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May: PR Firm Rankings

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*In his heart a man plans his course,
but the Lord determines his steps. - Proverbs 16:9*

Page Center calls for PR/press cooperation

The Arthur W. Page Center at Penn State, taking a much-needed PR leadership role, has launched a campaign for better government/institutional press relations. It can't be done alone.

Alarmed by the acrimony between the Trump Administration and the press, including Trump's remark that the press is the "enemy of the American people," speakers at a Feb. 22 Arthur W. Page Center awards dinner at the Grand Hyatt in New York called for PR people to enter the fray.

Dick Martin, former AT&T exec VP/PR, who was one of three honorees, urged the PR industry to create a counterpart to the Ad Council that has created public interest campaigns for 75 years.

"Why doesn't the PR industry have an equivalent effort?" he asked attendees at the first annual awards dinner of the Page Center.

Other recipients of the awards were Ann Barkelew, Founding General Manager and Senior Partner of Fleishman-Hillard, and Alan Murray, Chief Content Officer of Time Inc. and Editor-in-Chief of *Fortune* magazine.

Bill Nielsen, former head of communications of Johnson & Johnson, was chair of the event, which was attended by more than 200. Leaders of other PR groups that were present included Tina McCorkindale, CEO of the Institute for PR; Renee Wilson, President of the PR Council, and Jane Dvorak, Chair of PR Society of America.

PR, media credibility is low

Martin noted that while PR has credibility problems, so does the media. A recent Gallup poll shows Americans' trust in journalism is at an all-time low, with two-thirds of U.S. adults not believing the news they see, hear or read.

"It's especially frightening when the most powerful man in the world attacks reporters as 'the most dishonest people in the world' and calls some of our leading news organizations 'enemies of the American people,'" Martin said.

The PR industry can't stand by and hope the situation will change, said Martin. "Media literacy may be the social issue of our time. Addressing it is in our own interest."

The Internet "democratized media, giving everyone a voice, but traditional media are now 'fewer, smaller, and poorer,'" he said. They have lost ad dollars but "more significantly, they've cheapened the value of content, turning it into a commodity measured in clicks rather than substance."

PR/press joint effort possible

The acceptance of a Page Center award by Time Chief Content Officer Murray signals an historic integration of PR and the press.

Murray, who oversees editorial policies and standards at Time, Inc., and who previously spent two decades at the *Wall Street Journal* in high editorial posts, said both PR and journalism deal in "the facts."

A problem, said Murray, is that there is "no common currency of facts to form the basis for civil discourse, much less civic action, on any of the very real problems and issues that face our society."

Murray said it's the job of both PR and journalism to "fully inform the public." The truth should be "the standard that both hope to attain," he said. Murray and Barkelew also expressed the hope that relations can be improved between the press and companies, institutions and the government, with particular reference to the Trump Administration.

The Page Center, which "dedicates itself to advancing ethics and integrity in all forms of communication," funds research and develops educational opportunities to build an awareness and respect for in the fields of corporate and public communication. Since its 2004 founding, the Center has funded more than 200 scholars and awarded more than \$700,000 in research funding.

The Page Center's advisory board, which is based at Pennsylvania State University, includes Nielsen; Roger Bolton, President of the Arthur W. Page Society; and Denise Bortree, Director of the Center, who is Associate Professor of advertising/PR at Penn State.

Sponsors of the Feb. 22 awards event included Allstate, Brunswick, Bill Nielsen Communications Consulting, Edelman, FTI Consulting, IBM, Johnson & Johnson and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Other press present included Jerry Swartz, Deputy Editor, AP, and Dan Victor, Senior Staff Editor, *New York Times*. ●

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PR job seekers often rebuffed by Google searches

Marketing professionals are often rejected from prospective jobs due to findings hiring managers uncover about them online.

By Jon Gingerich

For advertising and marketing professionals entering the workforce, a quick Google search could make or break your chances of landing a job in the industry.

A new survey from staffing and recruiting agency The Creative Group shows that gathering additional information on prospective employees online is a shockingly common practice among advertising and marketing executives.

Even worse, what hiring managers find is also often cause for declining to hire those potential candidates.

An overwhelming number of executives surveyed admitted using Google or a similar search engine to find information on prospective employees, with more than a third — 34 percent — of ad executives and more than one-quarter — 26 percent — of marketing executives saying they do this at

least some of the time.

Nearly a third — 29 percent — of advertising executives, as well as 18 percent of marketing executives, said they always conduct online searches to gather additional information on a prospective new hire.

Moreover, many of the ad and marketing executives surveyed admitted that their online sleuthing has compelled them not to hire potential candidates. Nearly half — 48 percent — of advertising executives, as well as 26 percent of marketing executives, said they've declined to offer candidates a job simply based on what they've uncovered via the Internet.

When it comes to managing your online presence, the Creative Group survey concludes that job seekers shouldn't only shape online content to mitigate red flags; given the number of potential eyes watching, they should also use the Internet to showcase

their assets.

The staffing agency suggested that professionals moderate their online posting and exhibit caution in what they share, and suggested putting skills and insights on display by posting a digital portfolio showcasing work, as well as commenting in relevant forums or authoring industry-relevant online articles.

The Creative Group survey was conducted in November by research firm SSRS. It included 400 telephone responses from randomly selected U.S. advertising and marketing executives, 200 of whom are stationed at companies with 100 or more employees and 200 who work at agencies with 20 or more employees.

The Creative Group is a division of professional staffing service Robert Half. ○

Desktop, laptop Internet access declines

By Jon Gingerich

A growing number of Americans are accessing the Internet solely through mobile devices, according to new estimates released by digital market research company eMarketer.

More than 78 percent of Internet users this year — or about 214.6 million people — will regularly use mobile devices to access the web. Approximately 40.7 million of those people — or about 15 percent of the Internet-using population — will access the Internet only through mobile phones, up from 14 percent (36.6 million) in 2016 and 12 percent (32.1 million) in 2015.

According to the eMarketer report, those numbers are only expected to grow, with mobile-only Internet users comprising 52.3 million people in five years.

By contrast, the practice of accessing the Internet solely via desktop or laptop computers is becoming a rarity in the U.S. Only 17.9 million Americans will access the Internet through either a desktop or laptop this year, down from 20.3 million in 2016 and 24.7 million in 2015. And the number is expected to only decline in the future: eMarketer predicts that only about 10.5 million people will access the Internet through desktop or laptop computers by 2021.

The findings are part of a new eMarketer report titled "U.S. Digital Users: The eMarketer Forecast for 2017," which was released in February. ○

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Millennials are revolutionizing the food marketing menu

Millennials may be the most food savvy and label-conscious generation to date, but their reliance on non-traditional channels when educating themselves on nutrition, recipes, products and food news has made them an elusive demographic for food manufacturers and the marketers that represent them.

By Jon Gingerich

Food was an unusually big news topic in 2016. Boston-based firm Schneider Associates in December published its Most Memorable New Product Launch Survey, an annual study that polled more than 1,000 consumers in a bid to rank the top 10 memorable product launches for the year, and reported that food took up an unusually large amount of media bandwidth in 2016, with eight food-related products making the list, a first in the study's history.

Americans place a high valuation on food-related issues, but respondents belonging to the 18-to-34-year-old demographic seem to be particularly engaged by this topic. According to the annual Food News Study commissioned by New York agency Hunter Public Relations, which surveys Americans on their opinions regarding the top food-related news items each year, more than half of all Americans said they view food and nutrition stories as important, and more than a quarter — 26 percent — find these stories very important. Millennials this year were uniquely more likely than any other age group to emphasize the importance of food-related news stories, with more than two-thirds reporting that they responded behaviorally to at least one food-related story in 2016.

The survey, which polled more than 1,000 U.S. residents in October and asked them to name their three top food-related news stories for the year and whether those stories provoked any sort of behavioral change, reported that more than a third of this demographic — 37 percent — claimed they'd changed their behavior in light of Chipotle's E. Coli Outbreak, which took the number-one food story slot in Hunter's survey this year.

Three of the top 10 stories in this year's Hunter study pertained to restaurants in some way. Samara Farber Mormar, Executive Vice President of Insights and Strategy at Hunter PR, said this was unusual, considering topics involving eating out rarely make Hunter's top 10 at all.

"The role that restaurants and dining out plays in consumers' lives and popular culture is huge. Foodie culture continues to be on the rise, and there's more interest in the food we eat and being in the know about hot restaurants and food trends, which is all due in part to the fact that you now have two generations that have been around long

enough that they're essentially foodie generations," Mormar said.

A widening information gap

The Internet is quickly replacing traditional media as the source consumers turn to when researching and educating themselves on food, with more Americans now relying on social media, podcasts and online forums such as YouTube for nutrition and health advice, as well as recipes and food-related news. According to the Hunter survey, 17 percent of Americans are now getting recipes from videos on social media, a percentage now on par with U.S. cooking shows.

Millennials are leading this charge, and now cite social media posts from peers and media publishers as the de facto source for food news, with 20 percent of respondents stating they receive their food-related information from postings left by peers on Facebook, followed by news websites and posts made on the social media hub by media outlets and publishers (both 17 percent).

The continued digital migration for younger generations illustrates for marketers a gap in how different age groups are gathering information about new products, and the spate of recent food-related surveys indicates that split may be growing wider.

Schneider's MMNPL survey found that Millennials are less likely than older consumers to learn about new products through traditional media sources such as TV commercials, and this generation, along with Gen X consumers, are significantly more likely to rely on social media as a resource for finding out about new products than older cohorts.

Noel Fisher, Director of Integrated Media and Marketing at Schneider, told O'Dwyer's that current data suggests younger consumers will continue to move away from traditional media as they increase their social and digital media consumption. Baby Boomers and older generations, meanwhile, have also shifted slightly toward social, but not at metrics significant enough to call it a trend.

"We began tracking generational differences in media consumption in 2013 in response to the growing industry focus on Millennials. In that first year, 57 percent of Millennials were using social media to learn about new products, while 55 percent were

using TV and 38 percent using any source of traditional media. In 2016, we saw that only 45 percent of Millennials were using TV, 26 percent were using any kind of traditional media and 67 percent were using social media to learn about new products," Fisher said.

Healthy but indulgent

Millennials value news on nutrition, health and food, but healthy eating isn't seen as the be-all and end-all for this demographic. According to the Hunter survey, stories involving food safety and nutrition issues overall actually made a bigger impact among Gen X, Baby Boomers and Mature consumers in 2016, and members of these generations also placed a higher emphasis than younger consumers on eating healthy, paying attention to ingredients and the safety of the foods and beverages they consume.

New York-based marketing and branding services agency The Halo Group, which recently conducted a study to gauge the health and nutrition-related mindset of Millennials, found that three-quarters of this age group see food not only as a means of satisfying hunger, but as an adventurous pastime, and regularly seek out new food trends as a source of entertainment.

The Halo Group study also reported that Millennials prefer to eat in groups and share their experiences through social media on sites such as Instagram and Facebook. The Hunter survey reiterated this, finding that Millennials more than any other generation were inspired by news items they saw to share their food-related opinions via social media. The Hunter survey also found Millennials are now paying more attention to the role politics plays in food brands.

"Consumers are paying more and more attention to marketing," Mormar said. "Brands have become popular in our discourse; there's this acknowledgment now that brands and marketers are engaging with you and talking to you, and social media has helped create this role of the consumer as armchair marketer. People will now go on a brand's Facebook page and comment on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a campaign. They expect to have relationships with brands, and the more brands that have a one-to-one relationship and conversation through social media the more consumers will be conscious of that practice." ○

Turning digital into the edible

When the product you're promoting is something that can be downloaded, consumers have access to it immediately. But something's been lost. On the other hand, pairing the product with a custom-made food item sets it apart and adds a new dimension to the brand experience.

By Adam Ritchie

Remember that toy at the bottom of the cereal box? It usually didn't have a tie-in to the cereal, but it made the product that much more appealing. Now imagine if an entire cereal was created to celebrate the toy inside. That's the idea behind the case study we're about to share.

Boston-based indie rock band The Lights Out had a tough choice. They'd just recorded a sci-fi album about traveling through parallel universes and were considering how to release it. In one of the alternate realities they'd written about, consumers still went to music stores for new releases. But in this reality, they don't. New music, books and games are being encountered online, and physical immersion — along with the excitement that comes with it — has been sucked out of finding these products. The experience of discovering something new on the shelf, ringing it up, and the thrill of anticipation as you head home with it, is increasingly rare.

Following the foot traffic

There's still a physical place consumers go at least once a week to discover something new. They're even legally required to go there for it: it's the beer store.

Craft beer drinkers, like foodies, are an adventurous breed. Most of their purchase decisions are made standing in front of the beer cooler. They have little brand loyalty, and their favorite beer is the one they haven't tried yet. It's the same type of person who in the past might have seen a new album by an unknown band in a music store and taken a chance on it if it had an interesting cover.

Understanding this, instead of self-releasing their new album online or in an outdated traditional format, the publicist for The Lights Out brought it to a brewery instead, and asked them about releasing it on a special can of beer.

PR as product inventor

With every launch, PR is handed the product and tasked with figuring out how to raise awareness for it. In best-case scenarios, maybe PR had some input in the product's development. What makes the Lights Out T.R.I.P. case study unique is it's a scenario

where PR caused a new kind of product to exist, with a strategy applicable to any digital entertainment product launch.

Square one is identifying the right food or beverage partner, whose brand and consumer overlaps with yours. The Lights Out chose beer because rock music fans love it. And they found a receptive partner in Aeronaut Brewing Co. for their science-inspired T.R.I.P. album, because the brewery was founded by scientists from Cornell and MIT.

The brewers listened to a rough cut of the record, surrounded themselves with its pandimensional themes and brewed T.R.I.P. The beer was a paradoxical "imperial session" ale, with galaxy hops from the other side of the world and pictured the band on the label. It was brewed to serve as liquid sustenance for someone traveling between universes.

What made it an "album release beer" instead of a typical tribute beer was the social media trigger and instructions on the label. When drinkers posted a specific hashtag on Twitter, they'd receive a message back from the band, telling them what an alternate reflection of themselves was doing right now in a parallel universe, along with a link to the album. Then they could enjoy

the multiverse, and the album became the soundtrack to that journey.

Transferring bytes into bites

Let's say instead of an album, your PR team is tasked with promoting a book. Does the story take place in a specific time period? Is there a character associated with a specific food item? If you're promoting a new Berenstain Bears e-book, why not release it on co-branded jars of honey? If you're promoting a new digital episode of "Twin Peaks," how about serving it up on cherry pie following the recipe from the Double-R Diner?

PR professionals could apply the same thinking to product development that we've always used for creative mailers. And by bringing a social media release mechanism into the mix, we're driving consumer-generated social content, while keeping stakeholders engaged and entertained.

Serving up new media contacts

Another benefit of turning your non-food product into something edible is that it becomes much more interesting to your industry's media contacts, and opens the door to food and beverage media who would otherwise not have been among your outreach targets. They love a food item with a good story. A food item serving as the release vehicle for something from a totally different industry can make that story irresistible in terms of coverage potential.

If the product you're supporting can be downloaded, the next time you walk through the food aisle, imagine every bag of chips, bottle of soda and box of cookies as a blank slate, just waiting for the right digital pairing.

Adam Ritchie is the owner of Adam Ritchie Brand Direction in Boston, where he helps brands grow, communicate and do the right thing. He is also the guitarist for The Lights Out. ○



Adam Ritchie



Boston-based band The Lights Out teamed up with the Aeronaut Brewing Co. to release the band's sci-fi themed album, T.R.I.P., becoming the first studio album ever released on a can of beer.

the beer, while listening to the music that inspired it, and have a complete sensory experience with sound, visual, touch and taste. The beer fueled their journey through

Elevating food policy within the election process

An important segment of consumers think food policy issues should play a higher profile in presidential debates. This sentiment is bolstered by a growing sense among the Opinion Leader Shopper segment that the primary responsibility for making the right food choices lies with society rather than with the individual.

By Grant Prentice

There's no doubt that U.S. politics has elevated to a new level of divisiveness, with various presidential decrees met with a high level of sustained protest. A February 12 Gallup Poll indicates that President Trump currently has a net disapproval rating of -15 (40 percent approve / 55 percent disapprove), in sharp contrast to a January 19 Gallup Poll showing a +20 approval rating (58 percent approve / 38 percent disapprove) rating for President Obama as he left office.

In this heated political climate, important and thoughtful debate over food policy has taken a last-row seat to heated arguments regarding hot button issues such as immigration, foreign policy, health care and environmental regulation.

This is extremely unfortunate; given the important role that food policy plays in ensuring access to safe, healthy food, especially for vulnerable populations such as mothers and infants, and low-income individuals and families and their communities. The new Republican control of all branches of government has major implications for the food, beverage and agriculture industries.

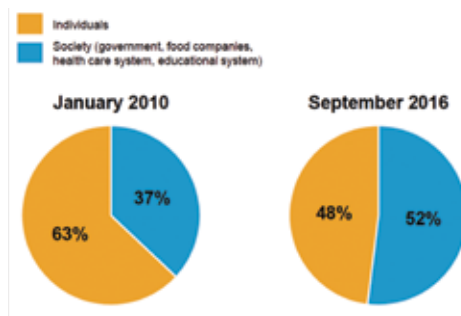
While President-Elect Donald Trump did not telegraph any specific policy actions or plans during the campaign trail, it's likely we'll see a relaxation — and potential reversal — of regulatory action across all industries in an effort to down-regulate government involvement in food policy. This means many of President Obama's food policy accomplishments may be on the line. As this article goes to press, the \$71 billion U.S. food stamp program faced intense scrutiny as members of Congress debate whether to prevent consumers from spending allowances on sugary soda, candy and other items deemed unhealthy.

At a time when Democrats and Republicans agree on few solutions to the challenges facing America, FoodMinds' fourth "Food Temperance in America" survey found two out of three Opinion Leader Shoppers — registered voters that express their food values in the grocery store, in public forums and in their politics — support including food policy issues in the presidential debates, with 76 percent of Democrat Opinion Leader Shoppers and 50 percent of Republican Opinion Leader

Shoppers thinking the presidential candidates should debate policy options around access to food, food assistance programs, food safety and education on healthy food choices.

There was an uptick among Republican Opinion Leader Shoppers calling for the inclusion of food issues in the debates, with only 42 percent of this group favoring food policy deliberation in 2012, the last time FoodMinds conducted the survey.

In your opinion, which of the following groups holds the primary responsibility for making sure the public makes the right food choices to stay healthy and avoid obesity?



Thinking about the increased level of government involvement in the food choices we make — and all of the potential actions they are considering to limit the consumption of unhealthy foods — would you say you approve or disapprove of this increased government intervention?



While food policy approaches differ between Democrats and Republicans, there has been a significant shift since 2010 in Opinion Leader Shoppers' thinking about who holds the primary responsibility for making the right food choices to stay healthy and avoid obesity.

Since the FoodMinds Food Temperance Survey was first fielded in January 2010, there has been a steady shift in perceived responsibility away from the individual and toward other parts of society, including food companies, government, health care and education. During this six-year time frame there has been a 15-point change among Opinion Leader Shoppers, with more than 50 percent of such shoppers now believing the primary responsibility for making the right food choices lies with society rather than the individual.



Grant Prentice

While Republican Opinion Leader Shoppers are more likely to place responsibility on the individual compared to Democrats, the percent of Republicans focused on individual responsibility dropped from 67 percent in 2012 to 59 percent in 2016.

In tandem with this elevated awareness of the importance of the environment on food choices and health outcomes is an increase in the direction of Opinion Leader Shoppers' support for increased government intervention to limit the consumption of unhealthy foods.

Although the hot button issues may be displacing attention and debate on food policy, it's important to keep in mind that everybody eats, usually at least three times a day. So, this is an important policy concern that deserves more time for debate and conversation regarding the best approaches for promoting access to healthy foods and helping facilitate public health.

Grant Prentice leads the Strategic Insights Practice at FoodMinds in Chicago.

FoodMinds' "Food Temperance in America" survey was conducted using Toluna's social voting community of more than 10 million people between September 7 and September 15, 2016. The sample of 684 Opinion Leader Shoppers was balanced on age, gender, income and region. The margin of error for Opinion Leader Shoppers is +/- 3.7 percent, Democratic Opinion Leader Shoppers is +/- 5.2 and Republican Opinion Leader Shoppers is +/- 6.8 percent. ○

Dieting is out, 'mindful' eating in for 2017

A survey of nutrition experts reveals a decline in consumer interest in dieting. Instead, mindful and 'clean' eating are among the major food trends appearing on consumers' plates this year.

By Mahlori Isaacs

The insatiable quest to unearth what's new, different, or to be frank — determine what will sell — is what drives America's food industry, especially the leading producers of our favorite snacks, beverages, candy and ever-changing “superfoods.” Essentially, everyone is looking for the next “Tickle Me Elmo” of food.

To better understand what makes the unique, highly nuanced and sometimes peculiar world of food tick, I present to you a five-year marriage between two organizations that, at first glance, might appear to be the most awkward, mismatched Tinder date. However, the partnership between Pollock Communications and *Today's Dietitian* delivers an annual national food trend survey that gets media, consumers and food executives talking.

As a result of this fantastic-food duo's combined powers, the fruits of their union have yielded the powerfully influential food trend survey, “What's Trending in Nutrition.” Each year, the survey polls registered dietitians to identify and track the next significant trends in food and eating for the upcoming year. Just this year, the survey hit an all-time high by engaging more than 1,700 registered dietitians to gain access to key 2017 insights, revealing what shoppers are really thinking, what's impacting their behaviors and what's driving their purchases. In addition, survey results attracted major media buzz, garnering top-tier placements in *USA Today*, *The Huffington Post*, *Dr. Oz the Good Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *Redbook*, *Shape*, *Good Housekeeping* and *The Food Network*.

But how do they get the job done?

Segue to Pollock Communications, a food, nutrition and wellness public relations agency based in Manhattan. Our team of media experts, RDs and PhDs have more than 25 years of experience analyzing food trends, securing top commodity clients and leveraging our expert food knowledge to influence the food industry, retailers, consumers and the media on behalf of notable giants such as Unilever, PepsiCo, Quaker, Dannon, Tea Council of the USA, USA Rice, The Cranberry Marketing Committee and The Cranberry Institute.

The other half of this powerhouse union is the leading nutrition trade magazine, currently in its 17th year, *Today's Dietitian*. The publication is a venerated resource for

RDs, as well as certified diabetes educators and dietary managers. In addition, both print and online versions of *Today's Dietitian* serve as the go-to source for best practices, peer insights, trends, industry news and new science.



According to Pollock Communications' recent survey, 49 percent of registered dietitians say consumers will choose mindful eating over dieting in 2017 and 59 percent believe consumers will choose whole foods such as veggies, fruits, ancient grains and green tea, as well as plant-based proteins like nuts and seeds over processed alternatives.

In tandem, our combined food credentials, paired with insider industry connections, allow us both to consistently produce data that truly matters. Together, we've formulated the blueprint for how to develop a food trend survey that's transparent, compelling and useful for industry executives, as well as national and trade food, nutrition and wellness reporters.

A snapshot of today's trends for 2017

This year, survey results outlined a decline in consumer interest in dieting. Alternatively, many are choosing clean and mindful eating as their path to healthier living. Furthermore, interest in certain “hot button” food issues that drive purchases are

on the decline. Of note, in contrast to previous years, RDs assert that consumers will be less concerned with food trends such as gluten-free, GMO-free and sustainability. Instead, interest in sugar-free food is on the rise, which is likely a result of the “sugar wars” in the media and among policymakers.

Meanwhile, ancient grains are still a favorite; fermented foods like yogurt and cheese gain favor; green tea continues to sit comfortably on the list; and interest in nuts and seeds is a major top trend. And for the first time, salmon makes a showing (but RDs say, don't call it a comeback).

When it comes to the other superfood trends in 2017, kale took a hit. The once shining star of superfoods lost some footing, and it continues to move down the list in comparison to previous years. Even though kale is down a few notches, there are still some other great superfood trends to look forward to this year. According to the latest “What's Trending in Nutrition” survey, the Top 10 Superfoods for 2017 will be: seeds, like chia and hemp; avocado; nuts, like almonds and walnuts; fermented foods, like yogurt; ancient grains; kale; green tea; coconut products; exotic fruits; and salmon.

Why should marketers care?

Marketers should care because the leadership and marketing teams at influential companies are already leveraging the “What's Trending in Nutrition” data to craft their strategic consumer marketing plans. This is primarily attributed to the countless registered dietitians who continuously share their expert perspective of what consumers are thinking and doing.

Overall, RD insights grant industry and health professionals with an unrivaled, front-row seat and unprecedented access to an expansive sample of the American population. This very same sample also includes respondents with diverse cultural backgrounds, who represent and work with rural and urban regions, making their insights exponentially more valuable to many marketers.

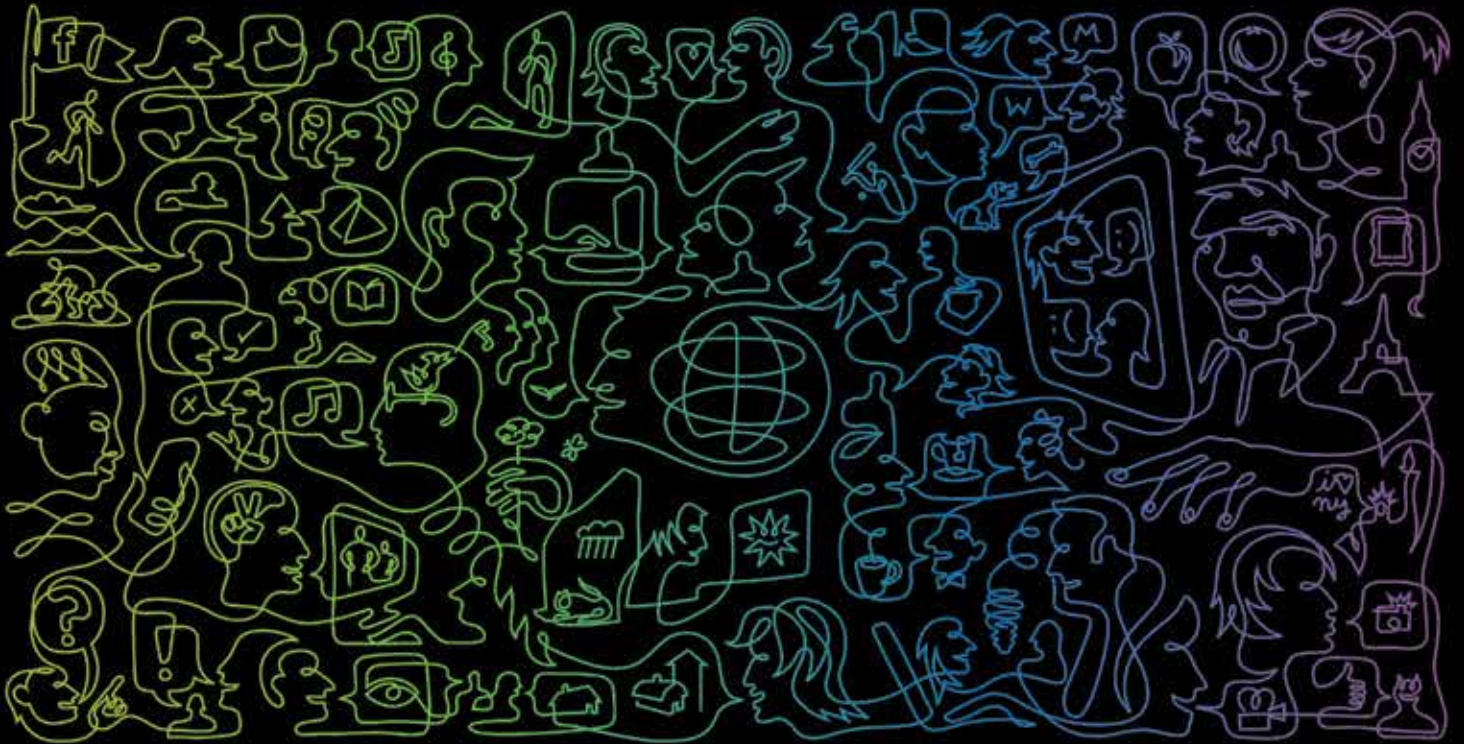
So, don't get left behind, and make sure you're either in contact with, or at the very least are on the distribution list to receive, the next big insider insights as to what will be trending in nutrition and food in 2018.

Mahlori Isaacs is Vice President and Director of Media at Pollock Communications. ○



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Owning your health story

'Healthy' has countless interpretations. Companies need to define what it means for their brand and tell their customers. Or risk having it defined for them.

By Edward Hoffman

What does the word “healthy” mean? If you say that healthy means choosing organic and hormone-free food, while I say it’s eating lean protein and drinking red wine, who’s right? The short answer is both of us.

While that may be frustrating and a bit unnerving, it’s also an opportunity for food, beverage and restaurant brands.

Today, consumers are bombarded with definitions of health, from fortified and gluten-free to such ambiguous terms as “natural” and “fresh” (although the FDA is attempting to provide some clarity around the former). There are numerous interpretations of what constitutes health, and most can be argued as correct.

This broad and vague definition may be why 64 percent of consumers cite healthfulness as a driver in making food and beverage choices, according to the International Food Information Council’s Food and Health Survey 2016.

Because health can mean different things to different people, it’s important that your customers easily understand what it means for your brand through clear and consistent communications. If you plan to create a “healthy” product line extension or new menu items, or even reformulate existing products, it’s just as important to ensure that these changes are consistent with your brand positioning.

You want healthful product offerings to strengthen your brand equity in the eyes of consumers and stakeholders rather than dilute it and potentially mislead them.

Define “health”

Before creating your healthful products, and long before you begin promoting them to customers, you first need to define what constitutes health for your brand. Your definition of health must be believable, relevant and motivating to your customers. It needs to make sense, or you risk wasting valuable research and development dollars. Or worse, you could hurt your existing business.

For example, if a restaurant operator is beloved by customers because of its signature burgers and stuffed sandwiches, don’t walk away from this brand equity. Customers may be looking for more healthful options, but they still demand great-tasting food.

Offer smaller portion sizes or use lean protein. Depending on the restaurant con-

cept, using organic ingredients, such as organic produce, might be a credible strategy. These are subtle yet effective ways to provide more healthful menu items while keeping the integrity of the menu. All of these approaches support the brand positioning and continue to provide customers with the food they love.

Embrace it

Once you’ve defined what “health” means for your brand, embrace your decision by offering multiple healthful items. The days of getting away with one or two “better for you” options are over. Consumers are trying to keep their diets balanced and want a lot of choices, believing moderation and portion control allow for both healthy and indulgent foods. “I’ll have a salad for lunch because I’m going to a new restaurant tonight and know that I’ll want dessert.” Sound familiar?

Let’s take a closer look at the smaller-portion strategy that is increasingly used across food and beverage categories as well as on restaurant menus. From 100-calorie snack packs to 90-calorie mini-cans of soda to half-serving options of menu items, these companies defined health by simply offering consumers less of the foods they love.

It’s an approach that reinforces the brand positioning, makes customers feel welcome and demonstrates commitment to providing more healthful options.

Tell your customers

Ultimately, success hinges on the ability of communications pros to tell the story in an authentic, unapologetic and confident manner. It’s imperative to clearly communicate to consumers what health means to your brand and to be consistent across all aspects of your marketing program. It’s also critical for company employees to understand and internalize your health position, regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with customers. People will ask questions in unexpected places and you want them to be prepared to provide clear, accurate responses.

So where do you start? At PadillaCRT, we begin every client assignment, no matter the complexity or budget size, with the same question: How do we connect our client to its target audience with purpose? Spend the time to understand what’s important to your customers in regard to health, where they get their news and who influences them.

Next, assess every marketing tool at your disposal and determine which ones will be the most effective and efficient in reaching your target audience.

Finally, develop a concise and meaningful story that resonates with your customers. There are numerous interpretations of health, and you want to avoid confusion with your customers’ preconceived definitions.

You also want to avoid alienating them by suddenly having healthier options scattered throughout your product line-up or menu, especially if this is new territory for the brand.

Healthy eating — however you define it — will continue to grow and evolve. Consumer expectations for healthier options will also continue to increase and inevitably change. To successfully compete, you need to plant your “healthy stake” in the ground, make sure it fits with your brand and clearly inform your customers.

There will always be consumers, stakeholders or authorities (both real and perceived) who disagree with your definition. The key to success is being deliberate and transparent in your approach and consistent in communicating it.

Edward Hoffman is Senior Vice President at PadillaCRT and leads the Food + Beverage Practice. ○



Edward Hoffman

PR news brief

MPOWER names Feintuch AOR

New York-based financial and tech agency Feintuch Communications has been named PR agency of record for lending platform MPOWER Financing.

MPOWER provides affordable student loans to international and underserved undergraduate and graduate students who don’t fit the traditional credit criteria of banks or lenders. The company has developed a proprietary loan origination and servicing platform that helps analyze loan applications and supports their funding. This technology, which can accommodate other financial lending products and services, may be licensed to other organizations.

As AOR, Feintuch will work to share MPOWER’s story with the investment community in a bid to attract additional equity. The account will be managed by agency president Henry Feintuch and senior managing director Richard Anderson, who heads the firm’s financial services practice.

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Trends restaurant marketers can't ignore

The restaurant industry has been upended by technological shifts and trends affecting the customer experience that pose major implications for restaurant owners as well the marketers focused on programming, promotions and outreach for these clients.

by Melissa Vigue

There have never been more options for dining out — or in — than there are today. From food trucks and food halls to meal prep kits, delivery services and in-retail dining experiences, the array of options is vast, sometimes overwhelming. For traditional restaurant brands looking to not only retain but increase share of stomach, the competition is fierce.

It's not just about getting butts in seats. Today's eater is faced with several decisions daily as busy schedules dictate a hybrid approach to meals, not exclusively eating out but not all home-cooked either. A recent study by Restaurant Business Online revealed that only 46 percent of respondents' revenue came from dining in, with more than a third coming from takeout.

In either case, just like any other purchase decision they're making, consumers are looking for the best their money can buy, making marketing and brilliant customer experience even more important.

Here are five trends that restaurant marketers shouldn't ignore this year.

Waste not, want not

Consumers have never been more aware of social issues and are increasingly making decisions based on the social responsibility of the brands with which they choose to engage. The USDA estimates food waste in the United States at between 30 and 40 percent of the food supply.

Not surprisingly, this is a hot topic in the food industry, and consumers are looking at how their food service suppliers, be they retail or hospitality, are addressing the issue through food donations, upcycling and more. Smart marketers will be sure to address their efforts when communicating with the industry and their customers.

Technology as an enabler

This one is not new, but it continues to be a critical part of the dining experience both in-restaurant/retail and at home. Can't order online or via an app for delivery? In this case, many of us will move on to another dining option that allows us to do, whether through a restaurant's own online platform, or more often, through a platform like Seamless or UberEats.

In addition, we continue to see the further integration of physical and digital interactions through iPad ordering/payment and the ever-present smart phone (Insta-

gram, anyone?). Each of these offers additional marketing and engagement tools such as the ability to upsell through storytelling and post-dine interactions via social media.

From an operations perspective, technology can also create scale for a proprietor. For example, Zume Pizza, a startup in Mountain View, California, uses robots to increase the speed at which they can make and deliver pizzas. And while we are not suggesting every restaurant go to this extent to deliver a fast and fresh meal, automation of something as simple as coffee or payment can improve the customer and employee experience.

Experience is king

The desire for an engaging, brand-authentic and personalized experience cannot be underestimated. Ensuring that every touchpoint on your consumers' path to purchase is impactful is essential.

Brands must ensure that their website is mobile-friendly and that they build a relationship with customers through social media. Furthermore, the ability to personalize service and ordering options can really set a brand apart. Being greeted by name for a reservation is a simple, yet critical first step.

Creating a branded dining experience within retail (think Ikea, Bass Pro Shops) is a whole other level, but one that offers that experiential element consumers are craving.

Whether offering the ability to customize portion size or the opportunity to order highly sought after wines by the glass using technology like Coravin, brands should be looking to create a unique, customizable and ownable experience for their guests.

Data-driven interaction

From large chains to single proprietors, each has access to data in some form. Whether careful analysis of millions of dining experiences or anecdotal evidence that a regular orders a burger every Tuesday night, data can be a formidable weapon for operators and marketers alike.

On a one-to-one scale, data can arm a server with the information they need to upsell for a special occasion (Happy birthday, Bob!). Similarly, it can provide a marketer with the ability to strategically target relevant messaging using social media to

drive consideration for that day or evening.

Based on what they know about a market through data analysis, restaurateurs are launching virtual restaurants which are basically commercial kitchens delivering high-end breakfast and lunch to the local workforce. Smart move. How will it affect local restaurants' lunch business and marketing plan?

Each of these trends has clear implications for restaurant owners and marketers considering how to allocate their budgets and where to prioritize programming, promotions and outreach.

Melissa Vigue is a Senior Director at Peppercomm. ○



Melissa Vigue

PR news brief

American Chemistry Council calls Baker & Hostetler

The American Chemistry Council, the trade association that represents American chemical manufacturers, has hired global law firm Baker & Hostetler for representation in Washington on issues related to chemicals, energy, homeland security and corporate tax policy, according to lobbying registration documents filed in February.

The Washington, D.C.-based trade group, formerly known as the Chemical Manufacturers' Association, works to shape policies that benefit the chemical industry and its member companies, which includes Dow Chemical, DuPont, Honeywell and Marathon Petroleum.

The American Chemistry Council spent more than \$9 million in total lobbying expenditures in 2016. Other firms that have recently represented the chemical trade group include Ogilvy Government Relations, CGCN Group, Schumacher Partners International and Holland & Knight.

Science-based nonprofit the Union of Concerned Scientists in 2015 released a report blasting the ACC for "pushing for industry-friendly chemical policies that fail to protect public health."

The ACC account will be managed by Chris Jones, former chief of staff to Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-NJ), deputy chief of staff to Rep. David McIntosh (R-IN) and press secretary to Rep. John Myers (R-IN); and Tyler Thompson, former Legislative Assistant to Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Legislative Correspondent to Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) and Legislative Correspondent to Senator Zell Miller (R-GA).

Inspiring action through communications

Communications programs that successfully connect and resonate with audiences typically employ strategies that compel people to take action.

By David Wendland

Communications has a special power: it can inspire people to act. We've all surely felt this in some capacity over the course of our lives: in moving speeches, influential causes and masterfully crafted narratives. The list goes on. In these instances, we're compelled to do something based on messages that resonate with us.

It seems simple, but it isn't.

At the same time, however, it comes as no surprise that communications falls well short of the mark far more often than it actually delivers. Why is this the case? How can something that possesses such a compelling force have it simultaneously be rivaled in potential by its ability to be so ineffective?

Clearly something is breaking down in the process. We as communicators need to do a better job of not only identifying where exactly it's happening, but of understanding how to fix it.

Everyday symptoms to watch for

In thinking about our ability to connect and resonate with our audiences, what separates winners from losers? In short, it's a tale of two roads that head in completely opposite directions.

First, prominent researchers such as Simon Sinek have found that communications is ineffective when it's used in an outside-in approach. Allow me to explain.

In this strategy — which, unfortunately, is used all too frequently today — we attempt to form meaningful connections with audiences by leading with the dissemination of facts, features and benefits. On paper, it doesn't sound like the world's worst idea. Parts of the approach (e.g. presenting a case based on facts) even seem sensible. So what's the deal?

As Sinek discovered, the problem has to do with biology, not psychology. The critical flaw of the outside-in approach is that it resonates only with the outer section of the brain, which is in charge of interpreting this type of detailed information.

The issue, though, is that this outer section — the one that controls rational, analytical thought and interprets language — isn't the one that drives us to behave in any way, shape or form.

Focusing on the wrong target

The result of leading with the "what," in effect, is a non-result. As audiences, we're able to comprehend, but we aren't compelled into action. For instance, have you ever

heard someone — perhaps yourself — say something along the lines of, "I understand, but it just doesn't feel right." It turns out this commonplace phrase is actually rooted in science.

On the other end of this impossible exchange, communicators are left scratching their heads, wondering why they aren't able to impose their will on their audiences.

One doesn't have to look very far to find examples of this running rampant in the wild. Think of the latest tech gadgets and service offerings with spokespeople spouting off about new features and functionality to prove how theirs is far superior to the rest of the competition available on the market. As the audience, we understand it all, but it ends there. We feel nothing more and it's a non-starter.

Let's look at where the opportunity lies, then, for maximizing the effectiveness of communications and for influencing actual behavior and outcomes.

Developing effective strategies

What lessons can be learned for communicating in more meaningful and impactful ways?

To start, it requires a different strategy from the onset. In stark contrast with the aforementioned outside-in approach of mediocrity, establishing a connection of meaning and substance works from the inside out.

What does this mean and what does it entail? To bring biology back into the fold, it requires speaking to the innermost parts of the brain that are actually behind the wheel of controlling decision-making, behavior, trust, loyalty and more.

Equally important to understand is that this core has no capacity for language. Therefore, all of the finer facts and figures we're casting in the lead role of our communications strategy are by default incapable of triggering a reaction within our audiences and of inspiring an action by them on the outside world.

It's true that by nature the inner parts of the brain are laser-focused on feelings, but the art form lies within the inciting of those feelings.

Putting it into practice

From the perspective of turning theory into practice and developing viable communications strategies that can actually be executed upon, it's easy to see why re-

search-based approaches of starting with the why have earned worldwide acclaim.

In a nutshell, it's all about cutting to the core of the matter right away. In a communications strategy this can be accomplished by addressing the "why" first because it encompasses the brand's identity, its purpose, its cause and its beliefs. As communicators, we need to have compelling answers to heavy questions such as "why does your company exist?" and "why should anyone care?"

Leaders are able to differentiate themselves among the crowd and separate themselves from the pack by ensuring the most-difficult and mission-critical messages are not only communicated right out of the gate, but readily understood and interpreted as intended upon first shot. No small feat.

Once this is accomplished, the effective communications strategy then works backward toward the "what," but not before addressing the next step in the value chain, which is communicating the "how."

Think of the "how" as the unique value proposition and the way the brand is going about solving a particular problem. What specifically makes it unique? Identify and own those key differentiators.

"What" is saved for last. As described above, once the central connection is made at the core of the brain, the outer area helps justify the decision in the mind of the receiver via analysis of the facts and figures.

Bringing it all back home

From a business perspective, why does all of this ultimately matter?

Sinek is famous for saying, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." By leading with the "why" and conveying what we as communicators believe, we stand a much better chance of attracting first believers who share the sentiment of our brand.

Research has shown that these two audiences, known as innovators and early adopters, are absolutely paramount in determining mass-market success. They precede the tipping point of broader scale adoption, after which follows groups such as the early majority, the late majority and the laggards.

It's a beautiful chain reaction that begs the question, "why?"

David Wendland is a Vice President at Finn Partners. ●



David Wendland

Getting social with investor relations

Social media is a common stomping ground for consumers and business marketers, but it's been slow to catch on as a channel for investor relations.

By Denise Garcia

Only 28 percent of IR practitioners use social media for IR, according to a 2016 social media survey conducted by the National Investor Relations Institute. The same study reported reluctance among analysts, with only 15-18 percent interested in using social media to engage with IR. Yet a majority of Americans now say they get news via social media and are using it in the context of their work.

According to research published in 2016 by the Pew Research Center, 24 percent of those surveyed said they use social media to get information that helps solve problems at work. Pew also reported that nearly eight in 10 online Americans have a Facebook account. While other social platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest are smaller in size, social's overall scale, data and information advantages have made it an increasingly important channel and marketing partner for business overall. As a strategic part of business communications, investor relations is inevitably becoming more social.

The question is no longer whether investor relations should engage in social media but how. Investor relations professionals are highly specialized communicators, operating within the bounds of SEC regulations and securities laws while often the first to communicate new business concepts, ideas, strategies and future plans to analysts, investors, lawmakers, employees, strategic partners and other key stakeholders. In this high-stakes arena, a casual comment made on social media can be disastrous, requiring 8-K filings and legal action. In some cases, they've resulted in management termination.

At the same time, blogs by day traders and individual investors on message boards and stock-related communications platforms can spread misinformation quickly, having an immediate and often damaging impact on a company's share price, and it can be difficult for management teams not to react.

Integrating investor relations within a corporate communications strategy that includes social media, as well as following a few simple guidelines, should help make the task less daunting. We've outlined a few guidelines for investor relations to keep in mind while communicating through social media.

Do's

- Leverage social media as an integrated

part of a social communications plan that includes IR to increase visibility, transparency and awareness.

- B2C companies should consider establishing a distinct social media identity for the business, focused on corporate and financial information, separate from your customer social media channels that typically focus on product and customer service. CEOs, other officers and brands may also want to consider establishing distinct social media identities but should not use them for personal communications.

- Establish the IR website as the primary IR communications channel and post the company's social media disclosure notice to the site, noting the company intends to distribute material information about the company via social media.

- Embed social media, such as Twitter feeds, YouTube videos or slides posted to LinkedIn, into your IR site when possible to increase awareness of your social media channels and provide easy access to reference materials on the IR website.

- Time social media posts with the public disclosure of press releases, earnings calls, and investor conferences. Content within social media posts often includes references to headlines, key metrics and information on which companies want investors to focus, as well as content and quotes from press releases, earnings call scripts and other previously disclosed, publicly available information.

- Always link social media posts to the IR website to reference complete disclosures

- Establish a social media policy for all employees regarding acceptable and unacceptable social media content consistent with your company's brand identity

- Select authorized spokespeople with a clear understanding of RegFD and investor relations communications along with an internal terms and conditions document to manage social media channels.

- Archive all social media posts and document references.

- Measure social media activity to understand which channels work best for your Company's messaging and investor preferences. Focus on developing social media for channels that your investors prefer.

Don'ts

- Disclose new information or provide unique commentary about your company or financials through social media sites that

has not been previously disclosed within a press release, filing, presentation or other communications on the IR Website.

- Engage in investor-related social media conversations that encourage rumors, speculation or false information, refer these inquiries back to the IR website for more information if necessary

- Use social media to announce internal or external meetings and their related topics that the public wouldn't be invited to or otherwise announced on the company website. This includes: internal meetings — topics and/or individuals — roadshows, non-deal roadshows and one-on-one meetings with investors, meetings with business partners or customers and meetings with potential business partners or customers.

- Disclose investor related materials from the personal social media site of an individual corporate officer or employee without advance notice to investors that the site may be used for this purpose. Personal social media sites of individuals employed by a public company would not ordinarily be assumed to be channels through which the company would disclose material corporate information and are not an acceptable method of disclosure under the securities laws.

Social media disclosure

Investors and others should note that [Company Name] announces material, financial and operational information to its investors using its investor relations website, press releases, SEC filings and public conference calls and webcasts. [Company Name] also intends to use [named social media] accounts, as means of disclosing information about [Company Name] and its services and for complying with its disclosure obligations under Regulation FD. The information we post through these social media channels may be deemed material. Accordingly, investors should monitor these social media channels in addition to following [Company Name] press releases, SEC filings and public conference calls and webcasts. The social media channels that [Company Name] intends to use as a means of disclosing the information described above may be updated from time to time as listed on [Company Name] investor relations website.

Denise Garcia is Managing Director of Investor Relations at ICR. ○



Denise Garcia

Have we reached a purchasing habits tipping point?

Consumers and companies are engaging in social issues more than ever, which is changing not only the foods we're consuming, but may finally drive an evolution in consumer product purchasing habits as well.

By Atalanta Rafferty

Research on Millennials consistently points to their interests in sustainability, purpose and corporate social responsibility, and the impact these issues have on their purchase habits across the supermarket and in restaurants.



Atalanta Rafferty

While food companies — big and small — have made great strides in being transparent about how their food is made, the ingredients they use and their commitment to responsible sourcing, it has done little to move the needle with it comes to product purchase.

Those of us who have worked in the food industry for years know that taste and convenience are still paramount when purchasing food. But with changing taste preferences, improvements in product development, new technologies and heightened social awareness can we finally anticipate a change in consumer behavior?

As we began 2017, we've seen a considerable shift in both personal and professional activist behavior in the United States. The rise of personal activism as well as demands for greater action, involvement and industry activism have created a new environment in which food and beverage companies must operate.

Increasingly, consumers are boycotting or supporting brands that stand for their shared values. The Super Bowl ads alone clearly showed that companies are taking a greater involvement in broader societal issues than before.

This is transpiring to the foods and beverages we consume. Consumers are thinking twice about the environmental, social and economic impact their personal decisions can have. And this isn't just among Millennial consumers; we are seeing this resonate across generations, with a desire to be part of the solution.

In addition, we continue to see an evolution in taste preference and food culture. Ethnic flavors, plant-based foods, alternative sources of protein and real, simple ingredients are driving consumer demand.

In the past two months alone, plant-based foods have garnered 77,000 mentions on social media and alternative proteins have garnered 26,000 mentions in the same time period. And the food industry is responding to these demands with new offerings and reformulations of established products that are transforming the food and beverage space.

Critical to this movement is new technology and innovation that deliver on the promise of great taste and superior nutrition, while minimizing the environmental impact of the foods we eat. Our food systems are increasingly under pressure, be it the water used and food wasted during production, the overfishing of our oceans or the decreasing nutritional value of our foods.

Increasingly, innovative food companies

are stepping up to the plate. Meat alternative companies like Impossible Foods, food industry innovator TerraVia — with its portfolio of algae products — snack companies like Barnana and beverage manufacturers like Fairlife are at the intersection of sustainability, taste and nutrition and are driving this new food movement forward.

And while these companies are still in the early years of development and consumer adoption, we're all rooting for their success and the advent of many more who can bring about changes in how and what we eat and drink.

We expect to see more consumer demand — and great things to come — from the industry in 2017.

Atalanta Rafferty is Executive Managing Director at RF|Binder. ○



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Marketing amongst our machine overlords

More and more marketing content will be analyzed by artificial intelligence applications, making it vital to consciously develop content that engages and can be interpreted by humans and machines alike.

By Seth Redmore

Just over two-thirds of Americans managed to read a book last year. But that's okay: more and more, machines are doing our reading for us.

From news articles to press releases, machines are being used to evaluate what's happening in the world. But they also have a very particular, blinkered way of interpreting results.

In some instances, that's a good thing. It helps to have a disinterested party weigh in on political debates or sports, for example. In others, it's less of an asset. Humor, sarcasm and satire pose challenges for machines, making them terrible at picking out whether a news article is from the *New York Times* or *The Onion*.

When it comes to nuance, machines are dense. This problem is being addressed by AI vendors that specialize in text analytics, but given the number of people around me who don't get my jokes, it's going to take a while. If people miss the joke, then how can we teach machines to understand them?

Machines are the most voracious, tireless readers among us. So, while AI folks work on the understanding, it's important for anyone writing content to consciously write for interpretation by machine as well as being read by humans.

So what makes how we read so different from how machines do it?

The big difference is context. Human interpretation is contextual and variable. What we pull out of a piece of text can change depending on what's going on in the world, whether we have a vested interest in the topic at hand, or whether we've had our morning coffee. Give the same piece to a machine, and you'll get the same result every time.

Humans are emotional, variable and unreliable. We're imperfect interpreters. And we're imperfect communicators. But we also have experience, context, bigger picture intuition and the ability to "repair" miscommunications in our favor. Machines don't.

The logical leaps and informational synthesis that make us good at solving problems and participating in witty banter are skills that machines haven't yet mastered. Let's not put people on a pedestal, though: there are a number of studies that show

numbers like an 80 percent agreement between "well-trained" scorers as to whether a sentence is positive or negative. Think about that for a second — at least 20 percent of what you're saying is being misinterpreted as wrongly positive or negative. And that's the best-case scenario.

Machines might get that something's a joke, but they won't actually get the joke. That's because humor is dynamic, contextual and domain-based. We've all experienced being the newcomer trying to laugh along with a group's in-jokes.

The reason we don't get them is mostly because we don't understand the context around the jokes: the references, the situations, the reason cousin Tommy has the nickname he does. For a machine, that's daily life. Dynamic context is an important area of Artificial Intelligence research — understanding the impact of who the speaker is, where they live, how old they are, the topic of conversation, as well as to whom the speaker is speaking — as we change our language depending on who we're talking to and our relationship to them. I curse a lot around my peers, but you better believe that I'm much more careful when I'm teaching a class of kindergarteners or speaking about a topic that requires gravitas.

Humans also sense whether something is creatively unique or brilliant. There are pieces that resonate with us, that make us feel a particular way. We have a sense of the rhetorical, a sense of what's powerful — and we can all channel it. At some point, every one of us has spoken or written a sentence that the world's never heard before.

One of the unfortunate truths of machine learning is that machines can only compare what they're reading with what's come before. So, if you give them something truly new or different, they won't know what to do with it until they have the data to compare it against.

In sum, machines are emotionless, have issues with context switching, and tend to be very, very literal. But they're superb at sentence diagramming. And they'll hang on your every word.

So how do we write something that machines can read and actually understand?

We don't have a Strunk and White for robots yet, but one's going to be sorely need-

ed. Here's our start:

Keep it simple. Stick to the facts. Avoid extraneous information and flights of fancy.

Go easy on the humor. Friendly and personable are one thing. But sarcasm and jokes can obscure meaning and make interpretation difficult.

Pick the right medium. Matter-of-fact press releases and reviews are ripe for analysis and rich with opportunities to slightly tune your language so that it will be interpreted more positively or negatively. There are lots of context present in the article itself. Short-form social media, on the other hand, can be much tougher because there isn't much context in the post itself. Having the context of attached articles or previous tweets, as well as other ethnographic knowledge can help. As an aside, when you're filling out one of those restaurant comment cards — be very clear and simple with your comment — it has a much better chance of being interpreted correctly.

Be clear and balanced. Active language can be easier to parse. But it's easy to let emotion get the better of you — and differentiating one emotion from another isn't as easy as it seems. If you are emotional about something, be very clear about your emotion. "I'm angry that my server didn't peel my grapes correctly, so I'm never returning to this restaurant." As opposed to "I wish they'd done my grapes better than they did, and I'm not sure whether I want to return there or not."

Oddly enough, these tips aren't so far off Kurt Vonnegut's tips on writing. And given that he touched on writing for machines as far back as his debut novel "Player Piano," perhaps he was on to something.

Machines are the most voracious, tireless readers among us. So, while the AI folks work on the understanding, it's important for anyone writing to consciously write for interpretation by machine as well as by humans.

Seth Redmore is CMO of text analytics leader Lexalytics. ○



Seth Redmore

Racepoint picks Prodromou as CEO

Peter Prodromou, President of Racepoint Global, has been named CEO of the Boston-based tech, healthcare and public affairs agency.

Prodromou's promotion is effective immediately. He will retain the title of President.

Prodromou, who's been with the global marketing agency since its inception in 2003, was previously Racepoint's Chief Global Accounts Officer before being named President in 2013. Prior to joining Racepoint, he was a Senior Vice President at Weber Shandwick as well as its predecessor, Weber Group, which was founded by Racepoint leader Larry Weber in 1996 and later merged with Shandwick International and BSMG to form the global Interpublic powerhouse in 2001.

Weber now holds Racepoint's Founder and Chairman title.

Before teaming up with Weber, Prodromou was previously a Partner at advertising agency CC and D Communications (Cosmopoulos Crowley and Daly) and a Senior Financial Analyst at Lehman Brothers affiliate, The Boston Company. ○



Peter Podromou

Finn Partners names LaNeve health group VP

New York-based Finn Partners has hired Geralyn LaNeve as a Group Vice President in the agency's global health practice.

LaNeve joins Finn Partners from Cooney Waters health advocacy unit Alembic Unlimited, where she was a Senior VP and Communications Consultant. Prior to that, she was a VP in Ruder Finn's healthcare practice. She was also a Communications VP at the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and a Director of Communications at the New York Organ Donor Network.

She will be based in New York and will re-



Geralyn LaNeve

port to Partner and health practice Deputy Michael Heinley. Heinley, a WebMD, Merck and Johnson & Johnson alum, joined the global independent agency in November. ○

Hispanic PR Assn. elects Lorie pres.

The Hispanic Public Relations Association has voted to elect Yvonne Lorie as President of its 2017 national board of directors.

The Founder of Refresh PR and 2013 HPRA PREMIO PR Achievement Award recipient served as President-elect of HPRA in 2016, after joining the national board in 2014 where she was secretary and then VP of programming.

HPRA is the only non-profit dedicated to Hispanic communications professionals and those seeking insights into the Hispanic market.

Since 2014, HPRA has hosted the annual National ¡Bravo! Awards, providing a forum that reflects the innovative, creative, and cultural competence of Hispanic market campaigns across several categories including: technology, food & beverage, healthcare & nutrition, sports, automotive, digital, non-profit and integrated marketing. ○



Yvonne Lorie

Cognito calls Barr managing dir.

Cognito, specializing in communications for the financial services and technology sectors, has named 20-year veteran Ryan Barr as Managing Director in its New York office.

Barr most recently was Managing Director at Burson-Marsteller, handling integrated marketing and PR programs for clients such as Bank of America and MassMutual. He also led Hill + Knowlton's financial communications and investor relations practice.

Barr will report to Cognito Founder and CEO Tom Coombes and partner with Managing Director and head of Cognito U.S.,



Ryan Barr

Eric Hazard.

Cognito, founded in 2000, has 65 employees spread across offices in New York, London, Los Angeles and Singapore. ○

Mills leaves Amgen, joins Mars Petcare

Mars Petcare, the world's leading pet nutrition and health care business with 41 brands in its portfolio, has named Helen Mills VP of Corporate Affairs to start in March.

For the past five years, Mills led corporate affairs for biotech giant Amgen's global commercial business. She will be charged with using her pharmaceutical and healthcare industry background to lead Mars Petcare's strategy of providing holistic care of pets from nutrition to veterinary care.

Prior to Amgen, the 20-year veteran managed a global corporate affairs team at Astra-Zeneca in Sweden and the UK, led external communication for one of GlaxoSmith-Kline's global therapeutic franchises based in the UK, and spent three years at Hill + Knowlton in London and Australia. ○



Helen Mills

Apple, Twitter PR vet Kerris to Edelman

Natalie Kerris, a longtime Apple PR exec, has joined Edelman to lead its substantial technology practice.

Kerris, who will serve as Global Chair of Edelman's tech unit, spent 14 years at Apple and recently did a short stint at Twitter as VP of global communications.

Kerris worked on the launch of Apple blockbusters like the iPod, iPhone and iPad. Edelman chief Richard Edelman noted Kerris "has been at the forefront of some of technology's greatest revolutions in the past two decades."

She will lead Edelman's 700-staffer global tech operation under head of global sectors, Kym White. ○



Natalie Kerris

O'Dwyer's guide to FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

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Ronn D. Torossian, *President & CEO*

It's hard to open a magazine, scroll through social media or turn on the television without seeing information about a new food or beverage trend. Often, the 5W food & beverage PR team is the source of those stories.

With new brands, lines, products, and restaurants introduced each day, we understand competition for space (in shopping carts, on shelves and in the media) is fierce. From facilitating the launch of new products to developing long-term creative strategies that ensure maximum traditional and social media coverage, sell product, increase distribution and win market share, our experience and results in the food and beverage arena are unparalleled.

We understand healthy food and beverages, telling compelling Public Relations narratives in the Alcohol/Spirits space, functional beverage arena and more.

Clients include Sparkling ICE, Anheuser-Busch, Evian Natural Spring Water, Santa Margherita Wines, Whole Foods Market, Viki's Granola, M&Ms, Welch's Fruit Snacks and many others.

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Artisan Production House is a full service production house specializing in food & lifestyle

publicity. We create brand content that resonates with your audience, keeps them engaged and brings value to their lives. Our innate understanding of story relevance and personal relationships with TV producers and media influencers throughout the country gets your story heard. We'll help you deliver your messages seamlessly and with style utilizing our high-end production capabilities (including film-style shooters and graphic designers). Artisan's in-studio & on location satellite junkets include quality bookings that are actually seen, spot-on custom craft services and a fresh, modern design aesthetic ... because taste matters. Additional services include exclusive launch event integrations, stunning branded content food videos, original book videos and select match-making between celebrity talent and brands.

AT THE TABLE PR

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Cheryl A. Miller, *CEO*

At The Table PR has been committed to food and beverage marketing for almost 35 years. We are a full-service boutique agency offering overall branding, strategic planning, social media strategy and implementation, media relations, international marketing, blogger coordination, local store marketing, franchise marketing, videography, product launches, advertising, packaging and design, food photography, grand opening PR and marketing and special event planning and implementation.

From the farm to the table, At The Table PR is dedicated to serving our clients by promoting their brands with our team of experienced professionals and creative partners, specializing in all areas of the food industry. We represent a diverse group of clients, from pecan and produce farms to vineyards, all the way to the tables of some of the best eateries. Our relationships with our clients are forged with trust and integrity and the desire to bring the freshest in-

gredients and finest products and services to the table.

Results are what matter to us, so we continually try to produce fresh ideas and create long-term relationships. We offer each client the personal involvement of a customized team of skilled, passionate professionals.

Whether your objectives are to increase sales, strengthen consumer loyalty, build your brand or improve your public image, we have saved a place for you At The Table.

AURITT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

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Joan Auritt, *President*

Auritt Communications Group is an award-winning full-service broadcast and online PR production company providing creative multi-platform solutions that meet our clients' specific needs. Our 25 years of hands-on experience creating and telling our clients' food stories on TV, radio and online has made us a leader in the craft. Working with food brands, commodity boards, wines and spirits, we get their messages to the right audience. Our producers partner with our clients to find the most effective way to talk about their brand. Our close, enduring relationships with the media result in the highest quality bookings. Our creatively designed cost-effective production packages increase brand awareness, reaching influencers and targeted audiences in prime media markets. Through carefully honed strategy and skilled execution, our team of media experts and network-credentialed producers delivers promised results.

What we do: video production for broadcast, web, corporate events, training; TV satellite, radio, on-line media tours; integrated media tours; partner media tours; media training; social media campaigns; webcasts and live streamed interactive events; video, audio, multimedia news releases; B-roll packages; and PSAs.

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Matt Kovacs, *President*

BLAZE is the trusted partner of choice for lifestyle contender 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 technologies.

Clients include: Arthur Schuman Inc., Bareburger, BoKu Superfoods, Chronic Tacos, Cocomazing, Forto Strong Coffee, Griffin Club, Marriott Hotels, Michael's Restaurant Group, Savant Naturals, Stonefire Grill, Tio Gazpacho, Tom's Urban, Toridoll Dining California, United Beverages, UP-TIME Energy, and Via Veneto.

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For almost 30 years, Fineman PR has been consistently recognized for its award-winning food and beverage campaigns. The agency specializes in brand PR, crisis communications and multicultural engagement for a full range of food and other CPG categories, including conventional and organic foods, nutritional supplements, confections, and wine and spirits.

Fineman PR excels in building category leadership for its clients. We demonstrate why a client's brand promise merits audience trial and trust. Fineman PR's high-profile crisis communications

work, including product recalls, labor negotiations, activist demonstrations, brand defamation, high profile lawsuits and workplace accidents, is nationally renowned. We safeguard and reinforce client reputations.

Recent work includes full-service marketing communications and issues management for Foster Farms poultry; leadership positioning for brands and company executives; blogger and influencer relations programming; social/digital content strategy and development; media training; cause marketing and community relations; and internal and retailer communications. Fineman PR's lifestyle, wine and multicultural divisions add specialty services tailored to each client's needs.

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Finn Partners Food & Beverage Specialty Practice envisions the industry differently, by taking a holistic lifestyle approach about enjoying the experience of food whether it is shopping, preparing, eating at home or dining out. The team has produced award-winning results for a diverse group of clients touching every aspect of the food and wine experience.

We are passionate professional communicators, charged with creating and executing integrated marketing campaigns for our clients. Social Media, and digital communications, our signature campaigns are created especially for Restaurant, Fast Casual and QSR clients as well as Grocery and CPG clients and spirits and wine clients. Food and beverage clients include Jamba Juice, Cinnabon, Jack Daniel's, J. Alexander's Family of Brands, Omaha Steaks, Rioja wines, Treasury Wine Estates, Peet's Coffee, Carvel, Levy Restaurants and others.

We are proud of our work to not only drive sales but also help companies evolve their brand nar-

rative. Using our completely integrated communications approach, we have transformed Jamba Juice into an iconic smoothie maker and Peet's Coffee into a leader in coffee movement. We also helped Levy Restaurants develop from a leading sports and entertainment restaurateur into a family of brands designing unforgettable live entertainment experiences.

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FoodMinds is an award-winning communications and consulting company boldly transforming the way the world thinks about food, nutrition and health. We harness communications, science and public affairs to establish unique selling propositions and produce novel food and nutrition programs. Clients come to FoodMinds when they want to create a better story that makes a difference, and tell it in a way that achieves their objectives through measurable results. FoodMinds brings together the right mix of talented, seasoned and motivated professionals — from registered dietitians, consumer marketers and media strategists to PhDs, science writers and public affairs experts — to shape a new food frontier with our clients where people are healthier and happier.

Clients include: Almond Board of California, American Heart Association, Applegate, Can Manufacturers Institute, Chobani, Dairy Management, Inc., Diageo, Hass Avocado Board, Mondelez, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Nestlé, Sabra Dipping Company and Welch's.

FoodMinds is a wholly owned division of PadillaCRT, a top 10 independent public relations and communications company.

FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN

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Rick French, Chairman & CEO



San Francisco-based Fineman PR developed a content-rich strategy, heavily weighted on influencer marketing, to help poultry client Foster Farms redefine comfort food. The campaign drove engagement with the brand and made in-roads with new audiences, resulting in more than 148 million impressions.

David Gwyn, President / Principal
Natalie Best, Executive Vice President / Director of Client Services / Principal

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs and brand communications agency and the winner of the *Holmes Report* 2016 Consumer Agency of the Year and the Bulldog Reporter Communications Agency of the Year. Founded in April 1997 by Agency Chairman & CEO Rick French, FWV employs 103 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C. headquarters and New York City, Los Angeles and Tampa offices.

FWV is home to one of the country's largest food and beverage practice areas and has been ranked in the top 20 nationally by *O'Dwyer's* for more than a decade. FWV specializes in creating maximum brand exposure for its clients through strategic partnerships, paid endorsements, sponsor relations, event management, social media, mobile and experiential marketing and traditional earned media outreach programs that stimulate product trial, increase brand awareness and drive purchase intent.

FWV's food and beverage clients

include some of the world's leading companies and brands, including Hood River Distillers, Pendleton Whisky, Melitta Coffee, Moe's Southwest Grill and Atlantic Natural Foods.

FWV has also produced award-winning campaigns that significantly increased product sales for the likes of The Coca-Cola Company (NESTEA, Gold Peak, Minute Maid, DASANI and Simply Orange), Celebrity Chef Lorena Garcia, the North Carolina Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association, Brinker International (Maggiano's Little Italy restaurants), Elevation Burger, House-Autry, ConAgra (Slim Jim, Pemmican Beef Jerky), Nabisco Foods, Brown-Forman (Jack Daniel's), Whole Foods Market, Diageo North America (Bulleit Bourbon), BRAND Napa Valley, Grain and Barrel Spirits and Smithfields Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q, among many others.

The April issue of *O'Dwyer's* will profile firms that focus on social media, as well as video & broadcast service companies. If you would like to be listed, contact Senior Editor Jon Gingerich at 646/843-2080 or jon@odwyerpr.com



A mixologist at High Street on Hudson in New York City pours an original cocktail made with TABASCO® Sauce at the annual pepper harvest celebration. Hunter PR works with TABASCO to execute these events, known as Harvest Parties, all over the world in cities like New York, London and Bali. During events, attendees — including food media, chefs and social media influencers — become fully immersed in the world of TABASCO, from seed to sauce, through the food, drink and overall experience.

HALL PR

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Steven Hall, *President & Founder*
Lisa Hammer, *General Manager*

Founded in 1996, Hall PR is a global hospitality/lifestyle public relations, consulting and concept development agency headquartered in New York City. Hall PR is affiliated with Andrew Freeman & Co in San Francisco, CA and Office K2M in Tokyo, Japan.

At Hall PR we stop at nothing to get our clients the media exposure they deserve, and our cutting edge out of the box thinking has catapulted our clients to new heights in the media world. We are the eyes and ears of our clients and are constantly bringing our ideas to the table and collaborating on how to better achieve our joint goals. We look at each client as an individual, and believe that everyone has a right to have their story told. We are proud to be the storytellers for such passionate and talented people as those whom we represent.

Our goal is to lend our experience and know-how to growing restaurant and hotel groups who are seeking representation and concepts for properties as they expand around the globe.

Specialties include: Media Relations, Social Media, Concept Development, Overseas Licensing Agreements, Culinary/FOH consulting, and Marketing Initiatives.

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Samantha Jacobs, *Founder and President*

Hemsworth Communications is a full-service, award-winning hos-

pitality, F&B, travel and lifestyle public relations agency that crafts customized, tailored strategic plans to fit each client's specific goal, producing unparalleled results and surpassing expectations. With offices in Fort Lauderdale and Atlanta, Hemsworth prides itself on its passion, insights and connections. Capabilities include corporate communications strategy, brand development initiatives, writing, thought leadership, new openings/events, social media, guerilla marketing campaigns and more.

A sampling of Hemsworth's global client roster includes: AmaWaterways, Best Western Hotels & Resorts, Bistro, Clearwater Uncorked, Coral Hospitality, JWB Prime Steak and Seafood, Landshark Lager, Margaritaville Holdings, Panorama Restaurant and Sky Lounge, and Pearl Beach Club.

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Partners: Grace Leong, Jonathan Lyon, Mark Newman, Donetta Allen, Gigi Russo, Erin Hanson

Hunter Public Relations is an award-winning, consumer products public relations firm with particular expertise in food, beverages, and nutrition. Hunter PR's creative approach and client service-orientation has led to some of the most enduring client relationships in the business including Tabasco Brand Pepper Sauce, who was our first client 28 years ago, and still a client today. Other clients include some of America's most iconic and respected food and beverage companies including Campbell Soup Company, Diageo, E&J Gallo Winery, Mondelez, Outback Steakhouse, Plum Organics, Post Foods, Red Bull, and Smithfield.

With offices in New York and London and a strategic footprint in markets across North America, Hunter PR's 120-person firm offers a full suite of strategic marketing PR services including: research and insights; media relations; social media marketing; Hispanic outreach; social responsibility initiatives; special event production and sponsorship activation; product introductions and anniversaries; nutrition and recipe initiatives; talent negotiations; media integrations; and crisis counseling. Hunter PR's award-winning graphic and digital design team creates everything from program logos and collateral materials to innovative, custom social and digital media applications in-house. Revitalizing mature brands, creating buzz around new products and building awareness among key influencer groups (including the epicurean and nutritional health communities) are among the firm's specific areas of expertise.

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Thomas Ryan, *CEO*
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Established in 1998, ICR partners with companies to develop

— Continued on page 28

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President, Founder & CEO



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Omega World Travel brings 42 years of travel industry knowledge and expertise to you, combining personalized service and advanced travel technology solutions.

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Marketing Maven client Chalos showed KTLA viewers what they could taste at LA Weekly's Tacolandia.

ICR

Continued from page 26

and execute strategic communications programs and advisory services that achieve business goals, build credibility, and enhance the long-term value of the enterprise. The firm's highly differentiated service model, which pairs capital markets veterans with senior communications professionals, brings deep sector knowledge and relationships to clients in more than 20 industries. Today, ICR is one of the largest and most experienced independent advisory firms in the world maintaining offices in Boston, Connecticut, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Hong Kong and Beijing.

Clients: Boot Barn, Chunghwa Telecom Co. Ltd., Cobalt Int'l Energy, Dave & Busters, FleetCor Technologies, Inc., Fossil,

Inc., Freshpet, Genuine Parts Co., Gildan Activewear, Harman, Herbalife Ltd., HubSpot, IAC, Jarden Corp., Lazard Freres & Co. LLC, La Quinta Holdings, Inc., Legg Mason & Co., LLC, lululemon athletica, Mobileye, Michaels, Michael Kors, New Relic, Ocwen Financial Corp., Pandora Media, Inc., Paramount Group, Inc., Planet Fitness, Inc., Red Hat, Inc., Shake Shack, Starwood Property Trust, VF Corp., Williams-Sonoma, Inc., Wingstop, Workiva and Zoës Kitchen.

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Ink Link Marketing is a full-service marketing communications firm that specializes in the restaurant, foodservice and hospitality industries. The firm offers PR, promotions, LSM, new product launches, grand opening support, corporate communications, employee communications and crisis communications. Ink Link is headquartered in South Florida with a satellite office in the Los Angeles area. Foodservice clients include: Church's Chicken, The Krystal Company, Ovation Brands (parent company to Ryan's, Home-Town Buffet, Old Country Buffet, Country Buffet, Fire Mountain and Tahoe Joe's), On The Border Mexican Grill & Cantina, Tropical Smoothie Café, Forever Yogurt, Fishbowl and MIC Food.

LANE

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Wendy Lane Stevens, *Managing Partner*

LANE, a Finn Partners Company, builds buzz and drives trial and sales for brands from coast to coast. With over 25 years of experience across the food and beverage industry, LANE's seasoned specialists know how to target messages and elevate brands. Drawing on insights garnered

from firsthand experience as well as from media, influencer and consumer circles, LANE's integrated campaigns connect across traditional and digital media, retailers and restaurants, and events.

LANE's award-winning campaigns have produced measureable results for national and international clients in the wine, beer and spirits; water, juice and coffee; and natural, organic and specialty food categories including Moonstruck Chocolate Co., Snake River Farms, Double R Ranch, International Olive Council, José Andrés Foods, Oregon Strawberry Commission, Trailblazer Foods, Olympia Provisions, Steaz, Portland Roasting Coffee, Wines from Spain, E. & J. Gallo Winery, Cupcake Vineyards, Sokol Blosser Winery and 10 Barrel Brewing.

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Named to *Entrepreneur* magazine's 2016 Entrepreneur 360 List as one of the Most Entrepreneurial Companies in America, Marketing Maven's sophisticated share of voice and sentiment analysis tools help to shape campaign strategy for food and beverage clients. Aligning with key influencers and utilizing grassroots social media tactics, paired with traditional media relations, generates significant impact for clients.

From an online cooking school to patented functional ingredients, the bicoastal team at Marketing Maven knows how to navigate food and beverage PR and social media campaigns. We specialize in showcasing your brand and increasing sales with unique pitch concepts distributed to top media for national TV, radio, newspaper, magazine and online coverage.

Marketing Maven is 8(a) certified by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Women's Business Enterprise (WBE), has WOSB status with the government and DBE, CUCP and CPUC certification.



Kimberly Miller, *President of Ink Link Marketing.*

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Michael Layne, Managing Partner

Marx Layne has been providing cost-effective marketing, public relations and digital media on a local, regional and national basis to the food and beverage sector since 1987.

Services offered to clients include media relations, social media, grand openings, product launches, special events, crisis and issues management, internal communications, community engagement programs, sampling events, blogger relations, online reputation management, direct mail, eblasts, graphic design, web development and design, content creation, brochure and newsletter production, and expanding concepts into new markets.

Clients include fine dining, fast casual, QSRs, supermarket chains, and food and beverage manufacturers and suppliers. We have successfully introduced concepts new to Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Florida and other markets.

Our creativity is boundless with one example being when Marx Layne conceptualized and managed all aspects of a product launch for a global restaurant brand that featured Nik Wallenda walking a high wire 80 feet above the City of Detroit, generating nearly \$1 million in national media coverage. Wallenda later went on to break Guinness World Records crossing Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon.

PADILLACRT

1101 West River Pkwy., #400
(Headquarters)
Minneapolis, MN 55415
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PadillaCRT.com

Ed Hoffman, Senior Vice President

PadillaCRT is a top 10 independent public relations and communications company. Its 240 employee owners use insightful strategies to help clients develop deep connections with the people who are important to their success. Its 360-degree approach uses research, branding, advertising, de-

sign, digital, social, mobile, media relations and crisis management expertise to build corporate and product brands with customers, investors, employees and communities.

PadillaCRT's Food, Beverage and Nutrition Practice is one of the strongest and most experienced in the country. Representing both brands and marketing cooperatives, the agency covers all audiences: consumer, foodservice, retail and manufacturing. PadillaCRT's team includes food experts; wine and spirits experts; writers and publicists; registered dietitians; recipe developers; and research, branding and digital specialists. Its food and beverage teams' unique in-house resources include a culinary studio near national media in New York City and an extensive food and beverage library.

Clients in the food and beverage sectors include Bordeaux wines, the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers, Hass Avocado Board, Prosciutto di Parma, U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and Welch's.

FoodMinds, an award-winning food and nutrition communications and consulting company, is a wholly owned division of PadillaCRT. PadillaCRT is a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, a partnership of 143 independently owned partner offices in 115 cities on six continents.

PEPPERCOMM, INC.

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Steve Cody, Co-CEO & Co-Founder

Ed Moed, Co-CEO & Co-Founder
Ted Birkhahn, Partner & President
Ann Barlow, Partner & President,
West Coast

Deborah Brown, Partner & Managing Director

Jacqueline Kolek, Partner & Managing Director
Maggie O'Neill, Partner & Managing Director

Peppercomm is an independent owned 21-year-old integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York with offices in San Francisco and London. Helping clients see around the corner and determine



Nik and Lijana Wallenda walked a high wire 80 feet above the City of Detroit to promote McDonald's coffee. The event and media campaign orchestrated by Marx Layne & Company generated nearly \$1 million in media coverage.

what's next sets Peppercomm apart from other integrated communications and marketing firms. It enables us to push boundaries while mitigating risk for clients in financial services, consumer, B-to-B and multi-industry sectors.

Our unique approach and dynamic workplace attract the best talent who, in turn, help us win and retain the best clients. While we've won countless awards, we're most proud of being named Best Place to Work in New York City by *Crain's New York Business* and a Best Workplace for Women by Great Place to Work® and *Fortune*.

Our combined years of deep category experience and love of what we do shapes our work. We engage your audiences on every level and set your brand apart. And we do all this to help your bottom-line and build your business. So get in touch. We're all ears.

POLLOCK COMMUNICATIONS

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Louise Pollock, President

Pollock Communications is an independent PR and marketing communications agency that offers cutting edge expertise in traditional and social media outreach for food, beverage, health & wellness, and lifestyle clients. With an established background

in reaching influencers who affect change, Pollock provides impactful and successful social and traditional communications campaigns. Founded in 1991, Pollock has been powering change for its client for decades. We pioneered communications for the functional food movement, creating some of the major food trends of the past 10 years, including making tea the healthy drink of the new millennium and making chocolate a healthy indulgence. Most recently, Pollock positioned cranberries as the superfruit of Millennials through a creative, award-winning social media campaign that helped to create a new generation of cranberry lovers. The Cranberry Friendsgiving Photo Contest, which encouraged Millennials to share their Friendsgiving cranberry creations on social media, helped increase awareness of the superfruit among a key target, helped increase sales and positioned cranberries at the center of a new American tradition, Friendsgiving.

For more than 25 years, we have been powering change for *Fortune* 100 food and beverage companies and global commodity foods, working to direct, shape and amplify their health and wellness stories. By strategically targeting and influencing food policymakers, traditional and social media, retail professionals and the healthcare community, Pollock Communications delivers results that change consumer perceptions and protect and enhance a brand's

— Continued on page 30



Pollock Communications is honored with a Big Apple Award by the New York Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America for its millennial-focused Cranberry Marketing Committee social media campaign, creating a new generation of cranberry lovers.

POLLOCK COMMS.

— Continued from page 29

position in the market. We utilize creative and impactful media outreach, evidence-based science, in-

fluencer advocacy and social media to achieve measurable results in brand awareness. We change consumer perceptions through influential healthcare professional (HCP) recommendations, and by generating media coverage and social media buzz that impacts con-

sumer purchasing decisions.

In addition to PR practitioners and marketers, our staff includes media-savvy registered dietitians who can address health & nutrition issues that are top-of-mind for today's print, broadcast and online journalists. Over the last two decades, Pollock has cultivated long-term relationships and trained a network of spokespeople, including media registered dietitians, celebrity chefs, social media celebrities, medical doctors and scientists, who are available and ready to deliver key messages for a variety of our clients in broadcast, print and social media.

We believe in pushing boundaries, breaking barriers and asking, "what if?" We diligently do our homework to develop an executable, strategic plan that delivers measurable results... every time.

Clients: A2 Milk, Abbott's EAS Brand, American Society of Hypertension, Cranberry Institute, Cranberry Marketing Committee USA, Fifty50 Foods, Frito-Lay, Gourmet Factory, PepsiCo's Quaker Brand, Seafood Nutrition Partnership, Tea Board of India, Tea Council of the USA, The Dannon Company, The Danone International Institute, USA Rice Federation and Whey Protein Research Consortium.



The New York Times captured the iconic Mr. Chow, a Quinn client, in a Food cover story on his madcap empire.

QUINN

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www.quinn.pr

Miami
310 NW 26th St
Miami, FL 33127
786/600-3954

Los Angeles
(opening May 1)

Quinn represents a select group of Food, Wine + Spirits clients.

Currently these brands include: MR CHOW, Pokéworks, Del Frisco's, Sullivan's Steakhouses, The Deck at Island Gardens, ZUMA, A Fish Called Avalon, Merriman's Restaurants, Monkeypod Kitchen, La Centrale, Stone and The Farm at Belle Mont Farm.

We help our clients define their visions, build brands and drive business.

RF|BINDER

950 Third Avenue, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10022
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www.rfbinder.com
Twitter: @rfbinder

Amy Binder, CEO
Atalanta Rafferty, Executive Managing Director, Food & Beverage

At RF|Binder, we work with companies, brands and institutions that are often in the most transformational period in their history, that are disruptors in their category, that are purpose driven and that are addressing the core issues of our society today. We seize every opportunity to tell a client's story, and we dive head first into their business. We believe that our senior hands-on management, emphasis on strategic thinking, and deep expertise in the food industry sets us apart from the competition. Our work ignites impactful results that not only reach goals, but also critically strengthen brands' identities, to ultimately support and invigorate businesses' bottom line.

Food and beverage is a cornerstone practice at RF|Binder, with experience working for more than 60 food and beverage clients across the industry including QSR, restaurant, and supermarket brands. We've worked at both the

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#UNDER35POTUS was a social movement created by Captain Morgan in 2016 to inspire a younger generation to become more involved in politics by allowing them the opportunity to be POTUS. Taylor conceived and led a fully integrated campaign through digital, paid, earned, experiential, PR and social. The agency executed a very bold campaign that brought to life the fun and irreverent spirit of a Brand. The campaign launched with an open letter in the *New York Times* and a Petition on WethePeople.org, as well as a series of unique media partnerships including BuzzFeed, MiTu, Tinder and ESPN.

RF | BINDER

— Continued from page 30

brand and corporate level, for both *Fortune* 500 food and beverage companies and start-up brands. With our deep understanding of the food landscape, we will help clients discover what's next for their business.

TAYLOR

The Empire State Building
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3800
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Tony Signore, CEO & Managing Partner
Mike Costabile, Executive Vice President

Taylor partners exclusively with category leading consumer brands that utilize lifestyle, sports, and

entertainment platforms to engage consumers and drive business growth.

Named "Consumer Agency of the Decade" by *The Holmes Report*, Taylor has more than 100 employees with headquarters in New York and offices in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Charlotte. The agency provides a full array of services including: brand planning; creative; digital strategy and social media; strategic media relations; consumer insights; measurement and evaluation; event creative and production, multicultural; and talent procurement and training.

Taylor develops and executes marketing communications programs for category leading food and beverage brands, including — for the past 29 years — Diageo, the world's leading premium drinks business. Via social campaigns and strategic media relations, Taylor has successfully launched new products, reinvigorated iconic brands and sustained momentum in the marketplace for Diageo's adult beverage favorites such as Crown Royal, Guinness, Captain Morgan, Smirnoff and Bulleit, among others.

The agency also partners with leading consumer food brands for a wide range of services, including product introductions, sponsorship

activations, and social amplification.

TREVELINO/ KELLER

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Trevelino/Keller has established its food, beverage and franchising practice as one of the more accomplished in the U.S., targeting emerging and middle-market companies across four channels: restaurants, franchising, manufacturing and associations. With its progressive foodie agency culture, from wine making to its own organic bee colony to seasoned salt production, the firm is sought after for international, national and hyperlocal programming in four core offerings: Public Relations, Digital/Social Marketing, and Demand Generation.

With a commitment to launching new brands and re-establishing lost leaders, Trevelino/Keller's disruptive approach to strategy and creative makes it one of the more innovative agencies in the industry. Its success cross fertilizing its food and beverage practice with franchising, environment, health, lifestyle and even technology, gives it a leg up on those agencies limited by a franchise or food and beverage only focus. Its balanced base of experience in B2B and B2C enable companies to consolidate their agencies for an integrated approach. The firm's growth in digital/social marketing has resonated with those brands and concepts interested in a dual national and hyperlocal approach with tactics ranging from paid search, organic social, remarketing and social leadgen.

Notable work includes Johnny Rockets, Corner Bakery Café, TCBY, Moe's Southwest Grill, Starbucks Coffee Company, Mrs. Fields, National Foundation for Celiac Awareness, Great Southern Craft Beer Competition and the Atlanta Food & Wine Festival. The firm extends its commitment to food and beverage four times a year with its original Winepreneurs event series, hosted in partnership with Silicon Valley Bank, for entrepreneurs who love wine.

WEBER SHANDWICK

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Gail Heimann, President
Janet Helm, MS, RD, Chief Food and Nutrition Strategist, North America

Weber Shandwick has built one of the largest and most successful food and nutrition practices in North America. Our clients include many of the world's leading food companies, and we've been behind some of the most iconic campaigns for food brands in the country. Weber Shandwick also has deep expertise in turning food industry groups like milk and pork into brands with award-winning campaigns that have changed perceptions and built demand.

Our food clients range from the indulgent to functional, and they each have a story to tell. In today's "always-on" world, we help brands engage, always. We manage the online communities of our multiple food clients and have extensive experience in creating engaging content and managing issues. Our work involves launching new products, reinvigorating brands, establishing thought leadership, and leveraging scientific research to change the way consumers and influencers think about specific foods or ingredients.

We have a dedicated food and nutrition team that includes some of the industry's most strategic senior counselors and content experts — including registered dietitians, PhD nutrition scientists, former and current journalists and trained chefs. These imbedded experts have extensive experience in public-private partnerships, alliance building, food and agriculture policy, food regulations, sustainability, food safety and crisis communications.

We have strong relationships with food and nutrition influencers, including registered dietitians and bloggers, who are increasingly influencing the media landscape. Weber Shandwick created and continues to support the Nutrition Blog Network — an aggregator of more than 900 blogs written by registered dietitians. Our food practice specialists have extensive experience in engaging the communities that matter most to our food and beverage clients. ○

View & download profiles of hundreds of PR firms specializing in a dozen industry areas at:
www.odwyerpr.com

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2015)	Firm	Net Fees (2015)
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$108,204,736	26. Lambert, Edwards & Assocs. , Grand Rapids, MI	954,000
2. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	15,408,500	27. LANE , Portland, OR	\$920,005
3. Hunter PR , New York, NY	15,000,000	28. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	745,753
4. Zeno Group , New York, NY	10,177,022	29. BLAZE , Santa Monica, CA	707,435
5. FoodMinds , Chicago, IL	8,287,748	30. Status Labs , Austin, TX	683,859
6. Taylor , New York, NY	7,230,000	31. Quinn , New York, NY	572,997
7. PadillaCRT , Minneapolis, MN	6,724,110	32. J Public Relations , New York, NY	564,629
8. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	6,538,830	33. Stuntman PR , New York, NY	524,000
9. Regan Communications Group , Boston, MA	5,265,400	34. Bizcom Associates , Addison, TX	450,000
10. RF I Binder Partners , New York, NY	5,011,118	35. The Power Group , Dallas, TX	408,477
11. Finn Partners , New York, NY	4,039,000	36. Maccabee , Minneapolis, MN	380,812
12. Ruder Finn , New York, NY	3,500,000	37. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	375,000
13. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	3,400,000	38. TransMedia Group , Boca Raton, FL	201,446
14. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	2,919,464	39. rbb Public Relations , Miami, FL	198,455
15. W2O Group , San Francisco, CA	2,700,000	40. Rosica Communications , Paramus, NJ	192,890
16. French I West I Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	2,689,771	41. North 6th Agency (N6A) , New York, NY	179,404
17. Konnect Public Relations , Los Angeles, CA	2,308,196	42. Red Sky PR , Boise, ID	140,229
18. Gold PR , Corona, CA	2,000,000	43. Hemsworth Communications , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	121,000
19. 360 Public Relations , Boston, MA	1,726,120	44. McNeely Pigott & Fox PR , Nashville, TN	107,657
20. LEVICK , Washington, DC	1,629,529	45. Marketing Maven PR , Camarillo, CA	97,400
21. SPM Communications , Dallas, TX	1,317,334	46. The Hodges Partnership , Richmond, VA	96,000
22. WE , Bellevue, WA	1,147,000	47. Sachs Media Group , Tallahassee, FL	45,000
23. Butin Integrated Comms. , St. Simons Island, GA	1,082,317	48. Schneider Associates , Boston, MA	18,500
24. Peppercomm , New York, NY	976,482	49. Lovell Communications , Nashville, TN	6,000
25. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	973,103	50. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	3,500

Donald Trump and the end of public relations

By Fraser Seitel

Depending on who you talk to, President Donald Trump could mean the end of everything from illegal immigration to the environment to the Mexican peso to the proper use of grammar as we know it.



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*.

There's one more item that must be added to the list: the practice of public relations.

Positive PR begins with proper performance and good behavior and communicating that reality to the public. In other words, "doing good and getting caught."

But today, with the onslaught of Typhoon Trump, the practice of PR may be doomed. In less than two weeks

in the saddle, the new American President had already violated a half-dozen of the cardinal principles of public relations.

PR Principle #1: Never lie

The cardinal rule of the practice of public relations is to never, ever lie. Your most important asset is your reputation. And if you lie, you lose it.

In PR, where practitioners regularly explain to reporters and bloggers, what their clients do and why they do it, lying is the quickest way to lose the trust of those from whom you are attempting to gain "third party endorsement."

President Trump, in his very first week, insisted that his inauguration drew more viewers than any in history (it didn't) and also that despite the official results, more legitimate voters voted for him than for his opponent. "In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally," Trump said.

In response, even the traditionally circumspect *New York Times* headlined its front-page article, "Trump Repeats Lie About Popular Vote in Meeting with Lawmakers."

PR Principle #2: Always check your facts

Journalists trust people who supply them with accurate facts. They build long-term relationships with public relations professionals who feed them the straight story. And they don't trust sources who, purposefully or not, regularly get their facts wrong.

President Trump seems to have a problem with "facts," whether tweeting or speaking. For example, the difficult relations with America's southern neighbor began when the President-to-be claimed: "Mexico is sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

The facts are a bit different, with the most recent number of immigrant sex offenders equaling two percent, with Latinos accounting for nine percent of U.S. sexual assaults; whites accounted for 71 percent.

PR Principle #3: Never attack the media

In the days when print newspapers and magazines ruled the communications landscape, the rule in public relations was, "Never get in a shouting match with a journalist who buys ink by the barrel."

The same holds true in the Age of the Internet and Social Media. Savvy newsmakers learn to slough off the slings and arrows hurled at reporters and bloggers. They don't let media criticism get under their skin. The new President, of course, isn't most people.

After the *Times* criticized his claims about winning the popular vote, Trump tweeted: "The failing @nytimes has been wrong about me from the very beginning. Said I would lose the primaries, then the general election. Fake News!"

This, despite the fact Trump had earlier sat down with the paper's editors and agreed to "bury the hatchet."

PR Principle #4: Don't insult adversaries

What you say behind closed doors is your business. But what you say for attribution can get you in trouble. So, when asked about a competitor or opponent you just don't like, it's always better to demur, i.e. Discretion is the better part of valor. But Donald Trump doesn't know the definition of "discretion."

When John Lewis, the 76-year-old civil right icon who once had his skull cracked open defending the rights of black people, suggested Trump was an "illegitimate President," the President fired back with guns blazing: "Congressman John Lewis should spend more time on fixing and helping his district, which is in horrible shape and falling apart (not to mention crime infested) rather than falsely complaining about the election results. All talk, talk, talk — no action or results. Sad!"

Even Trump's most devoted advisers must have cringed at that one.

PR Principle #5: Always keep your word

The quickest way to lose your reputation is to promise something and then fail to follow through. When President Obama drew a "line in the sand," threatening to retaliate against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, his credibility suffered when he never acted on his pledge.

So smart leaders won't promise something unless they know they can back it up. And then there's Donald Trump. While virtually every U.S. presidential candidate shares his tax returns with voters, Trump steadfastly refused. "I'm not releasing the tax returns because, as you know, they're under audit. So I can't release them till that's done."

A week ago the Administration announced that the President, on second thought, would be releasing nothing.

PR Principle #6: Take the high road

Finally, public relations advisors uniformly counsel clients to take the "high road" in any public debate. Leaders should be admired, looked up to. And that means that they must always act with decorum and quality and refinement.

Here's the "refinement" of America's new President describing his most vocal critic, the actress Rosie O'Donnell: "I said very tough things to her and I think everyone would agree that she deserves it and nobody feels sorry for her ... Rosie's a loser, a real loser. I look forward to taking lots of money from my nice fat little Rosie."

All of which suggests that if President Trump proceeds on his current course — and there's no reason to believe he'll change any time soon — the trusted, public relations advisor may be destined to go the way of the floppy disc. ○

PR news brief

Sharp expands to Florida

Sharp Communications, recently named one of the "50 Most Powerful PR Firms in America" by the *New York Observer*, has branched out to Florida to keep up with an increasing number of clients based in or relocating to the sunshine state.

The new office in West Palm Beach will handle accounts in Miami, Palm Beach, Orlando and Tallahassee.

Sharp, founded in 2000, employs 40 and focuses on clients in architecture & design; food, beverage & wellness; luxury lifestyle; the arts; financial services and philanthropy.

Nicole Janok, a Florida native and graduate of the University of Florida, re-joins Sharp as Senior VP and Regional Director and will head the new office. She has spent time as a reporter at the *Palm Beach Post* and held the role of Account Director at Sharp from 2011 to 2015.

Managing for prosperity in 2017 and beyond (part II)

By Richard Goldstein

In the January 2017 issue, I discussed the practice of managing for prosperity in a column that discussed some of the lessons taught to me by Al Croft. If you don't



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

have access to that column I'm happy to forward a copy of it to you.

By way of review, some of the fundamental factors that you need to consider to be successful in managing a PR firm are as follows:

- Write a business plan if you don't already have one. If you need help with this, let me know.

- Develop a short

and long-term budget. I can assist you with this as well.

- Properly plan for staff needs.
- Develop a marketing plan. If one is in place, have you implemented the plan and is it working?
- Develop and promote a unique strategic position.
- Aim for 80 percent to 85 percent staff utilization.
- Monitor write-offs. Do not carry work-in-process if it can't be billed. You're just fooling yourself.
- Track client profitability. What good is a "marquee" client if you lose money every hour you work on a project? This is not to say that having the marquee client even at a loss is not worth it. My point is you need to evaluate the relationship and decide if it is worth keeping the client.
- Monitor individual staff productivity.
- Monitor overall agency profitability. You should do this each month. If you are not satisfied with your overall profitability take out the shovel!
- Determine your billing rates based on your agency labor, overhead and desired profitability goals. I will write further on this in the next few months.
- Make sure your rates are competitive. Never give a fee estimate until you fully understand the value your agency brings to the client!

A few keys to profitability

Assuming you have or will develop a business plan, consider developing a marketing niche or strategic position. An example of

this may be digital services. Describe what your firm is, what you want and the markets you currently serve and those that offer opportunities.

Analyze current capabilities and those you will need to move into new markets. By the way, you may decide that in order to be successful, you will need to acquire new talent by acquiring another agency. I have written in the past about the concept of a "Bolt on acquisition." Delineate strengths and corporate culture, the things that make your firm unique and memorable! Ask yourself, would I hire me?

Productivity

A problem often experienced by small and medium sized agencies is low productivity: billing less than 85 percent of available time to clients. High productivity (not over servicing) depends on attracting and maintaining excellent staff that have high values and morals, and an environment that motivates staff by building intellectual capital. OK, is this your agency?

I have to tell you, money alone will not do it. Cash is the goal at the end of the day. However, you cannot get it without great staff. Staff is one of the most important — if not the most important — asset you have. If your agency can't build staff intellectual capital, they will leave regardless of what money you offer them. Employees need to understand, be recognized for and be proud of their contribution to your firm's success. They need to develop a strong sense of their own self-worth.

It's your responsibility as management to educate staff about the agency workload and to train them to balance (manage) their own productivity by getting help in handling peak loads or asking for additional work when their load is about to drop off. They can't be afraid to say "I'm light on work." A high level of staff interdependence is essential to overall high productivity. Allow staff that is not busy to work on other projects. Don't worry about the hours or realization. Remember you're building staff intellectual capital!

Setting billing rates

Your agency needs a system for measuring profitability and productivity. Many smaller agencies come up with numerous reasons why they don't need a time and billing system. In my view, a time and billing system is a cost accounting tool. It helps you measure both individual profitability and client profitability. It is not necessarily a billing tool.

Unless your client has agreed to pay you by the hour, your client could care less

about whether you have a time and billing system. The recording of time should not be the basis for billing a client unless that is the agreement. You need to know if you made or lost money on a client and why.

There's a school of thought out there that advocates that there's no need to keep track of time at all! Those that advocate this approach say manage by the income statement. If your margins are where you want them to be, this is all that counts! This is true. However, my answer to those that advocate eliminating the time and billing is you lose the ability to understand how you arrived at the margin!

According to Rick Gould, it's important to be flexible in tailoring your fees to the client and the assignment, whether it is crisis management, product launch, ongoing brand awareness or something else. The basic goal is to provide your clients with services and, in return, to bill and collect for these services. To do this, there are a variety of both time-honored and innovative mechanisms and a great many issues to consider. I'll discuss this in greater detail next month.

According to Gould, billing rates are now averaging \$480 per hour for CEOs of agencies with \$25 million or more in net revenues, with rates somewhat higher in the Washington D.C. area. The rate for smaller agencies is \$317 per hour. Agency VPs average \$270 per hour. It's important to establish billing rates for all your staff!

According to the 2015 billing rate survey conducted by Gould — I'll let you know the 2016 results as soon as they are available — firms are increasing rates. According to Gould, this is due in his opinion, to an improved economy and is consistent with growth of the PR industry in both net revenues and operating profit. ○

PR news brief

Resound reps C+A Global

Princeton, NJ-based tech and consumer lifestyle agency Resound Marketing has been named public relations agency of record for electronics, photographic equipment and consumer product manufacturer C+A Global.

C+A Global, formerly known as C&A Marketing, Inc., designs, manufactures and distributes popular consumer products such as the Polaroid, SkyMall, Stanley, and Gold's Gym brands. The Edison, NJ-based company, which maintains satellite offices in London and China, was founded in 2003.

Resound is charged with promoting consumer awareness of C+A Global's portfolio of products and brands and driving sales through earned and paid media placements across mainstream consumer, lifestyle, and technology outlets.

TransCanada taps CGCN in renewed lobbying push

TransCanada, the Calgary, Alberta-based energy giant behind the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, has retained Washington, D.C.-based lobbying and public affairs shop CGCN Group for representation on Capitol Hill regarding energy-related matters.

According to lobbying registration documents filed in February, TransCanada has hired CGCN for help on issues pertaining to “natural gas policies in the United States and between the U.S. and Canada,” “any energy legislation impacting cross border and domestic transmission of natural gas,” and “policy issues and executive branch approval of the Keystone pipeline.”

TransCanada, which owns and manages a network of 2,150 miles of oil pipeline and more than 35,000 miles of gas pipeline across North America, is the owner of the Keystone Pipeline System that runs from Alberta to U.S. refineries in Illinois and Texas. Its proposed Keystone XL extension would transport approximately 83,000 barrels of tar sands each day from a preexisting TransCanada pipeline system in Alberta to Nebraska, where it would then continue via another pipeline network to refineries in the Gulf of Mexico.

The proposed project became the subject of fierce protest among environmental groups and activists. After more than a half-dozen years of review, President Obama in late 2015 denied the permits needed for construction of the XL pipeline, claiming the project wouldn't increase energy security, lower gas prices or “make a meaningful, long term contribution to the economy.”

In January, however, President Donald Trump signed an executive order re-authorizing the Keystone XL pipeline, allowing TransCanada to resubmit its application, thus effectively reviving the project. Trump's January executive action also revived the controversial Dakota Access pipeline, whose approval Obama had similarly blocked late last year.

TransCanada last year spent \$1.1 million in total lobbying expenditures, following \$1.38 million in lobbying spends the year prior. Infamously, TransCanada had previously tapped number-one independent PR giant Edelman to develop a communications program involving its Energy East Pipeline, which would have transported oil from western Canada and the northwestern U.S. to refineries in Quebec. That relationship fell apart in late 2014 after environmental group Greenpeace obtained a cache of documents detailing Edelman's strategy for the project and leaked it to Canadian media outlets.

CGCN, formerly known as Clark Geduldig Cranford & Nielsen, is the right-leaning lobbying firm that was founded by Steve Clark, who was previously Communications Director for the National Republican Congressional Committee. ○

Planned Parenthood picks Epplin for lobbying salvo

Planned Parenthood has tapped government relations firm Epplin Strategic Planning for Capitol Hill representation in a bid to protect the organization's federal funding amid ongoing political attacks.

The health services and contraceptive giant, which sees 2.5 million patients annually through a network of about 650 clinics across the U.S., has been a longtime funding target of the GOP.

House Speaker Paul Ryan in January vowed to cut off federal tax dollars for Planned Parenthood as part of a larger measure to



repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. Meanwhile, two U.S. Senators — Joni Ernst (R, IA) and James Lankford (R, OK) — have co-sponsored the bill S.241, or “Protect Funding for Women's Health Care Act,” which would “prohibit federal funding of Planned Parenthood Federation of America” and instead re-allocate those funds to women's healthcare providers that don't provide abortion services.

Planned Parenthood isn't funded directly by the federal government; the majority of its funding comes in the form of preventive care reimbursements through Medicaid or other publicly funded health care programs such as Title X (about 60 percent of PP patients rely on programs such as Medicaid and Title X for their preventive and primary care, according to the organization). Planned Parenthood received \$554 million in federal funding and grants for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. Other funding comes from private contributions. By law, federal funding cannot be allocated for abortions.

The Planned Parenthood account will be managed by Epplin President and Founder Robert Epplin, a former Gephardt Government Affairs VP who was previously Legislative Director to Senator Susan Collins (R, ME) and also handled tax and trade matters for Sen. Gordon Smith (R, OR). Epplin, who began his Senate career as advisor to Sen. Bob Packwood (R-OR) on budgetary, economic, foreign affairs and defense issues, launched his government relations firm in early 2015. ○

SoundExchange signs Farragut

Digital performance rights organization SoundExchange has retained Washington, D.C.-based lobbying firm Farragut Partners for representation on Capitol Hill on issues related to broadcasting and copyright.

SoundExchange collects Internet and satellite radio royalties on the behalf of copyright owners and recording artists. The non-profit, which was formed in 2003 as a division of the Recording Industry Association of America, is run by a board that includes RIAA executives, major music publishers, independent labels and artist representatives. The majority of the organization's collected royalties come from Sirius-XM and web-based music services.

SoundExchange has hired Farragut to voice its opposition to H.Con.Res.13, also known as “Supporting the Local Radio Freedom Act.” That bill, which was introduced in January by Rep. Mike Conaway (R-TX), would prohibit any new performance fee, tax, royalty, or other charges for music played on local radio stations.

Farragut Partners was formed last year by former partners of lobbying firm Ryan, MacKinnon, Vasapoli and Berzok. ○

Iraq issues lobbying response to travel ban

Iraq's embassy in Washington, D.C. has hired national law firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck to lobby on behalf of the Middle Eastern nation to policymakers on Capitol Hill.

BHFS is charged with communicating Iraq-related issues including immigration, defense, economics and overall foreign policy with congressional leadership, administration officials and senior agency staff in Washington, according to Foreign Agents Registration Act documents filed on January 31.

Iraq is one of seven nations — along with Iran, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia — targeted by President Trump's January 27 executive order that temporarily bans travelers from those majority-Muslim nations from entering the U.S. The order also blocks Syrian refugees from entering the country indefinitely.

A federal judge in Seattle blocked key parts of the order in early February, allowing travelers that had been barred from entering the country, but the Justice Department two days later filed an appeal in federal appeals court to reinstate the travel ban. The Ninth Circuit in San Francisco is now considering whether Trump's action violated constitutional protections against religious discrimination. Trump has referred to the hearing as "disgraceful." ○

Glover Park signs Somaliland

The government of Somaliland has hired Washington, D.C. Democratic lobbying giant Glover Park Group to act as an advisor on communications and government relations matters.

Somaliland, which split from the southern country of Somalia and declared its independence after a 1991 civil war, is seen as an autonomous region and functions as a self-declared country.

The East African territory, which has its own currency and army, as well as a democratically elected government, maintains infor-

mal relations with the United Nations, the European Union and countries like the United States, but remains unrecognized internationally as a sovereign state.

According to Foreign Agents Registration Act documents filed in February, Glover Park will advise Somaliland on communications and government relations matters as they pertain to the territory's bilateral relations with the United States. ○

Squire Patton Boggs inks Syrian opposition pact

International law firm Squire Patton Boggs is providing legal and strategic policy advice to Syrian opposition bloc the High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Opposition.

The HNC is an umbrella organization established to represent political and military groups that oppose the Assad regime. Considered Syria's broadest opposition bloc, it was also formed to lay out a democratic Syrian transition plan and establish a delegation that would serve as a reference for negotiations with Syrian regime representatives.

The organization, which is not owned or controlled by anyone, was formed in late 2015 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Members include Syrian groups ranging from Damascus-based oppositionists to moderate armed opposition groups. It is led by chief coordinator Riyad Farid Hijab, who is Syria's former Prime Minister.

Squire Patton Boggs will advise HNC on U.S. policy issues and may also advocate on behalf of the opposition group within the United States, according to Foreign Agents Registration Act documents filed in February.

Squire Patton Boggs Managing Partner Edward J. Newberry, a former staffer to Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) and the House Appropriations Committee, will lead day-to-day efforts for the account.

Squire Patton Boggs will bill HNC \$50,000 per month for the work. The pact ends in September. ○

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.

Sandler Trade LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 16, 2017 for Polymet Alloys Inc.**, Birmingham, AL, regarding preparation of written comments and advocacy with federal agencies and Congressional staff and members pertinent to the Miscellaneous Tariff Bill (MTB) petition and legislative process. Polymet Alloys is solely owned by CIV International LTD, a company in the Cayman Islands.

Mercury Public Affairs, New York, NY **registered Feb. 23, 2017 for Libertas Foundation Inc.**, Brooklyn, NY, to manage external and governmental affairs and PR as it relates to country specific issues for Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia and Greece.

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.

In Defense of Christians, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 20, 2017 on behalf of itself**, regarding H.R. 5961, providing for relief of victims of genocide, in Iraq and Syria and accountability for perpetrators of these crimes.

Baker & Hostetler, LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 22, 2017 for NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association**, Arlington, VA, regarding communications and technology policy.

Confrere Strategies, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 17, 2017 for American Retirement Association**, Arlington, VA, regarding importance of retirement savings to economic growth and financial security.

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 15, 2017 for Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers**, Washington, D.C., regarding the promotion of reasonable fuel efficiency and auto safety standards for the automobile industry.

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