakeholders. We help advance health and science innovations by providing specialized thinking to clients throughout the company and product life cycle building innovation and value for humankind. We offer direct connections to media, investors, partners, advocacy groups, and KOLs. We are focused on building trust and long-term relationships based on the quality of the work that we deliver. In January 2020, LHS and Omnicom Public Relations Group (OPRG), a division of Omnicom Group (NYSE: OMC), formed a strategic alliance to bring global clients a broader set of integrated health- and science-experienced teams.

LAWLOR MEDIA GROUP INC.

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Norah Lawlor, Founder & CEO

Lawlor Media Group is a full-service, Public Relations and Digital Marketing Agency based in New York City, with over twenty years experience in successfully meeting the diverse needs of corporations, organizations and individuals.

Lawlor Media Group combines a strategic approach coupled with an out-of-the-box creativity resulting in a successful track record of delivering Client campaigns and events for a Clientele encompassing the hospitality & travel, literary, fashion, film, real estate, retail, beauty and entertainment industries, as well as a number of personalities, philanthropic foundations and charitable organizations.

Lawlor Media Group's business approach is client-centered with Clients receiving individual high-level attention throughout the relationship, supported by a PR campaign developed and implemented specific to each company, person or brands requirements.

Lawlor Media Group's expertise covers the spectrum of public relations capabilities — from branding, strategic marketing, buzz building, crisis management, investor relations and political communications, underpinned by long-standing relationships with print, digital and social media outlets and influencers.

Led by Founder and Principal Norah Lawlor, Lawlor Media Group represents clients in the hospitality & travel, literary, fashion, film, real estate, retail, beauty and nightlife & entertainment industries, as well as a number of philanthropists, foundations and charity benefits.

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Lou Rena Hammond, Founder
Stephen Hammond, CEO

Lou Hammond Group (LHG) is an award-winning firm specializing in the key industries of travel, economic development, destinations, culinary/spirits, real estate, life-



Marketing Maven CEO and President Lindsey Carnett.

style, and technology. With offices in New York, Charleston, Denver, Houston, Miami and Los Angeles, the agency has 40 employees offering brand development, public relations, digital strategy, social media management and analysis, creative programming, and marketing strategy.

For over three decades, LHG has been an industry leader providing superior, results-driven services to clients around the globe. Founded by industry trailblazer Lou Hammond, the agency takes pride in remaining fiercely independent and departing from business-as-usual. LHG continues to grow with an emphasis on digital, social, design, advertising and branding in an ever-evolving media landscape. With quality and trust as guiding principles, LHG has developed a proven yet agile and strategic approach earning it recognition as one of the nation's most award-winning marketing and communications firms.

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Lindsey Carnett, CEO & President

With offices in Los Angeles and New York City, Marketing Maven's combination of PR, social media, influencer marketing and market research 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.

Named to the 2018 and 2017 Inc. 5000 List of Fastest Growing Com-

panies in America and *Entrepreneur* magazine's 2016 Entrepreneur 360 List as one of the Most Entrepreneurial Companies in America, their services aid national marketing campaigns and product launches with reputation management, organic SEO tracking, competitive analysis reports and online product reviews to help increase revenue.

Marketing Maven is a federally recognized Native American Owned 8(a) and WOSB certified company. We are also a certified Small Business (SB) with the California Department of General Services (DGS) and a certified Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) with the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC).

Specialties include: Multicultural, beauty/fashion, professional services, travel/hospitality, home furnishings, financial PR/investor relations, healthcare, food & beverage, entertainment/sports, technology, environmental/public affairs clients and social media.

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Scott Signore, CEO & Principal
Patty Barry, Principal
Mandy Mladenoff, President

Matter is a Brand Elevation Agency that unifies PR, video services, creative services and digital marketing to create strategic, content-rich communications campaigns that inspire action and build value. Founded in 2003, with seven offices spanning North America and 200 employees, we work with

the world's most innovative companies across high-technology, healthcare, consumer technology and consumer markets, from start-ups and nonprofits with focused needs to well-known corporations.



CEO of Matter, Scott Signore.

We are experts in storytelling. That means we are laser-focused on getting a client's message out and heard by the right audiences, in the right places. Our strategic communications programs maximize earned, owned, shared and paid media to tell—and show—credible brand stories.

We have in-house graphic design and web development capabilities as well as video and live broadcast services for projects big and small. Our creative, video and digital marketing services groups work hand-in-hand with the PR teams to create high-quality assets to support campaigns. Our digital marketing capabilities amplify brand stories to increase reach and ROI. Our teams understand how a campaign can be brought to life across multiple platforms and mediums, and the interplay between the mix. We understand how to elevate any brand.

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Patrick McCabe, President
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Like a stone meeting water, effective communications expand to reach and motivate many audiences. Washington, DC-based McCabe Message Partners helps clients create their own ripple effect. Focusing solely on health and issues that affect it, agency leaders bring experience in journalism, market research, public policy, consumer advocacy, corporate communications, and non-profit management. McCabe Message Partners offers the expertise and professionalism of a large agency with the warmth and passion of a small business.

MWWPR

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Thirty-three-years young, MWWPR is among the world's leading independent, integrated PR agencies with nine offices across the US and the UK. Powered by data and guided by insights, intellect and human instincts, the agency leans heavily into a digitally-led, content-driven approach. Its mission is to ignite influence and impact to help organizations matter more to those who matter most. With dedicated insights, strategy,

data and analytics, digital and content and creative teams, MWWPR's expertise spans Consumer Lifestyle Marketing, Corporate Communications and Reputation Management, Public Affairs, Issues & Crisis Management, LGBTQ+, Technology, Sports & Entertainment, B2B, Food & Beverage and Health & Wellness. To learn more about MWWPR, visit <http://www.mww.com> or follow us on social @MWW_PR.

NOVITAS COMMUNICATIONS

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Novitas Communications is a full-service and award-winning public relations firm located in Denver offering media relations, issue management, crisis communications, strategic marketing, and public education campaigns to clients globally. Founded in 2008, Novitas helps clients craft and implement communications campaigns that influence public opinion, enhance brand recognition, and keep stakeholders informed. Novitas has traditionally worked with companies in banking, data centers, education, healthcare, oil and gas, real estate, technology and transportation, among other industries.

Whether it's a no-notice call for a pressing media engagement or a long-term strategic plan to enhance brand awareness, our clients' priorities are our priorities, and we deliver. We have built a reputation since our founding of doing right by our clients and we believe that

— Continued on page 78



The McCabe Message Partners team.



The Novitas team and the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce judging committee celebrate Novitas being named a finalist in the women-owned business category.

NOVITAS

Continued from page 77

integrity should be the cornerstone of every business or organization.

Novitas is proud to be the only Colorado affiliate of the Public Relations Global Network's invitation-only network. Through our PRGN membership, Novitas Communications has a global footprint.

Novitas isn't just a public relations firm, Novitas is truly an extension of each of its clients' businesses.

PADILLA

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Matt Kucharski, President

Padilla is an independently operated, globally resourced public relations and communication company with offices across the United States. The agency builds, grows and protects brands and reputations worldwide by creating purposeful connections with the people who matter most through public relations, advertising, digital and social marketing, investor relations and brand strategy. Padilla includes the brand consultancy of Joe Smith, the food and nutrition experts at FoodMinds, and the research authorities at SMS Research Advisors. Clients include 3M, Avocados From Mexico, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cargill Animal Nutrition, Dole Food Company, Mayo Clinic, Prosciutto di Parma, Rockwell Automation, Sanofi Pasteur, U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and Winnebago Industries. Padilla is an AVENIR GLOBAL company and is a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, a partnership of 132 independently owned partner offices in 115 cities on six continents. Connect with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

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PAN Communications is a leading integrated marketing and PR agency servicing B2B tech and healthcare brands. Recently named "Tech Agency of the Year" and "Best Mid-Sized Agency to Work For" by *Holmes Report* in 2018, the firm has office locations in Boston, San Francisco, New York, Orlando and London.

PAN moves ideas by creating compelling stories, driving intent and influencing markets across all forms of media. The firm offers the agility and personalized service of a mid-size agency while leveraging national and international relationships to manage large scale communications programs for brands such as SAP, Radial, MediaMath, Toast, Cogito and athenahealth. PAN strives to help today's modern marketers by integrating a combination of services to better engage with target audiences and move markets.

Connected Content—Creative Storytelling—Results that Matter!

Clients include: 8x8, Absolute Software, Amdocs, App Annie, athenahealth, Bazaarvoice, BMC, ByMiles, Citrix, CloudBees, CyberX, GetWellHealth, GreatCall, Health Dialog, Homemade, Igloo, MediaMath, Nice, NTT Data, Outsystems, Quantarix, Quorum Software, Radial, Rapid7, SAP, Sift, Software AG, Toast, Vibepay and WhiteOps.

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Peppercomm is an award-winning strategic, integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York City with offices in San Francisco and London. The firm combines 25 award-winning years of expertise

serving blue chip and breakout clients with forward-thinking new service offerings and the freshness of a start-up. This unique mix of experience and energy attracts and empowers teams with a creative edge, drive and a passion for promoting, protecting and connecting clients in a fast-changing marketplace.

Peppercomm operates on a different wavelength. We have a unique approach to integrated communications and marketing driven by the time-tested tenets of comedy. Research has proven that laughter changes how our minds work, making us more aware, better focused, calmer and more creative. It also makes us better listeners and better storytellers. In our 24/7/365 always-on world where inflection points come fast and furious, the Peppercomm Way helps us all think differently and produce the breakthrough work that drives business results for clients.

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Prosek Partners is among the largest independent public relations firms in the U.S., and one of the few domestic, mid-size firms that offers global capabilities through its London office and international network. We deliver an unexpected level of passion, creativity and marketing savvy to the financial and business-to-business sectors. Our "Unboxed Communications" approach brings breakthrough ideas and unmatched results to every client engagement.

- We are a rare hybrid; a corporate communications firm with a fully integrated, top-ranked deal shop and a comprehensive investor relations practice inside.

- Through our gateway office in London and network of partner agencies, we can deliver for clients in major business and financial centers around the world.

- We are an "Army of Entrepreneurs™." Our creative, entrepreneurial culture attracts and retains the most talented professionals.

Employees develop an "owner's mindset," delighting clients with top-quality service, fresh ideas and flawless execution.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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Public Communications Inc. provides strategic counsel to clients, whether they're dealing with the most serious and complex issue, a national awareness campaign or the splashiest of events - and we've been doing so for more than 50 years. PCI is a Woman Business Enterprise (WBE).

Our job is to safeguard reputations and recommend the right way for clients to communicate so what they have to say is heard and influences their audiences. We are an integrated communications firm, large enough to provide all communications services a client might need but the right size so that the firm's officers are directly involved, hands-on, in each client's program.

PCI is a founding partner of the WORLDCOM Public Relations Group, the world's leading partnership of independently owned public relations counseling firms with more offices in more cities and countries than any multinational firm.

We have a strong concentration of business in healthcare, conservation/environment, education, culture and destinations, and business clients from tech to non-profits, entrepreneurs to advocacy groups nationally, regionally and locally. Specialties in community engagement for municipalities.

Our clients trust us and stay with us. Our business grows primarily through referrals and word of mouth. Most of our clients have been with us five years or more; 15 and 20+ year relationships are common (and valued).

Our size and the depth of our staff enable us to manage the most sophisticated assignments while allowing us to move quickly, be

flexible and change course when it makes sense.

Select clients: AIDS Foundation of Chicago, American Association of Diabetes Educators, American Epilepsy Society, American Society of Anesthesiologists, Chicago Academy of Sciences/Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago's First Lady Cruises/Mercury, Chicago's Skyline Cruiseline, Chimp Haven, Cradles to Crayons, Howard Brown Health Center, Georgia Aquarium, Giving USA, International Crane Foundation, Lowry Park Zoological Society of Tampa, National Society of Genetic Counselors, Northwestern University Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, Option Care, Inc., The Marine Mammal Center, The Nature Conservancy and University of Illinois at Chicago

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Society has always been propelled forward by technology. There is a growing expectation, however, that innovation must serve humanity—there must be a higher moral purpose than innovating only because we can.

We believe that the complex challenges we face as a global society can only be tackled by embracing creativity and innovation fueled by purpose. Every company in every category is in some way using technology to sustainably change the way we work, live and play.

At Racepoint Global (RPG), our mission is simple: We help our clients navigate and succeed in the new communications landscape by shaping the conversations that matter. We live at the intersection of conversation and innovation and we serve clients with channel-agnostic communications strategies that engage their target audiences in authentic and meaningful ways. Our work with clients establishes competitive differentiation and drives business impact.

RPG is an independent integrated communications agency that combines the most powerful aspects of public relations, marketing and advertising to deliver breakthrough stories and results. Clients—from *Fortune* 50 corporations to startups—value RPG's disciplined,

earned-first approach to storytelling that builds brands, supports growth and protects reputation. RPG is headquartered in Boston, MA, with additional offices in London, New York, Raleigh and San Francisco.

Capabilities: Media & Analyst Relations, Digital Marketing, Influencer Engagement, Strategy & Comms. Planning, Creative Strategy, Video & Content Production, Media Training, Paid Media, Crisis Communications, Public Affairs, Event Management & Support, Measurement & Analytics

RBB COMMUNICATIONS

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Christine Barney, CEO & Managing Partner
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rbb Communications champions breakout brands with integrated marketing, digital and public relations strategies that engage stakeholders. rbb's employee-driven workplace empowers its staff to deliver strategic insights and innovative campaigns that inspire action and deliver bottom line results. Recognized multiple times as "Agency of the Year" and "Best Agency to Work For," rbb's 80+ professional and creative staff excels in PR, Digital, Creative and Advertising. Specialty practices include consumer, travel, health, entertainment, education, professional services, luxury, real estate and B2B. Breakout Brand clients include: Hilton, AMResorts, CINCH Home Services, Disney on Ice, Codina Partners, First Service Residential, Bank of America, DHL, Suffolk, Virgin Voyages, Brown & Brown, Chopin, Nozin, Cleveland Clinic and The Related Group. With a presence in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Los Angeles and New York, the firm also has international reach across more than 100 cities in 50 countries through its partnership in PROI Worldwide, the largest global network of independent communications agencies.

ROSICA COMMUNICATIONS

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Chris Rosica, President

Rosica Communications is an integrated PR, marketing and digital agency that focuses on our clients' business objectives, imperatives, and goals. We start with strategy and assist our client-partners by honing their positioning and messaging, which impacts all internal and external communications, thought leadership, and marketing.

Founded in 1980, the firm serves a diverse healthcare, nonprofit, education, and food clientele. Our PR and communications capabilities include positioning and messaging, media relations, social media marketing, marcom and PR strategy, thought leadership, crisis communications, influencer marketing, content development/marketing, corporate communications, cause marketing, direct marketing, and media training.

Rosica's social media services include strategy, management, branding, content development, optimization, and follower acquisition. Our online marketing team, based in New Windsor, NY, is a Google Certified Partner with 20 full-time employees and specializes in SEO, online reputation/reviews management, online advertising (PPC and social), website development, and WordPress security.

We craft compelling, authentic stories and messaging then effectively disseminate our client-partners' good news while supporting their sales and communications goals. Our process includes:

- Strategically identifying our clients' business and marketing goals/objectives
- Identifying target audiences, influencers, and key opinion leaders
- Honing the positioning, story, and key messages—tailoring messages to each audience
- Developing KPIs for our integrated and creative PR, social media, and internal/external communications programs
- Proactively communicating with clients
- Aggressively securing results, evaluating these against pre-determined KPIs
- Repurposing and leveraging content and PR coverage to augment SEO, sales activities, online reputation, tradeshow marketing, analyst relations, and direct marketing.

Clients include: Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey, Easterseals, Encompass Group, Exergen, National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS), Newark Public Library, Newark Trust for Education, NJ Sharing Network, Open Up Resources, Salvation Army NJ Division, TriStar Products and others.

SOURCECODE COMMUNICATIONS

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Rebecca Honeyman, Co-Founder and Managing Partner
Greg Mondschein, Co-Founder and Managing Partner

Based in New York, SourceCode Communications is an award-winning communications marketing agency. Launched in 2017 by technology PR industry veterans Greg Mondschein and Rebecca Honeyman, our mission is to evolve public relations and communications marketing through a steady dose of humanity, technology, and data. We focus on delivering measurable business impact to brands in five major sectors: Consumer & Lifestyle Technology, Financial Technology, Mobile, Cloud & Telecoms, Insights & Engagement, and Enterprise Technology.

The interpretable path to knowledge drives our programs, which is why we remain fiercely committed to our narrative process: The SourceCode Storyboard. Informed by this approach, we build the award-winning, data-driven and engaging campaigns we're best known for. Recently shortlisted for *PRWeek's* 2020 U.S. Awards shortlist for Outstanding Boutique Agency, we are the *Holmes Report* 2019 New Agency of the Year and *PRNews's* Best Place to Work and Small Agency of the Year.

SPM COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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SPM is the creative, no-jerks, above-and-beyond PR, social, influencer and reputation management agency where people come first, and great work wins the day.

Since 1999, SPM has partnered with food, restaurant, retail, apparel and lifestyle brands to tell their stories in a rapidly changing media and social landscape. We think critically about clients' business and proactively find solutions that make a measurable impact on their bottom line. We've worked with emerging brands to help take them national

— Continued on page 80

SPM COMMUNICATIONS

— Continued from page 79

and with established national brands that have important stories to tell to make a deeper impact.

Through our robust crisis communications practice, we've helped clients prepare for and manage through some 4,000 crises, from this year's coronavirus pandemic to foodborne illnesses, data breaches, product recalls and more. SPM's media protocol is currently deployed in more than a thousand restaurant and retail locations across the nation to help quickly escalate problems out of locations so they can get back to business.

Our work integrates earned media, influencer partnerships, events, community outreach and paid social media to create campaigns that target the right audiences, increase brand awareness and meet business objectives. We also partner with agencies to amplify advertising messages through traditional and new media outreach and placements.

We go above and beyond in all we do. We put our people first. We do what's right. We foster mutual respect. We build and protect our clients' brands. We listen intently and deliver results that matter.

Current Clients: Big Shots Golf, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas, Bruegger's Bagels, Cicis Pizza, Gold's Gym, Haggard Clothing Co., Kirkland's, Leslie's Pool Supplies, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Pollo Campesero, RW Garcia, Velvet Taco, Taco Cabana and Travis Frederick's Blocking Out Hunger

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Stanton Communications, Inc., is a strategic public relations firm providing counsel and program implementation to clients across the globe. We are fully independent and wholly dedicated to advancing

our clients' business goals through creative communication.

For over 30 years, the firm has enjoyed a reputation for combining serious strategic thinking with service excellence, and for blending thoughtfulness and strategy with tremendous agility. We build our teams with a balance of talent so clients benefit from the best we have to offer.

Among our clients are some of the world's most successful organizations in consumer products, travel and lifestyle, professional societies and industry associations. We provide a range of services from issue communication and public affairs to strategic communication planning, reputation enhancement, marketing communication, crisis mitigation and spokesperson preparation.

On behalf of our clients, Stanton Communications has won more than 50 industry awards including multiple Silver Anvils, the public relations profession's highest honor and Gold Quill Awards of Excellence, the premier award presented by the International Association of Business Communicators. We also have been named the Best Small Agency in America by *The Holmes Report* and one of the Best Places to Work by the *Washington Business Journal*.

Clients Include: American Assn. for Public Opinion Research, American Nurses Assn., American Statistical Assn., Asbury Communities, International Coaching Federation, International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis, Kelly Insurance Group, Live! Casino & Hotel, Railway Supply Institute, and W. L. Gore & Associates.

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Outcome-Driven. Beyond services, industry practices and even results, come to us if you have a specific outcome you're trying to achieve. We'll use our reputation marketing suite of services—public relations, digital/social marketing, demand generation and creative services—to deliver. We feature four—Thought Leadership, Growth, Engagement and

Valuation. And yes, there are nuances to each of these, but most of our clients land on one of these outcomes as part of their strategic objective. Have your own outcome, great. Serve it up and we'll give you our honest take on whether we can achieve it. Beyond outcomes, we connect with clients who have something to tell about their ambitions—Disruptive Forces, Category Pioneers, Stealth Leaders and Wonder Women. So ask yourself, what's your story?

As far as experience goes, we have eight practices, six ranked nationally—technology, health, financial services, food & beverage, government, lifestyle and environment. Franchising, the agency's eighth practice, is in an unranked category, but it has featured brands such as Nathan's Famous, Paris Baguette, TCBY, Johnny Rockets, Corner Bakery Café and Moe's Southwest Grill. Based in Atlanta's urban westside, the firm operates Groovy Studios, a creative arm that offers graphic design, web services, content development and brand identity. Since its inception, Groovy Studios has received more than 60 creative awards. Trevelino/Keller also owns and runs the Winepreneurs.Club, an initiative that brings together entrepreneurs and small batch winemakers to sip, taste and connect each quarter. The firm's Start-Opia platform houses its technology and entrepreneur endeavors that establish it as a first mover in the region with support for Atlanta Tech Village, Atlanta Tech Angels, Tech Alpharetta, Keiretsu Forum, Launch Pad2X and Raise Forum. Client work features a mix of publicly traded, middle market and emerging companies, including Belgard, Carvana, Ciox, Interface, Sita, SOC Telemed and Nathan's Famous.

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From left: Vested President & Co-Founder Binna Kim, CEO & Co-Founder Dan Simon and COO & Co-Founder Ishviene Arora.

Dan Simon, CEO & Co-Founder
Binna Kim, Pres. & Co-Founder
Ishviene Arora, COO & Co-Founder
Amer Roberts, CEO of Prof Svcs.
Elsbeth Rothwell, CEO, Vested UK

Vested is an award-winning, global integrated communications firm that is at the front of the rapidly evolving financial sector. The agency's approach merges deep financial expertise with creativity and an obsessive commitment to creating value for clients through paid, earned, shared and owned channels. Vested works with brands across financial services, ranging from newer fintechs to institutional firms. Its clients include American Express, Morgan Stanley, Morningstar, Bloomberg, Grayscale, SEI, Scotiabank and RBC Capital Markets, among others.

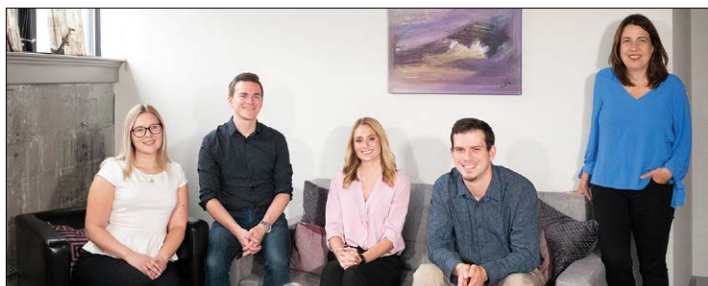
The agency, which has offices in New York, San Francisco, London and Toronto, is a founding member of the Global Fintech PR Network and operates an investment group, Vested Ventures. In 2019, it made a strategic investment in PR/content firm Caliber Corporate Advisers, and acquired the financial content marketing firm Scribe. Vested has been recognized as one of Inc. com's Top Places to Work, *Bulldog PR's* Best Industry-Focused Agency, *PRovoke's* Financial PR Agency of the Year, and *PRNews's* Best Places to Work.

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Whether it's rebranding a city, drawing attention to a revitalized neighborhood, or promoting a new sustainable development, Violet PR helps clients make a difference. Through a combination of news stories, social media, and compel-



Montclair, N.J.-based boutique PR firm, Violet PR, works with economic development, CRE and AEC clients across the U.S.

ling content, our NJ-based boutique public relations firm helps clients attract more dollars and supporters.

We serve clients in industries including economic development, real estate, architecture, engineering, professional services, hospitality and more. www.violetpr.com.

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Walker Sands is a full-service B2B marketing agency with core capabilities in public relations, demand generation, branding, creative, marketing strategy and web. Our integrated approach to marketing drives awareness, credibility and conversions for 100+ B2B technology and professional services clients around the world. A seven-time *Inc.* 5000 honoree, we're one of the fastest-growing B2B marketing agencies in the world, with offices in Chicago, San Francisco and Seattle.

For two decades, we've pushed the limits of what B2B marketing can do to get the results and recognition our clients deserve. We pride ourselves on helping B2B brands reach their goals—whether that's increasing revenue, pushing into new markets, attracting top talent, going public or getting acquired.

Our mission is to accelerate the growth of B2B companies. Through strategic programs tailored to meet our clients' needs, we offer a full range of marketing expertise—from strategy to execution—to provide endless possibilities for the best B2B brands in the world.

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come the CMOs and CEOs of tomorrow while leading B2B marketing into a new era. We are Walker Sands: the B2B growth agency.

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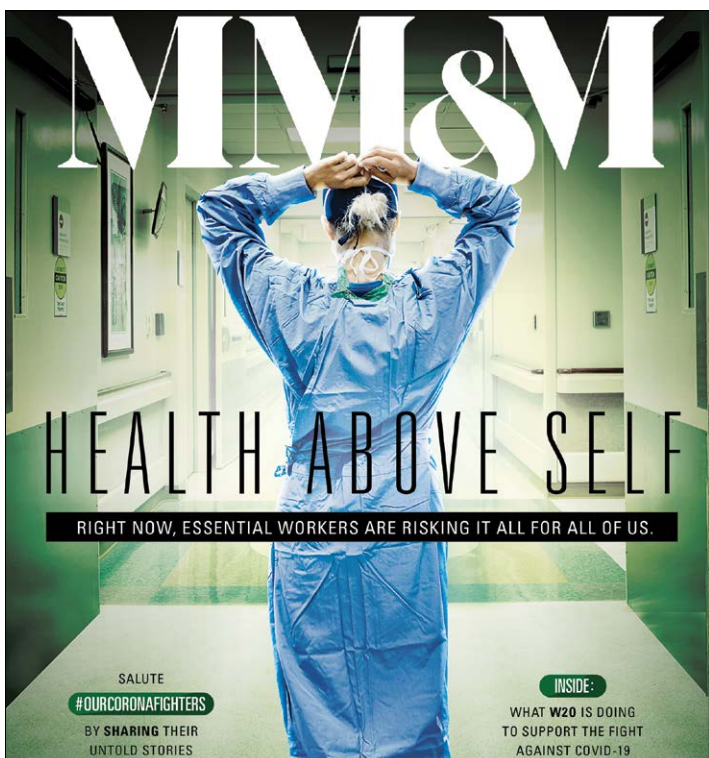
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Every company has at least one great story to tell: its own. At WordWrite, we believe authentic stories move hearts and minds and inspire action. We uncover, develop and share your company's Capital S Story to reveal why someone would want to partner with you, work for you or do business with you. It's your most powerful marketing asset and is the difference between a transactional service versus securing a long-term mutually beneficial relationship with a customer or other stakeholders.

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WordWrite is a member of PR Boutiques International, a worldwide collaborative network of boutique PR firms, as well as a HubSpot Certified Partner Agency and the publisher of both The Pittsburgh 100 ezine and P100 podcast.

Clients include Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Koppers Inc., McClintock & Associates, Meyer, Unkovic & Scott, New Pig, Pfizer Inc., The Waterfront, VetAdvisor/Three Wire Systems, Waldron Private Wealth and YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh. ○



W2O's tribute to our frontline corona fighters (May issue, MM&M).



Walker Sands celebrates being named an *Inc.* 5000 fastest-growing company for the seventh consecutive year.

CNN: the most tainted name in news

By Fraser Seitel

America is crumbling. The masking, distancing and sheltering-in-place mandates have resulted in accelerating domestic quarreling, families splintering and grocery buyers brawling. The mood has turned ugly. And I believe I know one reason why: CNN.



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*.

Ever since the coronavirus forced the nation indoors, CNN has become the most blatantly-biased, anti-Trump “news” source on the planet, making the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, MSNBC and the Chinese Communist Party resemble

Rush Limbaugh by comparison.

CNN’s conversion from credible news reporting to left-leaning mud-slinging appears to be part of an ingenious master plan to improve ratings. And it’s working. Ever since the virus penned people into their homes, CNN’s ratings have risen, leaving liberal rival MSNBC in the dust.

CNN’s “anti-Trump all-the-time” strategy is the brain-child of network president Jeff Zucker, a veteran of NBC’s entertainment division, who first green-lit Donald Trump’s “*The Apprentice*” in 2004 and then used the next decade to learn not only what made his reality show meal-ticket tick but also, for CNN’s purposes, what most ticked Trump off.

If you’re among the fortunate few who’ve been spared CNN’s daily assault on what used to be known as “objective journalism,” here’s what you’ve missed.

Boycotting Trump news conferences

Traditionally, when the President of the United States speaks, it’s big news. Every network, like every daily, covers every word.

So, when President Trump began convening daily White House Coronavirus Task Force press conferences, here was the media’s chance not only to score nightly ratings but also to confront the chief executive directly. Accordingly, every cable network from MSNBC to Fox to CSpan to One America News dutifully provided live, wall-to-wall coverage. But one “news” network has conspicuously demurred.

CNN, citing the administration’s attempts to “propagandize” the proceedings, has decided to sporadically dip into Trump’s nightly White House feeds only when it considers the news of the moment “justifies” such an intrusion in its regular schedule. The result is that while every other cable network—including Trump-hating MSNBC—dutifully covers the live White House news conference, CNN holds forth with an ad nauseam loop of tedious Wolf Blitzer physician interviews or panel discussions.

There’s no question that megalomaniacal Trump does, in fact, use the nightly briefings to puff himself up, but that’s not the point. The point is that like it or not, what the President or Dr. Birx, Dr. Fauci or Vice President Pence say at these nightly soirees is “news.” And a network whose business is to cover the “news” ought to be there.

On the other hand, if CNN’s real objective is to position itself as the “anti-Trump network,” than the decision to be the only network to boycott the nightly news conference makes inimitable sense.

Crawling with hostility

Avid news watchers have grown weary of the nonstop Chyron text-based graphics that crawl across their screens to juice up what’s being presented. Much of the time, blazing red “BREAKING NEWS” is anything but.

While most networks are guilty of hyping these news crawls, CNN has taken the art form to a new level of anti-Trump bashing. Typical was CNN’s all-cap Chyron bombardment during one recent White House Coronavirus Task Force, where the President, in all his venomous glory, mud-wrestled with cranky reporters: “ANGRY TRUMP TURNS BRIEFING INTO PROPAGANDA SESSION,” “TRUMP MELTS DOWN IN ANGRY RESPONSE TO REPORTS HE IGNORED VIRUS WARNING,” “TRUMP REFUSES TO ACKNOWLEDGE ANY MISTAKES.” Somewhere, Walter Cronkite is cringing.

Commenting with contempt

Journalists aren’t supposed to befriend the people they cover. At best, reporters and their subjects can be “friendly adversaries.” No doubt due to the current President’s overwhelming un-liability, the vast majority of those who cover him probably don’t like him. But most, at least somewhat cognizant that a reporter’s role is supposed to be that of an “objective” observer, try to disguise their animus. Not so for CNN’s on-air staff.

The network’s most obvious Trump dispenser is White House correspondent Jim

Acosta, who was booted from the White House in 2018 for failing to relinquish his microphone at a press conference. But now he’s back on Coronavirus Task Force detail with a grudge as big as his ego.

Then there’s the lugubrious Jake Tapper, another CNN anchor whose antipathy toward Trump is boundless. Even formerly bone fide journalists, like Anderson Cooper, Blitzer and Erin Burnett, seem to have been persuaded to bludgeon the President at every opportunity. One wonders if they’ve all been coaxed, coached or coerced into corroborating CNN’s anti-Trump position.

Boosting political favorites

Finally—and most egregiously—while the President is persona non grata at the Zucker news digs, another more favored son literally enjoys the run of the network.

Every day, CNN has been right there as Gov. Andrew Cuomo gavel to order his own coronavirus give-and-take with the media. When Cuomo began his daily news conferences, even his archest critics who considered the New York chief-of-state more drama queen than truth-bearer had to acknowledge the relevance of the updated facts and homespun wisdom that Cuomo conveyed. The governor’s good-natured jousting with his COVID-19-suffering CNN broadcaster brother Chris was particularly moving and memorable.

For weeks, Cuomo’s daily televised sessions were, indeed, “must see” TV. But after a while, the daily Cuomo briefings became stale, devolving into insufferable monologues about armchair pandemic philosophy, late night chats with newly-nesting daughters and crisis management lessons from a fearless, flawless government leader, “working seven days a week, 24/7 for the people of New York.”

Now, with New York State’s COVID-related hospital admissions and death numbers dropping, Cuomo’s daily self-aggrandizing diatribes have caused most other networks and even local New York City stations to cherry pick relevant information and bail out when Cuomo starts waxing poetic on his own brilliance. The *New York Times* typically covers the “news” content of the governor’s daily TV preening with a paragraph or two, if at all.

But one network stubbornly clings to broadcasting the governor’s every word. Lately, in fact, CNN has doubled down on Cuomo’s regular repetitious gabfest, occasionally even breaking into regularly scheduled programming—as it did Sunday in the middle of an interview with Trump

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The Paycheck Protection Program and Secure Act

By Richard Goldstein

Small businesses—many PR agencies fall into this category—that have received loans through the Paycheck Protection Program should be aware of certain tax deduction rules. The IRS released guidance to clarify whether taxpayers receiving the loans may deduct otherwise deductible expenses.



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

On May 14, the SBA changed course and announced that borrowers, together with their affiliates, who received PPP loans of less than \$2 million have been granted a safe harbor. The safe harbor means that anyone who received a PPP loan “under \$2 million” is automatically deemed to have made a good faith certification of need. As a result, they are safe from having their initial need for the PPP loan second-guessed and challenged on audit. Borrowers with PPP loans greater than \$2 million do not qualify for this automatic safe harbor protection.

Businesses can’t deduct the wages or other business expenses they paid for using the loan. The IRS has clarified that no deduction for any expense is allowed for an expense that’s otherwise deductible if both the payment of the expense results in forgiveness of a loan made under the Paycheck Protection Program and the income associated with the forgiveness is excluded from gross income pursuant to the Coronavirus, and Economic Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

The Paycheck Protection Program provides small business with loans to pay payroll costs, mortgages, rent and utilities. The loans are forgiven for payments of payroll costs, and payment of interest on covered

mortgage obligation, and payment on any covered rent obligation and any covered utility payment. However, see below!

Top Congressional tax writers disagree with IRS interpretation of expenses related to PPP Loans. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, ranking member Ron Wyden and House Ways and Means Committee Chair Richard Neal expressed disapproval of the recent IRS guidance (see above) regarding deductions for small business that receive PPP loans. The IRS guidance stated that business can’t take deduction for expenses, including wages, if the payment of the expenses results in forgiveness of a PPP loan.

The Congressional tax writers sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin requesting to reverse the guidance, as it goes against Congressional intent. The letter states, “We believe the position taken in the IRS Notice ignores the overreaching intent of the PPP, as well as the specific intent of Congress to allow deductions in the case of PPP loan recipients.”

The PPP loan issue is expected to be addressed in the next next round of economic relief legislation.

Employee Retention Credit

The Employee Retention Credit is a refundable credit against employment taxes equal to 50 percent of the qualified wages an eligible employer pays to employees after March 12, 2020, and before January 1, 2021.

Can an employer that receives a PPP loan receive the Employee Retention Credit? The simple answer is no! An employer may not receive the Employee Retention Credit if the employer receives a PPP loan that’s authorized under the CARES Act. An eligible employer that receives a PPP loan, regardless of the date of the loan, cannot claim the credit.

Is an employer that repays its PPP loan by May 14, 2020, eligible for the Employee Retention Credit? Yes. An employer that applied for a PPP loan, received payment and repaid the loan by May 14, 2020, will be treated as though the employer had not received a covered loan under the PPP for purposes of the Employee Retention Credit.

standard bearer Joe Biden fail to vanquish the sexual harassment furor and drop out. Cuomo, a self-acknowledged “good friend and admirer of Vice President Biden,” has vowed he’s not a Presidential candidate, won’t run and is staying put in New York. Yeah right.

So, is CNN purposely prejudiced against reporting anything remotely positive about the current President? When CNN Presi-

Therefore, the employer will be eligible for the credit if the employer is otherwise an eligible employer.

Is an employer eligible to receive an Employee Retention Credit after the PPP loan is forgiven? No. An employer that receives a PPP loan may not receive an Employee Retention Credit regardless of whether and when the loan is forgiven.

The Secure Act and your retirement

The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement Act of 2019, better known as the “Secure Act,” contains some significant provisions aimed at increasing access to tax advantaged accounts and preventing older Americans from outliving their assets.

The following are key provisions of the Secure Act, which became law on December 20, 2019.

- Makes it easier for PR firms—small businesses—to set up 401(k)s by increasing the cap under which they can automatically enroll workers in “safe harbor” retirement plans, from 10 percent of wages to 15 percent of wages.

- Many part-time workers will be eligible to participate in an employer retirement plan.

- The Act pushes back the age at which retirement plan participants need to take required minimum distributions from 70.5 to 72 for those who are not 70.5 by the end of 2019 and allows traditional IRA owners to keep making contributions indefinitely.

- The Act mandates that most non-spouses inheriting IRAs take the distribution that end up emptying the account in 10 years. The Act allows 401(k) plans to offer annuities.

Another change in the Act is the elimination of a provision known as stretch IRAs, which allowed non-spouses inheriting retirement accounts retirement accounts to stretch out disbursements over their lifetimes. The new rules require a full payout from the inherited IRA within 10 years of the death of the original account holder, raising an estimated \$15.7 billion in additional revenue. This will apply to heirs of account holders who die starting in 2020. ○

CNN

— Continued from page 82

economic advisor Larry Kudlow about the fate of the economy—so as not to miss out on Cuomo’s latest oratorical pearls.

A cynic might suggest that in providing the governor with unlimited air time, Zucker is laying the groundwork for Prince Andrew to swoop in should beleaguered Democrat

dent Zucker is asked if CNN’s coverage is anti-Trump, he quickly responds that CNN is “pro-truth.” But “truth” these days, rather than being an absolute, is more often than not in the eye of the beholder. And for the millions of people in America and elsewhere who despise Donald Trump’s every move, the “truth” that CNN serves up each day is just what they’re looking for. ○

COVID-19 claims create insurance industry nightmare

The insurance sector finds itself in uncharted waters due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented economic disruption of the coronavirus has commercial insurance companies seeing a deluge of claims from policyholders whose businesses have been interrupted or forced to close in light of the outbreak.

The problem: while “business interruption” coverage is a common feature of commercial insurance policies, it doesn’t typically provide coverage for communicable diseases or government-imposed shutdowns caused by a national emergency. As a result, countless small businesses across the country have filed claims with their insurance provider for COVID-19-related losses only to see those claims denied. And in response, many of those businesses are taking insurance providers to court for refusing to cover those claims.

Now, federal lawmakers have introduced legislation that would essentially rewrite existing business interruption provisions for business insurance coverage, requiring insurance carriers to pay COVID-19-related business interruption claims. In April, Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA), introduced H.R.6494, the “Business Interruption Insurance Coverage Act of 2020,” which would make business interruption insurance coverage available to businesses affected by losses due to viral pandemics. A similar bill, H.R.6497, the “Never Again Small Business Protection Act,” would mandate insurance carriers that offer business interruption insurance to make available additional coverage that keeps small businesses afloat during national emergencies.

In response, insurance companies and the trade groups that represent them are flooding Washington to voice their opposition to these bills, claiming that forcing carriers to pay for coverage they never sold in the first place threatens their business and poses significant future affects for the industry.

The American Property Casualty Insurance Association, the national trade group representing home, auto and business insurers, registered in April to lobby Congress on behalf of “COVID-19 Related Insurance Legislation” as it relates to “Business Interruption Insurance.”

“These types of proposals could have dramatic repercussions for families, individuals, motorists and businesses,” APCIA said in a statement. “If policymakers force insurers to pay for losses that are not covered under existing insurance policies, the stability of the sector could be impacted and that could affect the ability of consumers to address everyday risks that are covered by the property casualty industry.”

The National Association of Professional Insurance Agents, the nonprofit representing independent insurance agents, registered in April to lobby Congress on “issues related to business interruption insurance and COVID-19.”

“Retroactively rewriting contracts undermines existing contractual relationships and risks injecting new uncertainties into our current economic crisis,” PIA said in a statement. “Only a small percentage of businesses would benefit in any way from it, and thousands of small business owners would be left struggling.”

The Wholesale & Specialty Insurance Association hired law firm Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath to lobby Congress on “COVID-19 response on insurance impacts including business interruption and recovery fund legislation.”

“These bills attempt to change every insurance policy issued for loss of use and occupancy and business interruption so that each policy would effectively be rewritten to include coverage for business interruption during the declared state of emergency due to



the COVID-19 pandemic ... providing a coverage never intended when the policy was underwritten and priced,” WSIA said in a statement.

The list goes on. Life insurance trade group The American Council of Life Insurers; The Reinsurance Association of America, which represents property and casualty reinsurers; and independent agent group the Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America all registered in April to lobby against H.R.6494 and H.R.6494. They were followed by insurance carriers State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, Hartford Financial Services Group, Encova Insurance and Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, all of whom similarly retained lobbying firms in April.

Another group to oppose H.R.6497 and H.R.6494 is the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the regulatory organization comprised of elected state officials who regulate insurance companies and establish the standards used by state insurance regulators.

“Business interruption policies were generally not designed or priced to provide coverage against communicable diseases such as COVID-19 and therefore include exclusions for that risk,” the NAIC said in a statement. “If insurance companies are required to cover such claims, such an action would create substantial solvency risks for the sector, significantly undermine the ability of insurers to pay other types of claims, and potentially exacerbate the negative financial and economic impacts the country is currently experiencing.” ○

Shirley & McVicker fights Michigan’s lockdown

Shirley & McVicker Public Affairs is promoting the push against Michigan’s lock-down strategy designed to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Erik Kiilunen, Founder of Neuvokas, rebar manufacturer, hired the Alexandria, VA-based firm to bolster visibility for his “All Business is Essential” campaign.

Claiming that he lost \$600,000 in business due to the lockdown, Kiilunen, paid for 23 billboards across the state to display the All Business is Essential message. He also declared May 21 “Take Yourself to Work Day.”

Kiilunen has been booked by local radio/TV stations and scored coverage by the Associated Press, Reuters, New York Times and USA Today.

Kevin McVicker, who supervises the campaign, said Kiilunen’s “leadership is an example to business owners who want to survive and continue to provide jobs.” ○

Glover Park cries for Argentina

Glover Park Group is providing strategic communications services to Argentina, which is on the brink of defaulting on \$66 billion in debt held by Wall Street bankers and other foreign entities.

The COVID-19 economic lockdown, rising healthcare costs, rampant inflation and increased poverty among its 45 million people led to Argentina defaulting for the third time in two decades when it missed a \$503 million debt payment on May 22.

The government of Alberto Fernandez, which took power seven months ago, is forecasting a 6.5 percent economic contraction during 2020.

The *New York Times* warns that another default threatens to revive Argentina's "reputation as a serial deadbeat and global financial pariah."

Glover Park is counseling Argentina's DC embassy on its diplomatic and economic relations with the U.S. as a subcontractor to Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer. ○

BGR works Kazakhstan media

BGR Government Affairs is providing strategic communications and media outreach for Kazakhstan, the oil-rich central Asia state.

Nursultan Nazarbayev, the country's only leader since it was carved off from the Soviet Union, stepped down in 2019 after thirty years at the helm.

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.

Dickens & Madson Canada, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered May 12, 2020 for Republic of Vanuatu**, Port Vila, Vanuata, regarding how best to deal with climate change as it specifically impacts the Pacific Island Region.

Baker & McKenzie, New York, NY **registered May 13, 2020 for The Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo**, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, regarding assistance with a broad economic restructuring mandate as well as the government's multilateral relations with the International Monetary Fund.

BGR Government Affairs, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered May 1, 2020 for Embassy of Kazakhstan**, Washington, D.C., regarding strategic public relations services in the US and assistance with outreach to members of the media.

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.

Capitol Hill Policy Group LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered May 20, 2020 for International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)**, Boston, MA, regarding efforts to expand the applicability of COVID-19 relief measures to more association members.

Greenberg Traurig, LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered May 20, 2020 for Hotel Association of New York City**, New York, NY, regarding administrative and legislative monitoring and outreach on issues related to COVID-19 relief.

Forbes-Tate, Washington, D.C., **registered May 20, 2020 for Vir Biotechnology, Inc.**, San Francisco, CA, regarding healthcare initiatives related to its novel antibody technology platform.

Cornerstone Government Affairs, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered May 19, 2020 for JR Automation**, Holland, MI, regarding automation of manufacturing for high demand medical devices and equipment for novel COVID response.

Ervin Hill Strategy, Washington, D.C., **registered May 19, 2020 for Starc Systems**, Brunswick, ME, regarding disaster planning within the Health and Human Services Office of Preparedness and Biomedical Advanced Research Development Authority for healthcare isolation solutions.

The collapse of oil prices and spread of COVID-19 has hampered Kazakhstan's economy.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke with Kazakhstani President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in April about joint efforts to address the pandemic and reaffirmed their intent to work closely on bilateral and global affairs. Pompeo visited Kazakhstan in February.

BGR PR President Jeffrey Birnbaum and VP Jo Maney work on the \$160,000 contract. They report to Erzhan Kazyhanov, Kazakhstan's ambassador to the U.S. ○

Qatar cuts Ballard Partners fee

The Embassy of Qatar trimmed Ballard Partners monthly fee from \$115,000 to \$50,000 effective May 1.

The Trump-connected firm is working to better U.S.-Qatari relations and on political, legislative and regional developments in Qatar.

Qatar initially signed Ballard Partners to a one-year contract on June 28, 2018, at \$50,000 per month. That fee was upped to \$115,000 last year. The amended pact runs through December 31.

Qatar was the biggest foreign spender at Ballard Partners during the six-month period ended Oct. 31, 2019. It contributed \$660,000 of the total \$2.1 million fees.

Qatar topped outlays from Zimbabwe, Kosovo, Dominican Republic and Turkey's Halbank, which cut ties with the Ballard Partners on Oct. 16, 2019, after spending \$455,000 during the period.

Brian Ballard is Finance Chair of the Florida unit of Trump Victory organization. ○

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j public relations
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J Public Relations
530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018
212/924-3600
letstalk@jpublicrelations.com
www.jpublicrelations.com
Employees: 65. Founded: 2005.

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

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

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

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

Locations:

New York
530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018
212/924-3600

San Diego
2341 Fifth Ave., San Diego, CA 92101
619/255-7069

Los Angeles
429 Santa Monica Blvd., #280, Santa Monica, CA 90401
310/722-7066

London
14 Gray's Inn Rd., 3063, London, WC1X, 8HN, UK
(011) 44 (20) 38905838

Sampling of highlighted clients:

Adare Manor, Ireland
Adventures by Disney (project work)
Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort (project work)
Chateau du Grand-Luce, France
Chewton Glen, UK
Cliveden House, UK
Discover Baja California
Four Seasons Resort Lanai
Golden Oak Development by Walt Disney World Resort
Grace Hotels
Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Lake Como
Gurney's Resorts - Montauk & Newport
Helena Bay, New Zealand
Hotel del Coronado
InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown
InterContinental, Washington DC - The Wharf
Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts
Newport Beach & Company
Rancho La Puerta
Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa
Regent Seven Seas Cruises (project work)
Relais & Châteaux
The Palms and The Shore Club, Turks & Caicos
The Private Suite at LAX
The Resort at Pedregal
The Ritz-Carlton Hotels (15 properties)
Vail Resorts Hospitality
Vail Mountain Resorts



Jamie Sigler O'Grady & Sarah Evans,
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or contact Melissa Werbel, Director of Research, 646/843-2082, melissa@odwyerpr.com

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