

# O'Dwyer's

Communications & New Media

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## THE FOOD ISSUE

INSIDE THE BIDEN ADMIN'S FOOD & NUTRITION POLICY AGENDA   FOOD BRAND SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH  
THE IMPORTANCE OF EMBARGOES   FOOD PR DURING A CRISIS   TACTICS FOR EARNED AND OWNED MEDIA  
HOW COVID-19 HAS CHANGED CONSUMER FOOD EXPERIENCES   COMMUNICATIONS IN A POST-COVID WORLD  
COVID & THE FULFILLMENT PARADOX   PR TRENDS FOR '21   PROFILES OF FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS  
PR STRATEGIES FOR THE COVID-19 WELLNESS REVOLUTION   BIG TECH'S ROLE IN NEWSPAPERS' DEMISE



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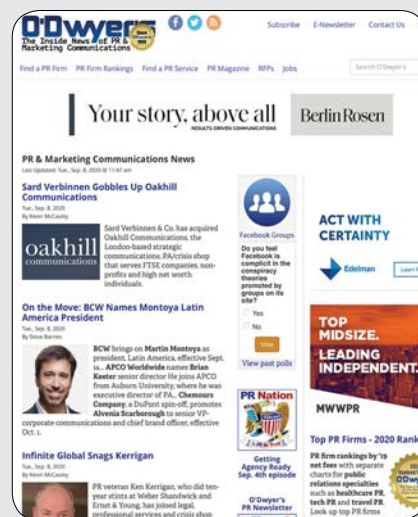
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# Should Facebook, Google pay for news content?

For years, a debate has been raging regarding the role Big Tech companies like Facebook and Google play in the newspaper industry's decline and what responsibility these platforms have in ensuring journalism's survival in the digital age.

The U.S. newspaper sector in 2021 is effectively on life support, with more than a decade of newsroom closures and layoffs as a result of disappearing advertising revenues now hastened by the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. A January Challenger, Gray & Christmas study found that U.S. newsrooms shed a record 16,000 jobs in 2020, a gain of nearly 200 percent from the year prior. In the last year alone, more than 300 U.S. newspapers shuttered, according to a Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill report. As a result, "news deserts" have spread across the U.S., leaving more than 1,800 communities around the country without access to local reporting.

Many cite the practices and market dominance of tech behemoths Facebook and Google for the news industry's endangered status, platforms that thrive by sharing the content created by local news organizations while sharing none of the ad revenue resulting from the clicks that content generates. Now, in the wake of a recent legislative stare-down between Big Tech and Australian lawmakers, a debate has arisen regarding whether these companies should begin effectively subsidizing news coverage in the U.S.

In case you didn't know: Australia's Parliament in February passed a controversial media bargaining law that forces the dominant tech companies like Google and Facebook to negotiate with Australian news publishers and compensate them for the content shared by its users on their platforms.

Supporters say the move lends much-needed aid to Australia's embattled news industry, where smaller, local media outlets have been unable to compete in a digital media ecosystem where Google, Facebook and other tech platforms have used their market dominance to essentially siphon news organizations' web traffic and digital advertising revenues by linking to the content those third-party publishers create. Big Tech's monopolistic power, they argue, has essentially rendered them information gatekeepers with the power to lock local newsrooms out of the advertising marketplace, crippling these outlets' ability to deliver the trustworthy investigative journalism that's critical to any democracy.

Critics say the law unfairly penalizes Google and Facebook, sites that constantly direct massive amounts of reader traffic to news outlets' websites, which allows these publishers to widen their audiences, sell more subscriptions and boost ad revenues. The law also mandates tech platforms to independently bargain with publishers individually for licensing agreements, requiring binding arbitration in cases where an agreement isn't met, a process they say unfairly favors publishers.

Facebook initially responded to the law's passage by saying it would block Australian users from accessing Australian news items on its platform, but quickly reversed that decision. Google, meanwhile, acquiesced and unveiled a plan to begin arraigning ad-sharing deals with publishers, including a multi-year partnership with Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. But arguably, the most significant development has been the global repercussions this precedent sets, as other countries now consider following the Australian government's lead and adopting similar legislation that could allow local publishers to collectively bargain with Big Tech over the news content that's distributed across their platforms.

These efforts have been gaining strength in the United States, where lawmakers for several years have wrangled over whether Facebook and Google stifle competition in the digital economy. A forthcoming series of House Judiciary Committee hearings to begin in March will see lawmakers debate proposals to update U.S. antitrust laws in response to Big Tech's immense market power. Several U.S. lawmakers are also at work drafting legislation that emulates the Australian plan in many ways. Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI), chairman of the House Antitrust Subcommittee, is reintroducing a 2019 bipartisan bill, the Journalism Competition and Protection Act, which would give news publishers a safe harbor from antitrust laws and allow them to negotiate with Big Tech companies on payment for news content. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA) are expected to introduce a similar bill in the Senate.

David Chavern, President and CEO of newspaper trade group the News Media Alliance, told *O'Dwyer's* that his organization was "very supportive" of the Australian bargaining law's passage, likening it to the creation of music licensing in the late nineteenth century, and considers media outlets' newfound ability to collectively negotiate a "historic moment" and a "significant victory for news publishers everywhere."

"There is now a lot of bipartisan support for that core idea in Congress and at a hearing in the House Antitrust Subcommittee next week we hope to outline ways to build upon that idea," Chavern said. "Most particularly, we are going to talk about how we could create a formal system for negotiation and dispute resolution." ○

— Jon Gingerich

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# Google, Facebook to blame for newspapers' demise

Big Tech giants Google and Facebook are the forces primarily responsible for the U.S. newspaper industry's economic collapse, according to a report by the American Economic Liberties Project.

By Jon Gingerich

**A** continuing concentration of advertising on platforms like Google and Facebook is the primary reason for the newspaper industry's economic collapse, according to a new report by the American Economic Liberties Project.

The organization's "The Courage to Learn" report provides an overview of how our antimonopoly laws and other current antitrust policies have contributed to what the authors refer to as a "corporate concentration crisis" in the U.S.

Specifically, the report details what effects under-enforced economic competition policies have had on the news publishing industry, as well as how Google and Facebook were allowed to amass power by essentially monopolizing the online advertising market and siphoning away the revenues that once flowed primarily to newspapers.

Traditionally, advertisements used to be purchased directly from news outlets or through third parties such as ad agencies. Once America's media landscape began shifting online, however, ads were increasingly bought and sold in an automated third-party market controlled by Big Tech, which severed the relationship between publisher and customer and allowed entities such as Google to take an increasingly larger share of every ad dollar spent.

That practice has effectively taken over the media buying market, and now comprises 86 percent of the online advertising space bought and sold, presenting serious economic challenges for newspaper companies.

At the same time, Google and Facebook, which both benefitted from the 2008 financial crisis that savaged ad markets as well as the Internet's shift from desktop to mobile, have relied on "an explicit strategy of monopolization" and took advantage of a lax FTC merger policy environment, with Google acquiring more than 150 companies between 2009 and 2016 and Facebook acquiring more than 50 companies (including Instagram and WhatsApp) during this time period.

The result? Google and Facebook are now two of the largest corporations in the world, effectively controlling 77 percent of local newspaper advertising revenue. Google is easily one of the world's largest sellers of ad space, accounting for nearly \$22 billion in advertising last year, more than any me-

dia company on the globe. Facebook owns more than 70 percent of the social media market share, with ad revenue of nearly \$70 billion in 2019.

Meanwhile, advertising revenue for the U.S. newspaper industry, which peaked at about \$50 billion in 2005, has since been in a free fall, standing at an estimated \$14 billion in 2018.

The report also blamed newspapers' demise on an increase of buyouts by predatory investment companies, strip-mining local news ecosystems of their remaining assets and giving rise to "news deserts," or communities in the U.S. without access to

a local paper. Private equity firms routinely purchase news companies, slash operations and lay off staff until these publications are profitable and then sell them, a process akin to flipping houses. A University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study last year found that more than a quarter of the country's newspapers have disappeared in the last 15 years, accounting for a loss of about 212 daily titles and 1,943 non-dailies since 2004.

The American Economic Liberties Project, which launched last year, is an organization dedicated to addressing the increased concentration of corporate and economic power in the United States. **O**

## Few digital newspaper subscribers actually read the news they pay for

A majority of local news subscribers are "zombie" readers who rarely consume the news they pay for, according to data released by Northwestern University's Medill Spiegel School of Journalism.

By Jon Gingerich

**D**igital subscriptions are critical to local news publishers' bottom lines, but new findings suggest that an increasing number of these subscribers are "zombie" readers who seldom consume what they pay for, highlighting an unnerving trend among readers who remain unengaged even though they may still pay for local news.

Recent data analysis of 45 U.S. news markets conducted by Northwestern University's Medill Spiegel Research Center found that, on average, nearly half of local news outlets' digital subscribers (49 percent) don't visit the news sites they pay for even once a month.

An additional 54 percent said they visit the website of the news outlets they pay for only one day per month or fewer, 58 percent reported visiting two days a month or fewer, 69 percent visited seven days or fewer, and 79 percent visited 15 days or fewer.

An April 2020 report by consumer market research agency Horowitz Research found that the coronavirus outbreak has resulted in a spike in local news consumption, with nearly six in 10 (58 percent) of Americans reporting consuming more local news in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And recent circulation gains at the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and others have underscored the importance of building subscription growth—and not simply selling more advertising—as an essential tactic for publishers to drive revenue and survive in an increasingly post-print world.

A February analysis conducted by media and marketing publication MediaPost found that today's media marketplace reveals two simultaneous trends essentially moving in opposite directions: while consumer media spending soared during the pandemic year, rising 5.6 percent in the U.S. alone, advertising and marketing spending for media publishers collapsed during the same period, declining 7.1 percent in 2020.

The Medill Spiegel Research Center's findings come on the heels of a viral Feb. report, which found that about 42 percent of the *Arizona Republic's* digital-only subscribers didn't read a single article on the paper's website in the last month. That Gannett property, which was founded in 1890, is the Grand Canyon State's largest daily newspaper.

Sharing these findings via Twitter, CNN host Brian Stelter wrote, "I think I've lost the passwords for 42% of the digital outlets I subscribe to." **O**



# Some businesses increased ad spends during pandemic

Despite the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, more small businesses increased their advertising spending in 2020 compared to those that decreased ad investments, according to a recent survey.

By Jon Gingerich

**T**he unprecedented economic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic has decimated industries of all stripes, but many small businesses actually increased their advertising budgets in 2020, according to a recent survey released by business news site The Manifest.

Despite facing the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, The Manifest's "2021 Small Business Survey" found that more companies staffing fewer than 500 employees increased their advertising investments in 2020 compared to those that decreased ad spending. While more than a third (38 percent) of small businesses increased their ad spending during the coronavirus outbreak last year, less than a quarter (22 percent) of small businesses reported decreasing their ad budgets during that time period.

The COVID-19 pandemic also resulted

in a spike in online content consumption, with adults now spending more than 16 hours per day on digital platforms. So, perhaps it's no surprise that social media sites remain the preferred advertising channel for small businesses.

According to the survey, nearly half of small businesses (45 percent) said they now plan to increase their investment in social media advertising in 2021. Small businesses particularly plan to boost their ad spending on Facebook (66 percent), YouTube (42 percent), and Instagram (41 percent), according to the survey. Short-form video platforms Snapchat and TikTok followed, at 15 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

An additional 35 percent of small businesses said they plan to increase their advertising investment on digital video platforms this year.

On the other hand, of the 28 percent of small businesses that say they invest in print advertising, almost all of them (24 percent) said they plan to reduce their print ad spending in 2021.

According to the survey, the majority of small businesses (55 percent) spent less than \$50,000 on advertising last year and only 11 percent spent more than one million dollars.

More than half of small businesses (55 percent) already advertise via social media, and almost half of them (47 percent) currently allocate up to 30 percent of their total ad spend to social media advertising, according to the survey.

The Manifest's "2021 Small Business Survey" polled 500 U.S.-based small business owners and managers in December.

The Manifest is the sister site of Washington, D.C.-based research and consulting firm Clutch. ○

## Companies take big hit from COVID

Over 40 percent of the companies surveyed in a study from FTI Consulting say that productivity has dropped in the wake of COVID, and most say the road back will not be a fast one.

By Steve Barnes

**T**he average G20 company has taken a 10 percent hit in revenue over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the latest quarterly FTI Resilience Barometer report.

The report, which polled 2,185 decision-makers in large companies across all G20 countries, found that the damage done by the pandemic has been considerable, with over 40 percent of the companies saying that they have experienced a drop in productivity. A majority (60 percent) indicate that they are facing challenges servicing debt requirements.

In addition, the effects of the pandemic are not expected to go away soon. Most respondents (70 percent) are planning for a prolonged economic downturn due to COVID-19.

One major source of anxiety for many corporate leaders is rising government debt. More than seven in 10 U.S. respondents (71 percent) indicated that they were concerned about an uptick in governmental red ink. The number was even higher for India and South Africa (both at 75 per-

cent).

The role of national governments in company strategy is also increasing, with 84 percent of companies agreeing that "governments have a strong potential to impact their business," topping the 80 percent who said that customers have the same potential.

A lack of adequate crisis preparation was also seen as a problem, with 39 percent of respondents saying that their crisis response plans were insufficient to deal with the challenges of COVID-19.

The report also goes into how the pandemic has shifted company game plans. Almost eight in 10 say they have had to fundamentally re-evaluate their business models as a result of the pandemic.

ESG issues are among the areas in which companies say they are planning to make changes. Over 85 percent of respondents said that they saw COVID-19 as "a catalyst to accelerate or materially enhance their approach to ESG and sustainability."

The use of analytics to track employee productivity has risen considerably over

the course of the pandemics, possibly a response to an increasingly dispersed workforce. While 46 percent said they used such analytics before COVID-19, another 41 percent have started using them since the pandemic began.

Cybersecurity was also a prime concern, with 74 percent agreeing that cybersecurity has risen up their board's agenda as a result of the pandemic. Six in ten (60 percent) are concerned by the prospect of nation-state cyberattacks.

Other topics that were mentioned by respondents include the possibility of additional waves of COVID-19 (which 65 percent saw as "likely and concerning"), rising unemployment (55 percent), an increase in corruption (52 percent) and increases in sanctions or other trade restrictions (47 percent).

"Common attributes can be seen amongst those companies which have weathered the crisis best: they are agile, technologically innovative and willing, even eager, to challenge old norms of doing business," said FTI Global Resilience Lead Caroline Das-Monfrais. ○

# COVID-19 and the paradox of 'fulfillment'

Why navigating America's new food system has arisen to become one of the most unexpected lessons for brands in our pandemic year.

By Kristen Ingraham

**F**ulfillment. It's more than a satisfying feeling experienced by consumers as they receive their purchases. Fulfillment is the complex matrix of the storage, compilation, packaging, shipping and delivery of goods. Understanding it is like evolving from a person who likes road trips into someone who can speak to every nuance of a car's engine. Perhaps this is why the paradox of "fulfillment" is one of the most unexpected lessons of this past pandemic year.

It took COVID-19 to open the eyes of the world to the intricacies of the fulfillment universe and interconnection of logistics. Consider how aware we now are of COVID-19 vaccine distribution hurdles—the tiny delivery window; the unprecedented demand for refrigeration and freezer capacity; the limited shelf life. It's a delicate balance to be sure. But does it really sound that different from our global food distribution needs? Why has it taken a pandemic to unveil to us the step-by-step processes that put goods in our hands and homes?

For a start, we are no longer just "end consumers" waiting to simply feel fulfilled. We want insight into every step of our consumer food journey. We want value pricing, constant availability, speedy delivery, living wages for food workers, reduced environmental impact, increased nutritional quality, safety and convenience ... our demands are enormous and endless. For brands and companies, meeting these demands is a like a game of Jenga, where one wrong move topples the tower and game over.

So, what do brands and companies need to understand, to navigate both consumer and logistical fulfillment, and its impact on their bottom line?

**Shipping costs:** Consumers will no longer accept the burden of high-priced shipping costs. That burden now rests solely on brands if they want to succeed. According to a recent report by the National Retail Foundation, 75 percent of consumers expect delivery to be free even on orders under \$50. The same report shows that most consumers consider shipping costs even before getting to the checkout page, with 65 percent saying they look up free-shipping thresholds before adding items to their online shopping carts. And not just any shipping will do—speed is a must—with 39 percent of consumers expecting two-day shipping to be free, and 29 percent saying

they have backed out of a purchase because two-day shipping wasn't free. Smart brands are learning to adjust online product pricing to make up margins, but others remain victim to consumers' insatiable appetite for cost-free convenience.

Nowhere is this shipping investment burden more obvious than with Amazon, even with Prime membership revenue to help offset costs. According to the company's 2020 Q4 earnings report, Amazon's shipping costs ballooned 67 percent as the company pushed one-day shipping. In Q4 alone, Amazon spent \$21.4 billion on shipping. Amazon also grew its fulfillment center footprint by 50 percent in 2020 to meet demand.

**Micro-fulfillment:** Innovative, scalable solutions—like the new, North American jointmarket offering for end-to-end eGrocery Management Solutions, from Attabotomics and FoodX Technologies—can provide retailers of all sizes with a turn-key, highly flexible solution for automated micro-fulfillment of fresh food. These advances merge front-end e-commerce, delivery routing, inventory management, fulfillment and reverse logistics, so companies big and small can compete on the global market.

Since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in MARCH 2021, the grocery e-commerce market has witnessed explosive growth and is projected to continue an upward path. These new micro-fulfillment centers—according to Produce Blue Book—have the ability to convert old retail spaces, warehouses and malls into condensed footprints closer to major cities and target customers, reducing carbon output and accelerating delivery times.

**"Big box" booming distribution center growth:** For every new micro-fulfillment center footprint, there remains a larger big box store distribution center location to counter it. Unlike many other segments of the economy, warehouse and DC development is not only withstanding the widespread economic impact of COVID-19, it's thriving. Companies cannot find space fast enough and developers can't build DCs quickly enough to meet demand. As *Logistics Management* reports, despite the scares COVID-19 has hurled on other industries, e-commerce has ensured steadily high demand for warehousing, distribution and fulfillment.

**Third-party logistics are here to stay:**

The vastly accelerated growth of digital commerce has many businesses embracing digital storefronts for the first time and seeking outside logistical support for order fulfillment. Third-party logistics companies have expanded their ecommerce and fulfillment capabilities to keep up—not just with capacity, but with transparency. As Inbound Logistics shares, online shoppers want full visibility into their product's journey—from order fulfillment, to when it reaches their doorstep—and near-instant gratification, pushing companies to need pick, pack and ship services completed faster and more accurately than ever. Businesses with issues in their supply chain and an inability to fulfill orders are often doomed. So, companies must find perfect partners to streamline these processes, share their commitment to customer service, and enhance visibility, speed and accuracy.

**Even convenience is open to consumer backlash:** Don't shoot the messenger, but feel free to blame them for taking their cut of the profits. Consumers are fiercely loyal to their favorite food companies and increasingly aware of the financial burden food brands assume by engaging third-party fulfillment partners. According to *The Washington Post*, restaurant delivery fulfillment by companies like DoorDash and GrubHub, means they collect anywhere between 10 percent and 30 percent of each order in fees. And customers do not like it.

Is it just the cost of completing the logistics lifecycle? Or is it foreshadowing a greater consumer backlash on who picks up the tab for our fulfilling new food reality? Consider the resounding backlash to the recent Uber Eats and DoorDash Super Bowl commercials that touted the brands' support for neighborhood restaurants and local businesses. Patrick Radden Keefe, a James Beard Award-nominated staff writer for *The New Yorker* tweeted the following: "The idea that Uber Eats, a parasitic app, has just rolled out the new tag phrase 'Eat Local, Support Local' gives even my cynicism a run for its money."

Ouch. But such is the paradox of "fulfillment."

Kristen Ingraham is a Senior Vice President at Padilla. She leads the agency's Food + Beverage Practice, with an emphasis on consumer brands, digital integrated marketing, and business development. ●



Kristen Ingraham

# How COVID changed consumer food experiences

Food brands have learned to adapt and survive as the COVID-19 pandemic leaves the traditional dining experience in uncertain territory.

By Lindsey Carnett

**C**COVID has changed everything we considered to be normal. We've spent more time at home than ever, following official guidance to stay inside to protect ourselves and others from the virus.

National lockdowns have changed the way we work, rest and play, and have put a halt on eating out. Spending on takeout has risen and many of us have become reacquainted with our kitchens.

Research from Statista reports that food and beverage e-commerce exceeded \$15 billion in 2020 and is expected to surpass \$20 billion by 2023. The pandemic has and will continue to drive this trend, with Core-sight Research stating that online sales increased by 40 percent alone in 2020.

As we've spent more time indoors, we have come to rely on our digital devices to communicate with colleagues, friends and family. Social media has become a tool for new discoveries and a way to recreate the fun of eating out. Food blogs and social media accounts have taken on a new meaning.

The Recipe Critic is a popular blog, with over 4.3 million Facebook fans alone and a clean, categorized website with recipes that every cook could want. YouTube has also become a vital venue for recreating fast food favorites. Joshua Weissman's channel provides the inspiration and techniques for everything from Chick-Fil-A to In-N-Out Burgers. Pro Home Cooks is another example of recipes that can take an amateur chef's cooking to another level.

Platforms like Instagram have been utilized by bloggers to host "cook along" classes. Bloggers like Liz Adams have used Instagram Live to create a "Cooking with Liz" series. Joined by her husband, the popular mid-Western blogger shares recipes, humor and teams up with brands as part of the weekly segment.

Another popular blogger, Carly, teams up with food brands including Cape Cod Chips, spotlighting them across social media and positioning them as "comfort food" that has helped her through the pandemic.

While many of us will have turned to familiar favorite foods throughout lockdown, keeping fit and healthy have been important. Communicating the health benefits of ingredients is one way in which brands have looked to market their products.

Food boxes have been one such method and companies have capitalized on seasonal trends to help consumers stay healthy at

home. The usual "new year, new you" theme is just one example, with brands like Plated, Green Fresh and Snap Kitchen using their direct to doorstep service as one way to target individuals that want to use their time during the pandemic to improve their diet and wellbeing.

In terms of marketing, the brands offer a discounted first box, free shipping and encourage customers to share snaps of their meals on social media as a way of targeting new customers. This simple technique works.

While we may not be able to visit our favorite restaurants or have a drink at our local bar, companies and small businesses have realized the potential of selling their consumer-packaged goods direct in a grocery store.

Consumers tired of takeout can still experience their favorite meals from home. Examples include Honest Burger, with meal kits offering an authentic burger experience, and the Asian chain Wasabi, whose take-out options are now available as ready meals in many grocery stores. And while some independent chains can't compete with the buying power of big names, they can get on board with the rapid transition and reliance of selling their items via ecommerce and social media.

To adapt and survive, brands have taken in some cases to using social media exclusively to sell their food and beverage items. The Cheesecake Girl is one example. Located in Center Street Market in Hilliard, Ohio, it markets individual cheesecakes, cakes and gifts boxes direct to 18,700 Instagram followers. Tiny Kitchen Treats embraced a similar model, with their artisan cookies available exclusively to buy online and shippable worldwide.

And restaurants, including many in the Los Angeles area, have switched to offering their products in kit form for consumers to enjoy at home. Milo & Olive is just one of these establishments, as well as Holbox offering dough and taco boxes respectively.

Brands should look to work with influencers in this way to generate and secure editorial press coverage—stories of triumphing over the odds and switching business models command column inches.

While we'll eventually see a return to the dining experience as we remember it, the benefits of a brand owning the relationship with their customer will not be lost. The di-

rect-to-consumer marketing model brings with it a higher profit margin. Whilst costs have risen in areas such as online marketing and packaging for take-out options, many expensive overheads have simply disappeared. These costs can be used to expand options in other areas but also offer services that customers expect. One of these is on-demand shipping or fast delivery options if offering products locally. The upside of this model is that the brand can accurately measure the lifetime value of their customer, knowing the true cost to acquire them and the cost it will take to keep them and gain brand loyalty.

The key to sustaining this model of 21st century dining and food is the smart use of social media, influencer marketing and other communications methods. With such a competitive marketplace, brands need to stand out—and fast—against their rivals.

Brands should think outside the box and identify other home-based trends, whether it be improvements to the home—programs like The Home Edit have seen a massive interest in reorganizing kitchens—they should seek opportunities with influencers in these fields to spotlight their food and beverage items. Health and wellness bloggers and social media stars still command great popularity amongst their followers, and whilst short-term revenue opportunities are difficult, avenues like Instagram and live Q&As are a great way to test out meal kits and recipes.

Email may seem like the more traditional of these methods, but it remains an effective way to collect data about customers, provide meal inspiration and directly market products. Smart targeting that ensures emails land in inboxes at key shopping or dinner times is a good way to get customers on board.

And if investment allows, creating an app is a targeted way to encourage and reward brand loyalty.

While the pandemic has thrown the traditional dining experience into turmoil, it has created many silver linings and opportunities for brands big and small. From working with influencers to investing in subscription-based services, brands can bounce back and embrace different ways of working to help create a long-term, sustainable business model.

*Lindsey Carnett is CEO and President of Marketing Maven. ○*



Lindsey Carnett



# The new food policy frontier

**How the Biden administration's nutrition and public health policies will present business challenges and opportunities in the COVID-19 era.**

By Sarah Levy and Laurie Hainley

A year after the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed the day-to-day experiences of most Americans, those working in food and nutrition are adjusting to new realities. From rapid supply chain adaptations to staggering rates of food insecurity and obesity-related coronavirus complications, the need to improve public health has become more urgent and more complex than ever before.

One could argue that the world is now grappling with four public health pandemics: climate change, undernutrition, overweight and obesity and COVID-19. The coronavirus crisis has exposed the reality that to build back stronger, society must address all four challenges in an integrated way.

## Quick take for businesses

A reinvigorated food and nutrition policy environment will present new business challenges and opportunities. As you review this article, consider the following questions and action steps.

**How can you get ahead?** Understand how evolving policy actions will impact your business, and how you can build proactive positions and advocacy plans.

**How can you stay relevant?** Ensure health- and nutrition-related communications are sensitive to COVID-19 realities, considering social and racial disparities and equity.

**How can you differentiate?** Define your business's role in supporting sustainable food systems to unlock new partnership and policy-engagement opportunities.

## Notable evolutions in food, nutrition policy

**Food access at the top of policy agendas:** The negative health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, leading to a greater reliance on food assistance programs. In the U.S., participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program jumped more than 20 percent in 2020, with more than 8 million additional people receiving benefits. Brand new food assistance programs also were created. For the foreseeable future, many governments' top nutrition priority will be getting food in the hands of people who need it.

**Stronger calls for anti-obesity regu-**

**lations that deliver quick wins and economic incentives:** Because obesity worsens COVID-19 outcomes and continues to carry high economic costs, there is a renewed sense of urgency around policies and regulations that restrict or discourage foods and beverages high in fat, sugar and salt. Front-of-pack labeling regulations continue to gain traction—particularly in Latin America and Europe—as do calls to limit ultra-processed foods from being marketed and sold. Sugar-sweetened beverage taxes have garnered special attention for their revenue-generating potential amidst struggling economies.

**Broader integration of nutrition and environmental sustainability:** More authorities now recognize the critical role nutrition plays in sustainable food systems. Nutrition guidelines and policies increasingly promote personal and planetary health, advocating for strategies that support both. The EU Farm to Fork Strategy aims to create a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system in Europe, with policy recommendations for a standardized FOPL system and sustainable food production measures. Non-EU nations have taken similar actions, such as the UK's National Food Strategy. Furthermore, by 2025, at least 13 countries are expected to expand their food-based dietary guidelines to include environmental sustainability considerations. The United Nations Food Systems Summit, planned for September, likely will result in similarly integrated recommendations that will set the global food and nutrition policy agenda for the next decade.

## Spotlight on the U.S.—expectations for the Biden presidency

Reflecting these challenges and policy evolutions, new U.S. President Joseph R. Biden has instructed his federal agencies to set their agendas based on three priorities: COVID-19, racial equity and climate. Health and nutrition are undercurrents of all three, contributing to the expectation that the Biden administration will be considerably more active and progressive on nutrition than the Trump administration.

While federal agency policy and regulatory agendas are still coming together, a handful of actions are already being ex-

plored—or are likely bets—for Biden's four-year term.

**Food assistance expansions:** On Day One, Biden called for immediate action to improve SNAP access by extending a 15 percent benefit increase. The American Rescue Plan also provides \$1 billion in additional nutrition assistance to residents of U.S. territories, and expands federal investment in the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children.

## Child Nutrition Re-

**authorization:** Every five years, Congress can use CNR to update the nutritional standards in child feeding programs, including school meals programs and WIC. New Senate Agriculture Committee Chair, Debbie Stabenow, intends to push forward this legislation, which carries opportunities for enhancing WIC food packages and permanently adopting universal school meals.

## Nutrition Innovation Strategy progress:

In 2018, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration introduced a novel strategy to modernize food and beverage claims and labeling to better support public health. Many of these activities stalled under Trump's presidency, but with new leadership, voluntary sodium reduction targets, updates to the "healthy" nutrient-content claim and other planned NIS activities should pick up.

**Sustainable agriculture push:** From re-entering the Paris Climate Agreement to setting an ambitious goal for a net-zero economy by 2050, the Biden administration is set to introduce forward-thinking climate policies across all sectors. This includes pursuit of climate-smart agriculture practices in the immediate term, and could spark interest in including sustainable diet advice in the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Which policies rise to the top of federal agency agendas will depend on agency leadership and policy influencers. It's worth noting that Biden's administration includes several Obama-era staff—Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and two of his re-



Sarah Levy



Laurie Hainley

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# A trust mindset for brand sustainability and growth

The COVID-19 pandemic's effects on the food and beverage industry will be felt for years to come. Here's why cultivating trust to meet consumer expectations will be what drives our clients forward.

By Michael Fineman

**W**ith COVID, calamitous weather and a widening human divide nationwide, nature appears to be running amok and making a direct hit on safety and health. Ultimately, as studies have shown, it has manifested in a lessening of trust in each other, in our institutions and in our way of life, all long taken for granted. For the food industry—as producers, retailers and responsible employers—the impact of the last year will reverberate for decades. As communicators, however, this isn't a doomsday scenario. We've seen historic marketplace and cultural meteors before.

Food businesses and executives who make smart, credible and genuine moves will lead, but it's going to require a doubling down on consumer trust and embracing change. The question of who and what you trust must be answered, and we're all responsible for demonstrating the answers with well-considered decisions and activities. I believe that means our public relations must be centered, discerning and authentic.

What's changed across the board? The speed by which critical information—and misinformation—is shared and the crucial nature of getting it right, especially when it comes to human health and safety. So, how best to build trust and meet consumer, customer and employee expectations? If we get it right, shareholder expectations will be met accordingly.

Our experience in helping clients successfully communicate consumer messages tells us to focus on building trust from the inside out. Take a brutally honest look at your corporate reputation and brand, how consumers and your own people view your organization. It can't be just about food or business as usual. The old saw, "doing well by doing good" is especially relevant today.

Here are some pathways our own food and beverage clients are taking:

## **Increase employee communications**

Out of sheer necessity, communicate often and visibly through these COVID times. Our daily business lives have been upset: to remote or not to remote, to renew the lease on our office space or find a less sizeable option. Many companies and employees are at loose ends to find their way and some regularity in daily work life. Provide brief, regular, fact-based updates to your website, your employees and your customers. Demonstrate your partnership with regulatory and public health entities. Especially during these times, it's these public guardians that

consumers will trust most (over the word of for-profit companies). Communicate with a tone of concern for your audience's health and welfare. Tone is often more important than content; optimism and encouragement never hurt.

## **Connect with your community**

Remember your local communities where many of your employees and their families live and where you often have an outsized shadow. Your town's tax base is often, in large part, dependent on your decisions. Local businesses and civic organizations will appreciate your support and patronage wherever you can provide it. Are you able to go the extra mile by working with a local medical partner to provide your workforce with vaccines? Are you able to contribute with scholarships, sponsorships, speaking/virtual presentation opportunities with the local community college? Can you organize team volunteers to contribute to local projects and/or disaster areas? Donations of much-needed supplies?

## **Gut check your reputation**

Re-vitalize your assets and allies, especially your employees. Take an honest audit of commentary on social media, internal chat channels and employee forums. Is your tried and true approach still working? Are employee concerns going unaddressed, purposely or from lack of resources? How can you really improve, and soon? Set aggressive timelines and take action where you can. Have you recognized those employees who went the distance for the company over the past year? Are there new employee voices emerging as leaders that may help the organization evolve?

## **How credible is your message?**

Are there local or industry experts that would be valuable to enlist for expert counsel and for referral sources when the media calls? Have you conducted studies and surveys that could be of interest to others? Are there forecasts or other research—trade or medical—that you've used to help guide your initiatives? Leverage them and keep eyes open for new partners who can support you and add credibility to your brand promise and values.

## **Update your game plan**

Don't wait until there's some semblance of "normal" to evaluate your communications strategy. Even though we are far from the "end" of this challenging period, all of us have seen organizational changes, personnel shifts, and the re-ordering of priorities.

Take a fresh look at your scenario plans and crisis preparation. Does your approach incorporate the new resources your team has leaned on in urgent situations over the past year? Lessons learned? Review your most reliable and/or updated tools for pushing out content and measuring impact. Revisit new threats to your business. Take an audit of competitors in the news. Think about developing trends, threats to your business and community, potential disasters and hazards, and competitive concerns that could have a pernicious effect. Then, act. Develop a position for these issues and scenarios, no matter how brief, that can be updated and customized when needed (response speed in hairy situations is so critical). Determine which events or developments might trigger your need to address the situation. Messaging? Medium? Spokesperson? Use this time to regroup wisely and retire outdated practices. It all adds up to help bulwark brand trust.

## **Social distance isn't for social media**

Now's the time to lean into social media to connect with your audience where they're choosing to spend time. Keep up with potentially new audiences, look for ways to genuinely connect with your followers and build loyalty through content that matters to them. This isn't the time to overproduce or overspend; there's no need to be perfect or slick. It's about telling your story authentically and contributing to the real-life conversations and experiences that are helping us all get through these times, together. And, remember, you're talking to the end customer. There's power in that.

## **Be willing to change**

Innovation is what fuels our industry and our personal growth. The changes in our professional world will continue, as will the changes in our daily lives. A trust mindset for business and for ourselves will help evolve how we communicate, how we connect, how we function, and how we support a constantly shifting consumer marketplace and food supply. Be open to change. Communicate trustworthiness and the promise reflected by your brand.

Michael Fineman is President of Fineman PR. ○



Michael Fineman

# Pandemic plates: strategies for a new health revolution

How COVID-19 changed consumer food consumption and what that means for brands' communications efforts in 2021.

By Louise Pollock

The global pandemic has changed all aspects of normal living and ushered in an era where health and wellness are paramount decision drivers for the foreseeable future, especially when it comes to food and beverage choices. The ninth annual Pollock Communications and Today's Dietitian "What's Trending in Nutrition" survey, with 1,165 registered dietitian nutritionists responding, provides an in-depth look at what dietitians are hearing from consumers about how their diets have changed due to COVID-19.

The health revolution has exploded because of the pandemic, with the top findings for 2021 revealing a focus on foods that support immunity, are affordable and provide comfort, as well as a major shift in snacking habits. Changes to the top 10 superfoods list also indicate a move toward foods that are plant-forward and support health, with green tea, a natural anti-inflammatory beverage, jumping from number 10 last year to the number-three spot this year, and nutrient-rich spinach and leafy greens making their debut on the list. As consumers continue to search for diets that promote well-being and longevity, intermittent fasting surpasses the ketogenic diet as the number-one diet trend dietitians predict for 2021, and RDNs forecast consumers will be on the hunt for natural, clean labels and ingredients like cannabidiol (CBD), collagen and hemp.

What does all this mean for food and beverage manufacturers and marketers? Here are three key takeaways to consider when developing communications strategies:

## Consumer mindsets have changed

Understanding how the novel coronavirus has affected consumers is one of the biggest challenges facing food manufacturers and marketers today. With heightened concern for health and wellness, and the reality of widespread financial hardship caused by the pandemic, consumers are rethinking every purchase. Decisions have been impacted by fears of illness and economic uncertainty, among other drivers. A year full of staying home and cooking more has also influenced consumers to reevaluate their food and nutrition choices. It's imperative that food companies monitor this constantly evolving shift in the consumer

mindset and continually adapt communications strategies to stay relevant during these unprecedented times and beyond.

According to our survey, because of the pandemic 78 percent of RDNs believe that consumer eating habits are shifting away from the traditional three meals a day to more frequent snacking. In addition, with anxiety about health, wellness and the challenging economy looming in consumers' minds, RDNs predict the top purchase drivers of 2021 will be foods and beverages that: support immunity, are affordable and value-based and promote comfort and emotional well-being.

In 2020, the food and beverage industry saw sales increases in anti-inflammatory beverages like green tea, as well as renewed attention on comforting, tried and true foods like dairy milk and healthy, fermented foods like yogurt. Our trends survey findings reflect that these top purchase drivers caused by COVID-19 will continue to impact consumer eating habits in 2021, and likely, for years to come. Food and beverage manufacturers and marketers need to reevaluate and highlight how their products fit into these drivers to engage and remain viable with consumers.

## Be a valuable source of information

We are witnessing unprecedented times in the world of nutrition, health and wellness. As the world grapples with how to best manage health, enhance well-being, fight disease and promote longevity, consumers are turning more and more to digital platforms like Instagram, Facebook and blogs for nutrition information. According to our survey of RDNs, the top three sources consumers trust for nutrition information are: medical doctors, RDNs and people with similar experiences and success stories.

This provides an immense opportunity for the food and beverage industry to utilize social platforms and credible targeted influencers, like RDNs and other expert health care professionals, to help consumers navigate their shifting needs. Many companies already transitioned their 2020 marketing efforts to have a heavier focus on digital, and it's evident from the trends that this shift will continue in 2021 and beyond, as consumers have become even more accustomed to shopping and spending time

online. Food companies must be willing to adapt to the new consumer mindset and leverage it to their advantage, or risk losing business.

## Keep the greater good in mind

It's human nature to want to help others, especially in times of crisis. We have seen healthcare workers travel to different states to help hard-hit hospitals and volunteers assisting with food distribution at community centers. Conversely, we have seen the backlash against companies and individuals who were price gauging and taking advantage of the situation. With a greater emphasis on helping each other, consumers are more likely to purchase from food and beverage companies and brands that are giving back. According to GlobalWebIndex, 38 percent of global consumers said brands that helped people during the outbreak will influence which ones they buy from after the pandemic.



Louise Pollock

Good will matters and needs to be a component of food and beverage marketing programs. Consumers want to know that their purchases are making a difference and supporting companies who are contributing to a greater cause. There are many ways to give back, so be thoughtful and creative, keeping your brand authenticity and target audience in mind, like these brands:

• Moon Cheese is encouraging consumers to nominate individuals helping on the front lines in need of some fuel and a smile. The brand is sending free samples of the healthy cheese snack as a gift of gratitude to nominated essential workers, as well as to food banks and many hospitals through a partnership with Founder's Give.

• Anheuser-Busch scrapped its 2021 Budweiser Super Bowl ad in favor of supporting the Ad Council and COVID Collaborative's vaccine awareness initiative, donating money to go toward the organizations' future ad campaigns.

• Danone is donating \$1.5 million to organizations making a local impact on food access in communities across the country as part its mission to bring health through food to as many people as possible. The company has set up a plan to help farmer and supplier partners, as well.

Successful shifts in marketing campaigns

— Continued on next page



# Five PR trends to watch in 2021

Learning to plan for the unpredictable has been one of the great lessons of 2020, and can also serve as a guide for looking to the year ahead.

By Ben Chodor

Last year, public relations professionals rose to the challenge of managing incredibly complex communications: guiding brands to communicate clearly—and with purpose—in response to evolving social, political and health and safety issues. It was a year when the word “pivot” became a strategy and the industry proved its ability to be nimble, agile and resilient.

If 2020 taught communicators anything, it was that we must find ways to plan for the unpredictable. The “new normal” will be a continued push to adopt technology and tools that will enable efficiency, collaboration and innovation. The digital transformation of public relations has officially arrived and there’s no turning back.

**Intelligent media monitoring will help PR pros navigate the news cycle.** 2020’s news cycle was anything but predictable, and it will not get easier to navigate this year. Communicators who want to stay ahead of breaking news should use media monitoring technology—powered by artificial intelligence—to track stories as they unfold, understanding when a story breaks, peaks and the factors that will influence coverage. A smart media monitoring strategy ensures that the right message is shared at the best possible time, with the reporters most likely to cover it.

**Brands start to measure the impact of value-based communication.** Social issues made their way to the boardroom last year

and companies of all types and sizes used public relations to define their position on topics like diversity, inclusion and social justice. This trend will continue, and it will become critical to measure these efforts and understand whether corporate values and beliefs resonate with consumers. Traditional share-of-voice metrics aren’t enough to measure public perception, and PR pros will need to rethink their use of sentiment metrics, reach, and influence to identify ways to measure effectiveness in communicating mission, vision, and values.

**Executives use live video to build connections.** The shift from in-person to virtual was an adjustment for many brands and consumers last year. However, the need for connection and engagement is stronger than ever. While live video is often viewed as a ‘risk’ it’s actually the perfect medium to humanize executives and ensure that target audiences and key stakeholders hear directly from the brand on important issues. This is particularly valuable during crisis, where speed and transparency are critical to mitigating risk.

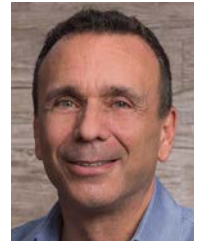
**Hybrid events are here to stay and new ways to engage the press will emerge.** The events landscape has evolved and technology will continue to play a critical role. Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide have attended corporate events this past year from the comfort of their own home, allowing them to save time on travel and

minimize costs for their employer. Event technology has advanced to such a degree that turning it off would be a missed opportunity for future attendees and event hosts. As a result, PR professionals must continue to identify new ways to engage with media for virtual events. Whether it’s online briefings, press conferences, interactive demos or panels, the creativity and virtual experience shouldn’t stop when in-person events make their way back to calendars.

**PR fully embraces tech.** 2021 will be a technology revolution in PR and this digital transformation will drive innovation in the use of data, measurement and monitoring tools. This year, we can expect to see PR professionals re-evaluate their tech stack, demanding more from legacy vendors and looking for solutions that are intelligent, easy-to-use and fully integrated. Additionally, PR pros (both agencies and brands) will need to implement a formal technology strategy to better align with the marketing department in order to measure and prove the value of their efforts, and drive business revenue.

As we look to the future, PR professionals must remain creative and open to adopting new technologies that will directly drive business outcomes. Although we don’t yet know what this year has in store, the PR industry must continue to embrace change as it evolves to help brands to not only survive, but also thrive.

*Ben Chodor is President at Intrado Digital Media. ●*



Ben Chodor

## A NEW FOOD POLICY FRONTIER

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cently appointed Deputy Under Secretaries, as well as former FDA commissioner David Kessler. Look for these individuals to potentially pursue nutrition initiatives aligned with their previous positions and actions.

Consumer advocacy groups and grassroots organizations also will be critical players in the U.S. nutrition policy en-

vironment. These groups, which tend to wield more influence during Democratic presidencies, will continue to call for aggressive policy actions like banning junk food marketing to kids and mandating sugar-sweetened beverage warnings and taxes. Such policies are most likely to gain traction at the local or state levels first, like the new healthy checkout ordinance in Berkeley and the sodium warning labels in New York City. However, the Democratic-controlled House

and Senate make potential federal standards for these strategies a greater possibility.

As events unfold in the U.S. and globally, food and beverage stakeholders should understand, prepare for and positively contribute to the evolving nutrition policy environment.

*Sarah Levy, MPH, RD, is Global Director of Food & Nutrition Affairs at FoodMinds. Laurie Hainley, RD, is an Account Supervisor at FoodMinds. ●*

## PANDEMIC PLATES

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will depend heavily on the authenticity of the effort. Brands must remain true to who they are and what they represent to their valued customers. Also, marketers must continue to monitor current news and

events and adjust efforts as necessary, since the situation remains fluid and evolves rapidly. Being sensitive to consumer concerns is paramount in building and keeping trust and loyalty. Communications campaigns that leverage solutions to pandemic concerns and engage with consumers will help build brand loyalty during these troubling

times and beyond. Having the right communications partner who understands and has had success in this market can help companies create and execute strategic platforms that deliver long-term results.

*Louise Pollock is the President and Founder of Pollock Communications in New York City. ●*

# Food PR during a state of crisis

Three crises occurring simultaneously in the U.S. illustrate why PR professionals are well-positioned to help leaders in the food and beverage industry tell their sustainability story.

By Jimmy Szczepanek

As President Biden campaigned towards the end of 2020, in a world that was almost unrecognizable from a year ago, he spoke of several crises converging simultaneously on the U.S.: a public health crisis, racial injustice and climate change.

In addition to being priorities for the Biden Administration, they also have an impact on our food system and the way in which we communicate to stakeholders.

## Food and COVID-19

Food has been a central focus of the pandemic, which has placed an unprecedented strain on our food supply, changed the way that many consumers shop, shined a light on food insecurity and food waste, upended the food service community and challenged the way agriculture is harvested and processed.

This is a unique moment in history, particularly for those of us in food PR, because of these changes and the reality that people are at home, cooking regularly and more engaged with their food. This provides an opportunity to connect with them by providing inspiration and meeting them where they are. According to research conducted in November 2020 by the International Food Information Council, 38 percent of consumers are cooking more comfort foods at home while 34 percent are preparing more nutritious foods. Therefore, how can we help to inspire consumers with healthier versions of comfort foods that satisfy their cravings?

Another transformation in food PR has been in the shift to a virtual environment. Many of us have had packed schedules in previous years, jetting from Expo West to IFT to FNCE, to reconnect with friends and colleagues and build relationships. The “great pause” of 2020 forced us to get creative and find ways to be disruptive in a virtual environment to connect with contacts and partners. Someday we’ll all be walking the trade show floor together, but until then we’ll have webinars, Zoom calls and virtual gatherings.

## The journey to racial justice

The summer of 2020 brought a profound awareness of racial inequality and a grassroots effort that took to the streets. Many companies within the food industry, that were already dealing with the challenges of

the pandemic, felt paralyzed about how—and if—to respond.

Some wanted to fly under the radar, others added their voice to the Black Lives Matter movement, and many made public their commitment and monetary donations. Companies like MARS, Quaker Oats Company and Cream of Wheat retired branding elements that had been criticized for connections to racial stereotypes. It became clear that consumers were carefully observing their favorite brands in order to hold them accountable, using pressure to influence real action against systemic racism.

According to a recent survey conducted by Porter Novelli, 82 percent of Americans surveyed find it acceptable that a company makes a statement in support of communities of color, but it must be followed by action.

Ben & Jerry’s, a client of Porter Novelli, has a longstanding history of taking action against inequality. Following the tragic death of George Floyd, they made a bold statement regarding the need to dismantle white supremacy and have followed it up with action to support the racial justice movement. The company was inspired by Colin Kaepernick’s commitment to battle racial injustice and collaborated with him on a non-dairy flavor partnership called Change the Whirled. Kaepernick’s proceeds from the partnership go to his Know Your Rights Camp that educates and empowers Black and Brown communities.

One way that PR professionals can contribute to equity is by committing to recommend and work with BIPOC spokespeople and influencers. Racially diverse spokespeople lend an authentic voice to a conversation that is greatly needed as people confront their own implicit biases to learn and grow.

We’ve also seen increased demand in facilitating education and growth through internal trainings around justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. PR professionals are well-positioned to counsel clients and lead the development of internal communications efforts and education within their own ranks. Change at an individual level can have a profound societal impact and encourage an atmosphere of respect, particularly within industries like foodser-

vice, where half of all hourly employees are BIPOC.

## Climate change

On day one of the Biden Administration, the U.S. rejoined the Paris Accord, signaling to Americans and the world that fighting climate change would be a priority over the next four years. This provided, at least, a glimmer of hope to the young people who have a profound fear about this existential threat, as more than 70 percent of Gen Z and Millennials surveyed indicated that climate change poses an immediate threat to life.

And with the world population projected to reach 9.8 billion people by 2050, the growing concern about sustainability and our food has been on the rise. How can we sustainability feed that many people? Are we able to revamp our food system in the next 30 years to make it more regenerative?

The rising interest in plant-based diets is an indication that there’s consumer demand for food that is better for people and the planet. According to a recent survey conducted by Sprouts Farmers Market, more than half of respondents were likely to reduce their meat consumption and embrace a flexitarian diet. Further evidence of this growing interest in eating for the planet was a 56 percent increase in sales of consumer products carrying a sustainability message in the beginning of March 2021, when stockpiling hit its peak at the grocery store, according to IRI.

As communications professionals, we can help the food industry to tell their sustainability story better and connect with consumers on this important issue. By advocating for transparency through accurate and consistent ESG reporting, forming partnerships with governments and NGOs and reminding businesses that their responsibility is not only to shareholders but to all stakeholders, we can help the food industry be more recognized for sustainability and start a dialogue about what more needs to be done.

*Jimmy Szczepanek is Executive Vice President at Porter Novelli. ○*



Jimmy Szczepanek

# Why you should get comfortable with embargoes

While press releases are important for informing the media, the embargo can add even more value to coverage—particularly in health and science.

By Bryan Blatstein

Recently, some PR professionals and journalists have argued that embargoes are a tactic of the past and not relevant for the world of crazy news cycles we live in today. I would argue that they actually serve an important purpose and should be deployed as a communication tool when appropriate, as they can lead to important, in-depth coverage for your clients.

Embargoes can play an especially big role in health and science journalism, where much of the coverage is based on research studies in peer-reviewed journals, clinical trial results, data readouts or upcoming business development deals, news that's highly complex and carefully guarded. Given the conservative nature of the pharma and biotech industry, getting the green light to go for embargoed outreach can be a challenge—but a fruitful one—as the embargo gives reporters a chance to analyze any data and interview experts or researchers that can add nuanced context and help digest any complex science before it is released to the public.

Endpoints Founder and Editor John Carroll agrees. In February, he tweeted:

“We got some good embargoes over the last couple of days. Days in advance. Plenty of time to percolate, interview. I would encourage more people to do this. If there's really something to dive into, give it some time. Not: This breaks in 12 hours at 6am. What do you think?”



John Carroll  
@JohnCendpts

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6:40 PM · Feb 12, 2021 · TweetDeck

The tried-and-true press release is still an important way to communicate news, but those go out to everyone at the same time, generating a race among reporters to beat their competition to publish. An embargo gives the added benefit of time, allowing journalists to develop richer stories without an immediate deadline.

Here are the top advantages to giving reporters an advanced look at news:

**Time for more in-depth, contextualized reporting.** With an embargoed release, re-

porters can delve into the importance of the story and develop more thorough and accurate stories. Reporters can take more time to understand the issue, research the history of the topic and talk to more sources. A typical beat reporter covers multiple companies or topics and can't be expected to be an expert at all times, so they may appreciate the time to get up to speed.

**Influential reporters can be the first to frame the story in the media.** Reporters are competitive by nature and they watch what others are covering. By giving an advanced look at news to a few highly regarded and influential reporters, you can give the reporters you know and trust best the opportunity to help contextualize your news. Their early coverage signals to others that this is an important story.

**Stronger relationships and trust with media.** By revealing confidential information in advance, your client can help build rapport with trustworthy journalists. Embargoed offers are more likely to result in interviews, during which professional—and personal—relationships can grow. While it's true that a good story will always get covered, relationships are still key and must be built over time.

One thing to think through before offering an embargo is whether or not your story is worthy of an embargo. You can't offer embargoes on everything, or your embargo won't mean much. As a tactic, an embargo is meant to help flag to reporters that a story is of high news value and/or complex. Stories that are worthy of an embargo in science journalism include:

- Market-moving data.
- Large business development deals.
- Complicated science or data, especially if it hasn't been covered recently.
- Movement in a disease category that has been stagnant for a while.
- Drug approval.
- Highly anticipated data.

You also need to make sure you are abiding by the generally accepted rules of the road regarding how to offer embargoes. An embargo is an agreement that reporters won't publish the story until an agreed upon date. Securing agreement in writing to uphold the embargo before sharing details is best practice.

Eric Savitz, Associate Editor at *Barron's*, recently tweeted: “An embargo is a contract

– I agree to hold the news until a certain time, and then I get early access, which gives me more time to plan/write the story. But if you just send me a release with the word EMBARGOED slapped on it, there is no agreement.”



Eric Savitz · 3rd+  
Associate Editor, Technology at *Barron's*  
3w · 0

Some free advice for my PR friends: Please don't send me press releases that say EMBARGOED without asking me if I agree to an embargo. An embargo is a contract - I agree to hold the news until a certain time, and then I get early access, which gives me more time to plan/write the story. But if you just send me a release with the word EMBARGOED slapped on it, there is no agreement, and literally no reason I shouldn't just crank out a story on your release (if it actually has news value), embargo be damned. So, cut it out. #pr

580 · 81 comments

It's important to be very clear about the date and time that the embargo lifts and to give the same embargo to all reporters. If for some reason the embargo time needs to change, you must be clear and upfront with all reporters. Embargoes are different than exclusives—offered to one outlet only—and everyone receiving information under embargo should have the same information.

When to offer an embargo may vary by story. If your goal is more in-depth coverage, a few hours in advance is likely not going to help. You'll have to work with your client to understand when they will be ready to speak with media, when they will have approved materials to share as background and, depending on the story, when is the best time to start outreach.

Finally, it's key to make sure you are offering an embargo to the right reporters. An embargo is an agreement for the media to respect your wishes regarding timing. If you're on the media-relations side, the key—as with so many other aspects of PR—is to research and work with trustworthy reporters. There are many journalists out there who are accustomed to honoring embargoes and using the extra time to develop great content.

In health and science news, embargoed announcements can not only extend the reach of rich stories and create additional opportunities, but help form stronger relationships. Used smartly, they're a valuable asset in the arsenal for every media relations professional.

*Bryan Blatstein is Executive Vice President at Spectrum Science. ○*



Bryan Blatstein



# Earned or owned? That's the wrong question

With the tech sector and media increasingly at odds, several major Silicon Valley companies have recently made the decision to cancel proactive media relations altogether and instead focus on a media strategy where their own newsrooms produce massive amounts of owned content across many channels. But establishing a media mix that avoids the press runs its own set of risks.

By Dan O'Mahony

A debate continues to wage on in the public relations world regarding whether an earned or owned media strategy makes more sense. Should you focus on earned media, driven by proactive media relations? Or owned media where you build a following using self-published content on your media channels?

Large companies like Tesla have made recent headlines by “eliminating” their communications teams. Many startups and VCs from Coinbase to Andreessen Horowitz are similarly applying the “go direct” approach. The Clubhouse app is the new platform to reach audiences, but companies are using everything from YouTube to Twitter to their own hosted podcasts and other unique media properties.

Why are some companies choosing not to engage with the press? There's more tension than ever between reporters and the companies they cover. It's been building for a decade, and events like the Theranos fallout have only fueled the fire. Now, the press is holding tech companies accountable for not meeting oversized expectations and for the lack of diversity in the industry.

Every company is looking for the right media mix. It depends on their stage of growth, available resources and business objectives. Communications strategies hinge on broader, more strategic questions: Who is your audience? What do you want them to do? What change are you ushering in? What do you want to be known for?

Instead of deciding between earned vs. owned, consider these questions:

## What's your business goal and who are your audiences?

Earned media is called earned because someone else says good things about you. It builds credibility for a company or spokesperson and boosts awareness at a reach most companies don't have. Owned media, on the other hand, creates an ongoing dialogue with your key audiences and the ability to build individual relationships. It assumes that you already have an audience that's paying attention.

Let's say you're in the healthcare space and one key audience for you is senior citizens. Both earned and owned make sense to reach this audience. With earned media,

this company can leverage the credibility of a reporter that senior citizens know and trust. With owned media, this company can create very specific, niche content that speaks to senior citizens, who then go on to share via their own social media channels.

If you're selling an open source database technology to software developers, earned and owned both make sense too. With earned media, your technology could be included in a round-up alongside other popular solutions, which is beneficial for instant awareness. With owned media, you could create an ongoing Q&A on a key database topic and invite outside thought leaders to participate and share with their own channels, creating engagement and dialogue with your audience.

It's hard to imagine a scenario where you would only pursue one strategy. Both strategies often make sense and if the story is consistent, the strategies help build on each other. That said, some companies are in a position where reporters cover them regardless of whether they engage with them.

## Should you pick only one media strategy?

Facebook, Tesla or Apple can go direct because they have large consumer followings, celebrity CEOs and are able to produce massive amounts of owned content across many channels.

But for most companies out there, if you ignore the press there are two possible outcomes: you won't get news coverage or the media will write a story via leaks and scandals. Likewise, if you decide to only “go direct” you will need to invest. It will take headcount, new technologies, partnerships and time to build an audience.

## Are you ready for the media's distrust?

In-house communications teams know this best. If you choose to ignore a problem and not talk about it with the press, that doesn't mean press stop asking about it or covering it. In fact, it makes dealing with those issues more challenging. It invites scrutiny and turns your employees into spokespeople. Building an audience that trusts you is tough without the press.

These two strategies overlap, and should work in tandem, but they're not the same. It's a virtuous cycle that communicates transparency and openness.

Dan O'Mahony is Executive Vice President and San Francisco General Manager at Inkhouse. ○



Dan O'Mahony

# Print book sales surged in 2020

The lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted the highest print book sales in the U.S. in more than a decade, according to sales data analysis from NPD Group.

Sales volume of print books sold in the United States in 2020 totaled 751 million units, according to NPD's analysis, accounting for an 8.2 percent year-over-year increase from 2019. NPD reports that these figures account for the best year for print book sales in the U.S. since 2010.

Much of this growth was led by books in the juvenile fiction genre, the second-largest book category in terms of volume, which totaled sales of 186 million units in 2020, or about a third of all books sold in the U.S. last year. Books in this category saw an 11

percent increase in 2020, accounting for about 18 million more units sold in 2020 than in 2019.

Adult non-fiction print books, which remains the largest category of books in the U.S. by both volume and sales revenue, increased 4.8 percent in 2020 to total 309 million units, or approx. 14 million more units sold than in 2019. Adult fiction followed, selling eight million more books year-over-year to total 138 million units. Juvenile non-fiction grew 23 percent, or by about 14 million books, to total 77 million units.

2020's top seller was President Barack Obama's memoir “A Promised Land,” which sold 2.68 million copies. Young adult novel “Midnight Sun,” penned by “Twilight” series author Stephenie Meyer, was second. ○

## Richard Goldstein, O'Dwyer's columnist and tax expert, dies

**R**ichard Goldstein, an O'Dwyer's columnist specializing in financial issues affecting the public relations industry, died on February 10 at the age of 74.



Richard Goldstein

For nearly 25 years, Goldstein penned the monthly Financial Management column in O'Dwyer's magazine, where he discussed tax issues, mergers and acquisitions, business planning and other financial matters impacting the PR industry.

Goldstein's first O'Dwyer's article appeared in our Feb. 1996 issue. He contributed a column to O'Dwyer's almost every month since.

Since 2006, Goldstein had served as a Partner at public accounting firm Buchbinder Tunick & Company in Little Falls NJ. Prior to joining BT&C, Goldstein was Co-Managing Partner at Tocci, Goldstein & Co. (later Tardino Tocci & Goldstein), which he joined in 1992. He began his career in 1978 at audit, tax and advisory firm KPMG, where he was stationed for 15 years.

Goldstein was additionally an adjunct professor at the Long Island University Graduate School of Business, where he taught accounting and taxation. He previously also taught taxation at New Jersey City University.

Born in Brooklyn, Goldstein attended Baruch College, where he received a BBA in accounting and an MBA in taxation. He resided in Staten Island.

Goldstein's final column, which discussed home office expenses PR professionals can deduct from their taxes now that many agencies are working remotely in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, was published in O'Dwyer's November 2020 edition.

He is survived by his wife Judy, to whom he was married for 50 years, as well as a brother (Frank), two children and three grandchildren. ○

## Golin's Behrman skips to Edelman

**M**ary Jo Behrman has joined Edelman after a nine-year stint at Golin, where she rose to the Executive VP Digital Experience and Head of Innovation

post.

At the Interpublic unit, she worked with Walmart, General Mills and Allstate.

She handled enterprise transformation, predictive storytelling, influencer integration, reputation management and product promotion.

At Edelman's Chicago office, Behrman holds the Managing Director, Digital title.

Kevin Cook, Edelman Chicago President, expects Behrman's "background in mathematics, sharp analytical lens and deep experience in predictive storytelling will sharpen our data and intelligence capabilities, delivering even better service for our clients." ○



Mary Jo Behrman

## Schroeder takes CCO post at Inova Health

**T**racey Schroeder has joined Inova Health Systems, the leading nonprofit healthcare provider in northern Virginia, as Chief Communications Officer.

Most recently, she was Global Head of Consumer PR at Marriott International responsible for its 30 brands during a five-year stint.

Schroeder joined Marriott from Burson-Marsteller, where she was COO of its Proof Integrated Communications offering.

Inova's 18,000 staffers operate five hospitals that serve more than two million people a year through the hospital network, primary and specialty care practices, emergency and urgent care centers.

Schroeder will lead the health system's internal and external communications as well as its marketing initiatives. ○



Tracey Schroeder

## W2O hires Postmate's Garcia

**W**2O brings on Stephanie Garcia as Chief People Officer.

Garcia joins W2O from Postmates, where she was Senior Vice President, People and Civic Labs. Before that, she led global HR and business performance at PayPal and Sales-



Stephanie Garcia

force. She also held HR leadership roles at Life Technologies Corporation, a leader in biotech solutions.

"Stephanie brings incredible energy and a refreshing perspective that will help us achieve our ambitious vision for the future," said W2O Founder and CEO Jim Weiss. ○

## Marriott's Donahue hops to IHOP

**I**HOP has named Kieran Donahue Chief Marketing Officer.

Most recently, Donahue was at Marriott as Vice President, Brand, Marketing and Digital, Americas. She previously held several positions at Hilton, including Vice President, Americas Marketing for Hilton Enterprises and Vice President of Global Brand Marketing for DoubleTree by Hilton.

At IHOP, Donahue is responsible for driving the brand's marketing and culinary strategies, including oversight of advertising, digital innovation, communications, menu development and overall brand experience. ○



Kieran Donahue

## Brunswick adds JWT Talent alum

**B**runswick Group has hired Maria Gianoutsos, who was Global Chief Creative Talent Officer at J Walter Thompson, as Global Managing Partner, People.

Upon joining the firm on March 1, Gianoutsos will handle recruiting, talent management and human resources.

Prior to JWT, she was North America Managing Director at The Talent Business and Executive Recruiter at ML Search.

She has worked at agencies including Ogilvy, Weiss Whitten Stagliano, Ammirati Puris Lintas and J. Walter Thompson. Most recently, Gianoutsos was running The Counsel Co.

CEO Neal Wolin said Gianoutsos will help ensure that Brunswick has the right human capital strategy in place to unleash the full potential of staffers worldwide. ○



Maria Gianoutsos



# We are consumed by food.

**The right blend of seasoned expertise  
bringing flavor to the food, beverage  
and nutrition landscape.**



Together, Padilla and FoodMinds provide global expertise and leadership in the planet's evolving food ecosystem. We're reimagining why, what and how consumers eat and drink — to build a flourishing future for all. See what we've got cooking at [PadillaCo.com](https://www.PadillaCo.com) and [FoodMinds.com](https://www.FoodMinds.com).





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connect with purpose

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

## 5W PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**Ronn D. Torossian**, Founder & CEO  
**Dara Busch, Matthew Caiola**, Presidents

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.

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.

Client experience include Sparkling ICE, ZICO Coconut Water, SodaStream, Santa Margherita Wines, Whole Foods Market, &pizza, Tropical Smoothie Café, Paris Baguette, GAEA, Viki's Granola and many others.

## 360PR+

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**Laura Tomasetti**, CEO  
**Victoria Renwick, Michael Rush**, Partners  
**Rob Bratskeir**, Executive Vice President  
**Stacey Clement, Ali Kavulich, Caitlin Melnick, George Snell**, Senior Vice Presidents  
**Jenni Brennan, Melinda Bonner, Erin Kadamus, Kristen Thompson, Melissa Perroni (HR), Morgan Salmon (Finance)**, Vice Presidents

360PR+ knows how to make consumers hungry, thirsty and come back for more because our work starts with ideas steeped in



**Mom of three Vanessa Lachey shares her tips for healthy snacking and helps unveil Stonyfield Snack Packs (a 360PR+ client) to media and influencers.**

insights that matter, leavened by years of experience. Food & Beverage is our largest practice. Our deep understanding of how and why shoppers fill their carts and emerging trends translates to integrated campaigns that break through, fuel coverage and conversation and drive sales.

Our award-winning campaigns start with compelling storytelling, reaching consumers and key opinion leaders through earned media, influencer marketing, social media content and immersive brand experiences. We know the tastemakers—chefs, RDs, celebrities, media and bloggers—who consumers turn to for the latest nutrition, cooking and entertaining trends, advice and new products. And, we know how to elevate executives and brands as thought leaders, growing their influence.

It's why some of the most loved and trusted companies and brands have chosen 360PR+ as their partner: purpose-driven trailblazers like Stonyfield Organic and Pete and Gerry's Organic Eggs, icons such as America's Test Kitchen and illy coffee, better-for-you brands like Nasoya plant-based products and family favorites like Krusteaz

and Juicy Juice. Brands that bring a smile to our faces, like Jelly Belly and Sweethearts. And adult beverage brands, from craft beer pioneer Harpoon, to fast-risers like Sagamore Spirit Rye and Blue Chair Bay Rum.

In 360PR+ you'll gain a partner who comes to work hungry for new challenges every day, eager and fully equipped to create success with you and your team.

## BLAZE PR

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**Matt Kovacs**, President

BLAZE is the go-to PR agency for lifestyle brands hungry for a real piece of the marketshare. Fresh and seasoned, our boutique agency is comprised of veteran practitioners who stay one step ahead of trends and will not rest on the laurels of past successes. Our media strategies are meaty, creative and on-point because they are backed by a thoughtful process that con-

siders the particular world of each brand.

Recent Awards: *PR Week*, Best Places to Work; *LA Business Journal*, Best Places to Work; One Planet Awards, Gold—PR Campaign of the Year; One Planet Awards, Bronze—Product Launch of the Year

Clients include: Barebells protein bars, Bilinski's Chicken Sausage, Bushwick Kitchen, Calavo, California Olive Oil Council, Dalmatia Fig Spread, Electrolit, Golden West Food Group, High Peaks plant-based sausage, KOE Kombucha, Mary's Gone Crackers, Meat District, Melora Manuka, NadaMoo!, Nature's Path Organic Foods, Perfect Hydration, Pickle Juice.

## BULLFROG + BAUM

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**Jennifer Baum**, President + Founder

With over 20 years of success under its belt, Bullfrog + Baum continues to disrupt the communications world. We are storytellers who believe Hospitality Is Everywhere™. Our team is comprised of past chefs, travel junkies, wellness mavens, former editors, globetrotters and those who are curious and passionate about the world around them.

We're a one-stop-shop for clients seeking game-changing awareness and tangible ROI. In 2020, we introduced a new suite of services to respond to the evolving needs of the hospitality industry in light of the pandemic with timely, budget-friendly communications offerings. Bullhorn by B+B is a first-of-its-kind subscription service, and Amp is a three-month recovery program that provides a full suite of services for those in need of a marketing boost after such a tumultuous year.

Once a leading boutique PR firm specializing in restaurants, we have since grown to be much more and are now a full-service hospitality marketing agency with clients across F&B, Travel, and CPG. Our clients include Black Tap Craft Burgers & Beer, Katz's Delicatessen, Margaritaville Resort Times



Square, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Country Life Vitamins, Magnolia Bakery, Ketel One Family Made Vodka, and more.

We're not just a marketing, hospitality or lifestyle agency. We're a style of life agency.

## CAROLYN IZZO INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS (CIIC)

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**Carolyn Izzo-Feldman**, President  
& Chief Strategist  
**Amy Seden**, Executive Director  
& Partner  
**Paola Cuevas**, Senior Director

PR & Social Media for the food & beverage, travel & tourism, hospitality, real estate and lifestyle industries.

CIIC is an award-winning, full-service international public relations, social media and communications firm specializing in creating dynamic campaigns for the food & beverage space. Our staffers bring many years of experience from several of the country's top PR firms and for 25 years, CIIC has been dedicated to servicing food and beverage brands with top-tier public relations campaigns and award-winning results.

CIIC got its start by putting Krispy Kreme Doughnuts on the map when they first launched in the Northeast. Since then, CIIC has represented a number of leading F&B brands, including Sovány



CIIC onsite at the Bibigo Culinary Challenge in Partnership with the Culinary Institute of America.

Beverage Company, Florida Wine Academy, 305 Wines, The Original Soupman, Opal Apples, Barton & Guestier Wines, Bibigo Foods, Morton's The Steakhouse, Kona Red Beverages, Coney Island Brewing Company, New Leaf Beverages, California Pizza Kitchen, Bohlsen Restaurant Group, Beekman 1802, and more.

We are adept at launches, openings and franchisor relations, and are known for our networking expertise and extensive contacts in the trade, media and influencer categories,

which we leverage to increase the level of reach, media coverage and access for our clientele. From working with key influencers and A-list media, to arranging appearances on network television shows, managing product sampling and planning top-level events in your key markets, our goal is to strategically and creatively deliver the best results at the best value.

CIIC is a woman-owned and operated business (WBENC Certified) and a proud member of latam-PR, furthering our reach in Mexico

and Latin America.

For more information or to inquire about new business opportunities, please contact 845/358-3920 x 11 or visit us online at [www.ciic-news.com](http://www.ciic-news.com).

## CHAMPION

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**Ladd Biro**, Founder & Principal  
**Eric Spiritas**, Principal  
**Jami Sharp**, Senior Vice President, Public Relations  
**Russell Ford**, Senior Vice President, Marketing

We typically don't brag on ourselves, but Champion is an award-winning, privately held, full-service public relations, local store marketing, franchise development, digital media and crisis management agency. Well-established and emerging restaurant brands partner with us because our PR game is unrivaled at the national and local level, we build and execute spot-on local market activation plans, we deliver qualified franchisee candidates, we move the needle through digital media platforms and we wisely steer them through crises big and small.

Continued on page 24



Champion's clients are ubiquitous in the national and local media. Here, FOX News interviews two Champion clients: the CEOs of Fazoli's and Dickey's Barbecue Pit.



## CHAMPION

Continued from page 23

We're based in Texas, with a satellite office in Denver, but we're calling on the national media and working on local marketing campaigns in nearly every state as you read this.

Our clients—which include Raising Cane's, Dickey's Barbecue, Fazoli's, On The Border, SPB Hospitality and Taco John's—call us “incredibly fast, creative and innovative,” “best in class,” “invaluable partners,” “badass, kickass and always have their foot on the gas” and “the best full-service PR/LSM/social media agency we've ever worked with.” (We think they're pretty awesome, too!)

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**Thomas F. Coyne**, CEO  
**John Gogarty**, President  
**Tim Schramm**, Executive Vice President  
**Stacy Bataille**, Senior Vice President

The food and nutrition space has been a cornerstone of Coyne PR since the agency's inception nearly thirty years ago. Coyne has represented many of the most trusted brands in the world, including Keurig Dr Pepper, Del Monte Foods, Newman's Own, Chiquita, In the Raw, Eggland's Best, Entenmann's, Just Born Quality Confections, Perdue Foods, General Mills, PepsiCo, Kraft Foods, The Hershey Company, Campbell's, McCormick, and Perrigo's infant formulas, among others.

Coyne combines insight-driven strategy, cutting edge creative elements and flawless execution to achieve goals for clients, whether they be category leaders or challenger brands. We immerse ourselves in our client's business, becoming an extension of the communication and brand teams.

We create compelling storytelling and match these skills with our broad and deep media relationships to drive new levels of attention for



Coyne PR helps to solidify the PEEPS® Brand as a pop culture icon and extends its presence beyond the Easter season each year at PEEPSFEST®, a family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration.

brands. Through proprietary tools, we identify, engage and activate the influencers who reach a brand's audience authentically and understand how to tap into and amplify the voice of brand evangelists. Our registered dietitian network, consisting of 100+ influential and connected RD's and nutritionists, can be utilized to build, launch, and sustain campaign initiatives. We've introduced scores of products, launched numerous breakthrough campaigns, and helped brands navigate significant industry challenges and crisis situations.

## EDELMAN

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Edelman is a global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations. Our 6,000 people in more than 60 offices deliver communications strategies that give our clients the confidence to lead and act with certainty, earning the trust of their stakeholders. Our honors include the Cannes Lions Grand Prix for PR; *Advertising Age's* 2019 A-List; the *Holmes Report's* 2018 Global Digital Agency of the Year; and, five times, Glassdoor's Best Places to Work. Since

our founding in 1952, we have remained an independent, family-run business. Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle).

## EVINS COMMUNICATIONS, LTD.

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Food, Wine & Spirits

At EVINS we know that the secret to building brand relevancy, consumer engagement and organic advocacy among consumers is through exceptional storytelling, and nowhere do stories come alive with more passion and lasting emotion than at the table. For over 30 years, EVINS' Food, Wine and Spirits (FWS) Practice has been telling the stories of the brands, experiences and people that shape the way consumers engage and enjoy. We are gratified and honored to have a number of client relationships for more than a quarter of a century, helping brands including Colgin Cellars, Cakebread Cellars, Chef John Currence, Crown

Maple, Laphroaig, Maker's Mark, Nat Sherman Cigars, Old Overholt, Tequila Avion, Schaller & Weber, SmartWater, Trinchero Napa Valley and countless others convey their stories to the audiences that matter most to them. We are the driving force behind a number of the most iconic brands, personalities and trends in the food and beverage industry. We pioneered the practice of “seeded organic self-discovery” marketing, and we take great pride in being the leading practitioners of seamless “no fingerprints” public relations and influencer engagement. The EVINS FWS Practice skillfully combines the intense personal interests and proven professional expertise to create programs and attention-getting media coverage that bring hidden stories to the forefront. Transparent in our practices, relentless in our commitment to results, and passionate about solving the challenges facing our clients, EVINS has become a trusted and indispensable partner to our clients. Learn more about what we can do for you by visiting us at [www.evins.com](http://www.evins.com).

The May issue of *O'Dwyer's* will profile our ranked PR firms. If your firm is ranked with *O'Dwyer's* and you would like to be featured in the profiles section, contact Associate Editor Steve Barnes at 646/843-2089 or [steve@odwyerpr.com](mailto:steve@odwyerpr.com)

## FINEMAN PR

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San Francisco-based Fineman PR is consistently recognized for its award-winning food and beverage programs. From coining the term “Brand PR” in the 90s, to driving the natural foods boom, to servicing prestigious wine clients—Fineman PR has a tenured reputation that prioritizes substance over spin.

Fineman PR specializes in Brand PR, crisis communications and digital marketing for a full range of food and CPG categories, including organic foods, better-for-you functional foods, candy, and wine and spirits.

The firm demonstrates why a client’s brand promise merits audience trial and trust. Fineman PR’s high-profile crisis communications work is nationally renowned and includes food safety issues and product recalls, labor negotiations,

activist demonstrations, brand defamation, high profile legal action and workplace accidents. We safeguard and reinforce client reputations and excel in building category leadership for our clients.

Recent client experience includes full-service marketing communications and issues management for Foster Farms poultry; regional event marketing and brand awareness for Dunkin’ Donuts; Amy’s Kitchen corporate and brand initiatives.

Fineman PR’s core services include proactive media relations; leadership positioning for brands and company executives; influencer relations; media training; cause marketing and community relations; and internal, trade and retail communications.

In 2020, Fineman PR joined forces with Off Madison Ave, a Phoenix-based integrated marketing agency with deep digital, creative and social experience. This enhances the firm’s ability to provide a range of additional marketing, creative and digital solutions to both firms’ diverse roster of clients.”

## FISH CONSULTING

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**Jenna Kantrowitz**, SVP / COO  
**Lauren Simo**, SVP  
**Ashley Davidson**, VP

Founded in 2004, Fish is a national PR agency that has helped some of the fastest-growing restaurant brands achieve their business goals. We’re proud to serve some of the industry’s leading companies, including Dunkin’, FOCUS Brands, Blaze Pizza, Chicken Salad Chick, and Jack in the Box, among many others.

Our restaurant experience runs deep. From brand building, national consumer and B2B PR, and influencer marketing to franchisee recruitment, local grand openings, and crisis management, we’ve done a lot in the restaurant space.

Our strategic media relations campaigns consistently land our partners coverage in the most widely read and watched consumer and

business outlets nationwide. We love developing creative ways to get media talking about the brands we work with—and getting customers talking about them, too.

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

## FLEISHMAN HILLARD

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**Kristie Sigler**, Americas Food, Agribusiness & Beverage (FAB) Lead

FleishmanHillard understands where food has been and where it’s going—philosophically and literally—as we work in every link of the food chain. Our global, cross-functional team of more than 160 FAB specialists includes passionate foodies, farm kids, registered dietitians, food scientists, policy experts, former journalists, government officials, issues and crisis specialists, social storytellers and agriculture experts.

Food is no longer just functional; it’s emotional, it’s an expression of self. Influencers are using their forks to promote a wide range of political and cultural agendas. Consumers want to know more about how food is raised and produced. The need for authenticity has never been greater, which is why we connect our farm-to-fork approach with our social, innovation and technology experts to identify emerging global change agents (issues and individuals) to help companies engage differently with the individuals who are shaping what and how we eat and drink.

If you’d like to learn more, please contact Kristie Sigler, kristie.sigler@fleishman.com.

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At FoodMinds, we put passion



At Fish, we always put our team members first because we strongly believe that when employees are happy and healthy, they do their best work for our clients. Fish has been repeatedly recognized as a best place to work, receiving prestigious national and local awards over the past year, including Inc., PRWeek, PRNEWS, PProvoke, and the South Florida Business Journal. Additionally, Fish was named to Forbes’ inaugural list of America’s Best PR Agencies for 2021. The agency also has been recognized as one of Entrepreneur magazine’s Top Franchise Suppliers for the last three years.

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## FOODMINDS

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into practice by harnessing science, public affairs, food values and communications to meet our clients' business and public health objectives—a capability we created and define as food and nutrition affairs. FoodMinds is the only agency with more than 20 registered dietitians on staff and a Global ExpertBench™ of nutrition science, policy and communications professionals around the world. Capabilities include: food and nutrition affairs; sustainable and nutritious food systems engagement; personal wellness strategy; food values insights; strategic planning; thought leadership; nutrition, health and wellness science; partnerships and coalitions; health professional and influencer communications; influencer mapping; strategic insights; consumer engagement and media relations; and issues and crisis navigation. We are not just another PR agency. We help our clients tell a better story.

FoodMinds works with more than 30 leading commodity boards, food companies, brands and associations in the U.S. and around the world, including several *Fortune* 500 companies. Contact us to learn more.

FoodMinds is a division of Padilla. Between FoodMinds and Padilla Food + Beverage, we are happily consumed by food, all the time. Together, we're re-imagining why, what and how consumers eat and drink—to build a stronger, flourishing future for all. We are building, growing and protecting brands and reputations by creating purposeful connections with the people who matter most to our clients. Together, our services span the ecosystem of food, beverage and nutrition—from research and insights to branding, creative and digital to marketing communications and our unique culinary center.

## FRENCH/WEST/ VAUGHAN

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

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

French/West/Vaughan (FWV),



**HUNTER inspired a new wave of home cooks by helping sports fans across the globe use TABASCO® Sauces to create their favorite, nostalgia-inducing game day eats right at home through Stadium Food FOMO meal kits, a recipe digital series in partnership with Vice Munchies, and launching influencer content with chefs in the #TeamTABASCO network.**

the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, is home to one of the country's largest Food & Beverage practice areas. FWV is ranked No. 17 on the list of the nation's largest PR firms overall (2020 *O'Dwyer's* Ranking of Top U.S. PR Firms) and has been in the top 20 for nearly two decades.

FWV specializes in creating maximum brand exposure through integrated campaigns that include earned media, promotional partnerships, celebrity endorsements, sponsor relations, event management, social media, influencer marketing, experiential activations and trade shows. The firm has vast experience with product launches in B2C and B2B channels, as well as in strategic counsel on issues related to environmental topics, supply chain, manufacturing and product recalls.

This broad range of expertise, including the evolving communications and content technologies utilized by consumers and the industry, has enabled FWV to support some of the most sought-after F&B brands in the world, including Melitta Coffee, Moe's Southwest Grill, BurgerFi, Certified Angus Beef, RealEats, The Coca-Cola Company (NESTEA, Gold Peak, Minute

Maid, DASANI, Simply Orange), ConAgra (Slim Jim, Pemmican Beef Jerky), Nabisco Foods, Brinker International (Maggiano's Little Italy restaurants), Elevation Burger, House-Autry, Atlantic Natural Foods, Lidl, Whole Foods Market, Smithfield Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q, the N.C. Pork Council and North Carolina SweetPotato Commission. Our past and present client roster in the beer, wine and spirits category includes Proximo (Pendleton Whisky), Brown-Forman (Jack Daniel's), Diageo North America (Bulleit Bourbon), Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits (Josh Cellars, Yellow Tail), BRAND Napa Valley, Grain and Barrel Spirits, Mother Earth Brewing and the N.C. Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association. The agency has also produced award-winning campaigns for celebrity chefs Christine Hazel, Jeff Mauro, Lorena Garcia and Aliya LeeKong, among many others.

FWV is the only N.C.-based public relations firm to capture National Agency of the Year honors, something it has now done 20 times over the past two decades. Founded in April 1997 by agency Chairman & CEO Rick French, FWV employs more than 120 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing

experts among its Raleigh, New York City, Los Angeles, Greater Boston and Tampa offices.

## HUNTER

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**Grace Leong**, CEO  
**Jonathan Lyon**, Partner  
**Donetta Allen**, Partner  
**Gigi Russo**, Partner  
**Erin Hanson**, Partner

Contact: smormar@hunterpr.com  
**Samara Farber Mormar**, Executive Vice President, Business Development

HUNTER is an award-winning, integrated consumer marketing firm and the second largest food and beverage agency in the United States. Our creative approach and client-led orientation has led to some of the most enduring client relationships in the business including TABASCO® Brand Pepper Sauce, HUNTER's first partner over 30 years ago, and still a client today. Others include some of America's most iconic and beloved companies and brands including Smithfield, Diageo North America, Pompeian, Mrs. T's Pierogies,



Chicken of the Sea and King's Hawaiian.

With offices in New York, Los Angeles and London and partnerships that extend our reach globally, HUNTER's 160-person firm is perhaps best known for executing strategic, creative, equity building campaigns that drive conversation and insert brands firmly into the lifestyles of their target consumers. From the traditional days of "tasting is believing" to the modern world of #instagood #foodporn, food and beverage is in our DNA. For today's consumer, food and drink are one of the primary pathways in their pursuit of health and happiness. Eating, drinking, cooking and dining are critical parts of family connection, entertainment and self-care rituals with people spending more time in the kitchen than ever before. Through a powerful blend of our staff's passion for food culture, relationships with food influencers and prowess for strategic consumer marketing, we help brands to become part of these rituals by inserting them into the right moments in time through the right mediums and right mouthpieces.

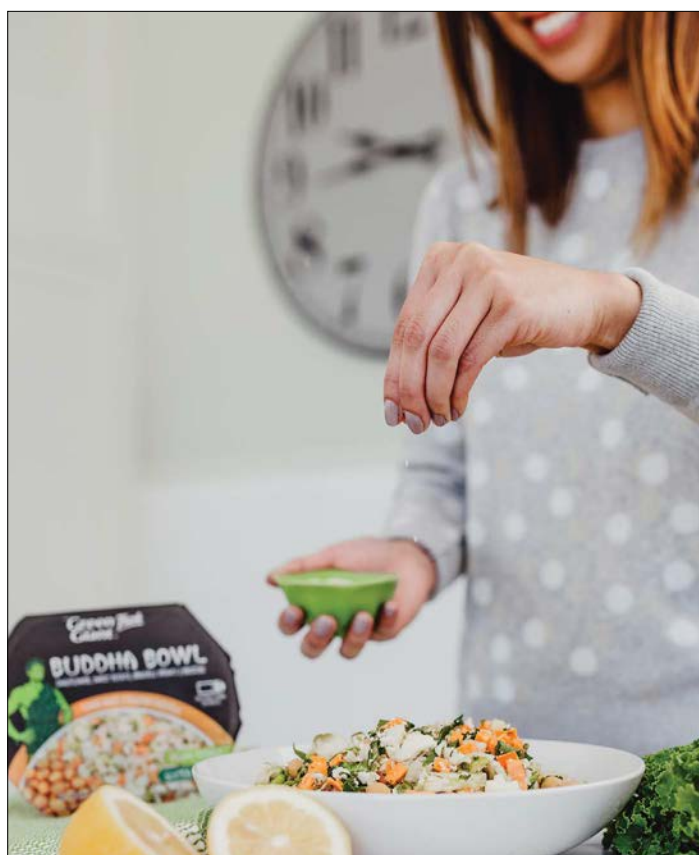
In addition to our core competencies, we offer specialized services for these clients including recipe development and photography; relationships with bartenders, mixologists, chefs and celebrity food influencers in both social and traditional media; and partnerships with government and non-profit organizations driving the conversations about food and beverages today.

HUNTER served as the founding member of the Food + Beverage division of the Public Relation Society of America, and conducts an annual Food News Study, to help keep our clients abreast of what is making news in the industry and which media consumers trust most.

## ICR

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Established in 1998, ICR partners with companies to execute strategic communications and advisory programs that achieve business goals, build awareness and credibility, and enhance long-term enterprise value. The firm's highly-differentiated service model, which pairs capital markets veterans with senior communications professionals, brings deep sector knowledge and relationships to more than 650 clients



**Lambert was charged by Green Giant Fresh to support the national launch of Veggie Bowls—a new line of plant-based microwaveable meal bowls found within the increasingly competitive produce section of the grocery store. Key to a successful product introduction was building and maintaining relationships with the brand's retail customers, measured by store traffic and, ultimately, sales.**

in approximately 20 industries. ICR's healthcare practice operates under the Westwicke brand ([www.westwicke.com](http://www.westwicke.com)). Today, ICR is one of the largest and most experienced independent communications and advisory firms in North America, maintaining offices in New York, Norwalk, Boston, Baltimore, San Francisco, San Diego and Beijing. ICR also advises on capital markets transactions through ICR Capital, LLC. Learn more at [www.icrinc.com](http://www.icrinc.com). Follow us on Twitter at @ICRPR.

Clients: Albertsons Companies, B&G Foods, Beyond Meat, Boot Barn, Boston Market, CV Sciences, Chunghwa Telecom Co. Ltd., Darden Restaurants, GNC Holdings, Inc., Fogo de Chao, Freshpet, Harman, Herbalife Ltd., Hostess, Laird Superfood, Limoneira, Luckin' Coffee, lululemon athletica, Michaels, Michael Kors, New Relic, Nomad Foods, Olo, Paramount Group Inc., Planet Fitness Inc., Prairie Vodka, Shake Shack, Starwood Property Trust, Texas Roadhouse, The National

Restaurant Association, The One Group, Tilray, Torchys, Utz Quality Foods, Williams-Sonoma, Inc. and Workiva.

## LAMBERT & CO.

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**Jeff Lambert**, Founder & CEO  
**Don Hunt**, President/Partner  
**Matt Jackson**, Managing Partner  
**Michelle Olson**, APR, Managing Partner  
**Sarah Smith**, Chief Growth Officer

Lambert & Co. is the Challenger Agency for Challenger Brands™ serving emerging and established brands with integrated marketing strategies that encourage new product trial and build brand affinity.

Our experience includes nearly every aisle and every segment, including salty snacks, beverages, deli, produce, dairy, beer and spirits, juices, functional foods, breakfast bars, frozen foods, salsas and more. Our core difference is the priority we place on business outcome versus agency output, and this philosophy has helped Lambert stand apart as an organization where leaders want to grow, and clients want to stay. While we are an independent firm, we have innovative partnerships with global MBE and WBE multi-cultural marketing agencies to complement our in-house team of creatives, PR practitioners, web developers, social and paid media experts and multimedia producers. Our cross-functional collaboration allows us to effectively manage the content machine that drives new discovery and understand the evolution of today's consumer journey. We know how to build extraordinary brand relevance and help our clients achieve their strategic goals.

## MARKETING MAVEN

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**Lindsey Carnett**, CEO & President

Named to the 2017 and 2018 *Inc.* 5000 List of Fastest Growing Companies in America and *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 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, influencer 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 a federal-

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**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 generating national media coverage and tremendous social media buzz.**

## MARKETING MAVEN

Continued from page 27

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

## MARX LAYNE & COMPANY

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**Leslie Pardo**, Senior VP and Food & Beverage Lead

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

Services offered include media relations, social media, grand openings, product launches, special events, crisis and reputation management, internal communications, community engagement programs,

sampling events, blogger relations, direct mail, e-blasts, graphic design, web development and design, SEO, content creation, brochure and newsletter production, and expanding concepts into new markets.

Industry experience includes fine dining, fast casual, QSRs, super-market chains, and food and beverage manufacturers and suppliers. We have successfully introduced concepts new to Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Florida and other markets.

Our creativity is boundless. For example, 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 national media coverage and tremendous social media buzz. Wallenda later went on to break Guinness World Records crossing Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon.

## PADILLA

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**Kristen Ingraham**, Senior Vice President, Food + Beverage Group Lead

Padilla's Food + Beverage Practice is one of the strongest and most experienced in the country. Balancing deeply rooted expertise with cutting-edge insights and technology, Padilla's team navigates complex challenges and delivers award-winning solutions.

Located in the media capital of the world—and anchored by its state-of-the-art culinary studio, The Cookery—Padilla's Food + Beverage Practice represents beloved brands and marketing cooperatives for all audiences: consumer, food-service, retail and beyond.

Padilla's team includes consumer brand builders; wine and spirits aficionados; digital strategists and e-commerce experts; storytellers and publicists; retail authorities and registered dietitians; culinary curators and recipe developers; and research, trends and insights specialists. Food and beverage industry clients include: Avocados From Mexico, Dole Food Company, the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers, Prosciutto di Parma, Ribera y Rueda Wines, Smithfield, the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and Virginia Wines.

Padilla is an independently operated, globally resourced public relations and communication company with offices across the United States. The agency builds, grows and protects brands and reputations worldwide by creating purposeful connections with the people who matter most through public relations, advertising, digital and social marketing, investor relations and brand strategy. Padilla includes the brand consultancy of Joe Smith, the food and nutrition experts at FoodMinds and the research authorities at SMS Research Advisors. Padilla is an AVENIR GLOBAL company and is a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, a partnership of 132 independently owned partner offices in 115 cities on six continents. Connect with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

## 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, virtual and live events and trade shows, foodservice and retail support, target influencer engagement, crisis management, third-party alliance building, and science activation for food, beverage, health, wellness, and lifestyle clients. We keep our finger on the pulse of the latest health and wellness trends through our annual What's Trending in Nutrition survey conducted in partnership with *Today's Dietitian*. Our research arms the leading consumer and nutrition media with trends that fuel their year-round editorial coverage. We also leverage the survey insights to align clients with news-making trends and inform their strategies to develop and execute impactful and successful communications campaigns.

Pollock pioneered communications for the functional food movement, creating some major food trends including making tea the healthy drink of millennials and making chocolate a healthy indulgence. Most recently, Pollock drove national media coverage, awareness and sales for Moon Cheese as the perfect healthy snack. On behalf of the Tea Council of the USA, the agency engaged millennials through a creative, award-winning social media campaign that inspired tea lovers to share their #Individuali-TEA. The traditional and digital media campaign drove an increase in social followers and increased awareness for National Hot Tea Month and tea benefits among a key target. For the Cranberry Marketing Committee, Pollock harnessed the power of social media and Friendsgiving, the trendy millennial holiday, to break through the digital noise and reinvent the cranberry with this new target audience. And for Mars, Pollock leveraged scientific research about chocolate and health to showcase Dove brand attributes timed to Valentine's Day, driving a 40% increase in sales.

View & download profiles of hundreds of PR firms specializing in a dozen industry areas at: [www.odwyerpr.com](http://www.odwyerpr.com)





**"The ninth annual Pollock Communications and *Today's Dietitian* 'What's Trending in Nutrition' survey provides insights into how the pandemic has affected 2021 diet trends."**

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 delivers B2B and B2C results that change perceptions and protect and enhance a brand's position in the market.

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. Pollock Communications has built a broad network of influential 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 de-

velop an executable, strategic plan that delivers measurable results... every time.

American Dairy Association North East, American Pulse Association, Cranberry Institute, Cranberry Marketing Committee, Danone North America, LivBar, L-Nutra, Moon Cheese, National Watermelon Promotion Board, Orgain, Tea Association of the USA, Tea Council of the USA, USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council and USA Rice Federation.

## PORTER NOVELLI

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porternovelli.com  
202/601-8000

**David Bentley**, Chief Executive Officer

**Kate Cusick**, Chief Marketing Officer

**Margaret-Ann Cole**, Chief People & Transformation Officer

Porter Novelli is a global communications partner who confidently leads clients through a modern stakeholder landscape. We believe that successful companies need to stand for something beyond what

they sell to build the reputation they deserve. They must positively impact people's lives and society to maintain relevance and achieve better business results. Our experts operate at the nexus of food policy, research, trends and innovations that create a healthier world for workers, communities and the planet.

For nearly 50 years, we've guided the food and nutrition industry—a journey dating back to the creation of the first Food Pyramid. Today, we offer deep expertise in stakeholder communication, mapping and engagement, science and policy counsel, issues management and mitigation, consumer engagement and activation, foodservice and food professional engagement, sustainability communications and reporting, and media outreach. Porter Novelli Food is well-equipped as your singular communications partner to answer today's challenges and embrace tomorrow's opportunities.

Our expertise spans agriculture, B2B communications, commodity groups, consumer products, foodservice and nutrition for clients such as the Almond Board of California, Ben & Jerry's, National Honey Board and siggi's, among others.

## THE POWER GROUP

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**Amy Power**, President & CEO  
**Kortni Robinson**, Director of Sales & Marketing

The Power Group is a full-service public relations and social media firm specializing in media and influencer relations, crisis communications, social media content creation, events, and more. Our experienced team works with clients to build PR campaigns and social media strategies that fit specific needs and deliver powerful results. The firm's longest-tenured client, Golden Chick, has been retained for more than 20 years.

We work with our clients to set specific, measurable KPIs that tie into their overall business objectives. Our unique "30-day guarantee" promises clients media coverage within the first 30 days of media relations outreach. The Power Group also utilizes an innovative value-based pricing model

which benefits both the agency and clients by offering flat rate service fees rooted in actual value instead of inefficient hourly billing.

We know the restaurant industry and specialize in food and beverage PR. We have coordinated and executed successful grand openings, influencer campaigns, new menu launches and more across the United States.

To learn more about The Power Group's services, clients and results, visit [www.thepowergroup.com](http://www.thepowergroup.com) or contact Kortni Robinson, director of sales & marketing, at [korti@thepowergroup.com](mailto:korti@thepowergroup.com).

Notable clients include: Abacus Jasper's Restaurant Group; BenefitMall; Bulla Gastrobar; Borden Dairy Company; Cafe Express; Cotton Patch Café; Crisp & Green; Dillas Quesadillas; Fireside Pies; Golden Chick; LALA USA; Lawry's The Prime Rib; Marufuku Ramen; MidiCi Neapolitan Pizza; Mimi's Bistro and Bakery; MOOYAH Burgers, Fries & Shakes; Pollo Campero;

Ranch Rider Spirits; Rave Restaurant Group; RedBull; Religion Tequila; Tacos 4 Life; TGI Fridays; TEAZZERS; Vacation in a Bottle (ViB); and Which Wich Superior Sandwiches.

## RFIBINDER

950 3rd Ave. Floor 8  
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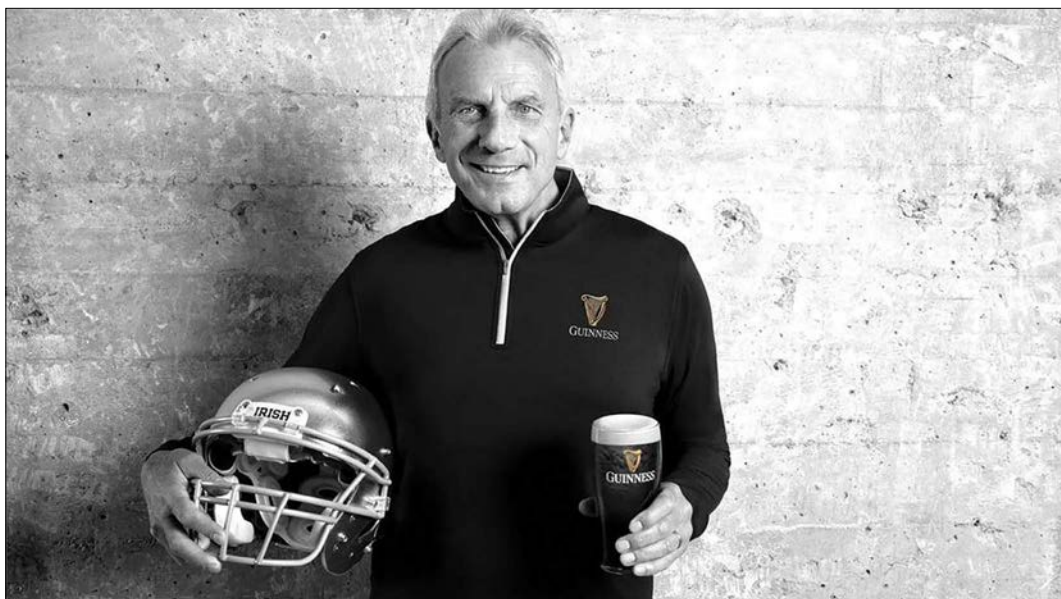
**Amy Binder**, CEO  
**Jacqueline Piccolo**, Head of Business Development  
**Atlanta Rafferty**, Head of Food, Drinks & Nutrition Practice

Driving business results for food and beverage companies, brands and associations is at the core of RF|Binder's communications and consulting experience in the food industry. Our creative work has made food and beverage brands not only pantry staples but also cultural icons. With the growing demand to build a more sustainable food future, one of our specialty areas is working with emerging food innovators, from food technology and plant-based companies to category disruptors.

We've developed award-winning consumer and corporate campaigns across QSR, restaurant, CPG brands, B2B ingredients, wine, beer and distilled spirits brands, country trade groups and industry associations. We have built reputations by creating highly targeted, integrated marketing and communications

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**Taylor partnered with Guinness in August to unveil a partnership—more than 200 years in the making—with Notre Dame, as an official beer of Fighting Irish Alumni & Fans. Hall of Fame quarterback and Notre Dame alumnus Joe Montana has been the face of the campaign ever since, from countless virtual media appearances, to autographed football giveaways, to acclaimed ad campaigns that toast to the greatest year that's still ahead of us. Much more to come in 2021, when fans can hopefully once again enjoy Football Saturdays in the stands or out with family and friends.**

## RF | BINDER

— Continued from page 29

campaigns and handled a range of issues from product recalls, in-store incidents, customer complaints and activists' campaigns.

RF|Binder is a fully integrated communications and consulting firm—powered by strategy, creativity, analytics and purpose. We are independent, entrepreneurial, and woman-owned. RF|Binder is headquartered in New York City, with offices in Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

## SPM COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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**Suzanne Parsonage Miller,**  
President & Founder

For more than 20 years, SPM has worked with food, beverage and restaurant clients to tell their unique stories as the food and nutrition landscape has evolved. We've drawn on our deep brand and crisis management roots over the

past year to help clients navigate a new level of sustained crisis while working to build and maintain relationships with their key audiences.

We integrate earned media relations, influencer partnerships, events and paid social media strategy to create campaigns that increase brand awareness and meet business objectives, whether those are sales goals, traffic around a certain milestone or company acquisition. Just a few of our work highlights in 2020 include:

Provided daily guidance to multiple restaurant brands on rapidly changing COVID-19 regulations, restrictions and protocols throughout the pandemic to aid in maintaining community and consumer relationships.

Helped challenger seltzer brand Mighty Swell capitalize on a national moment and a unique partnership to launch a tongue-in-cheek national Change.org petition to make Super Monday a national holiday, creating the Austin-based brand's most successful PR activation to date.

Leveraged the pandemic-proof business model of fajita delivery and catering company Fajita Pete's to generate trade and franchise stories as the company sought to drive franchise deals and expand to new markets.

Helped brands connect with communities through give-back programs while pandemic regulations kept them closed and cut off from

key consumers. For example, SPM helped Chuck E. Cheese activate a "Day of Giving" program in dozens of local U.S. markets in which they provided more than 20,000 meals to front line workers, medical personnel and first responders, reaching an estimated media audience of more than 600,000.

Leveraged strong national, regional and local media relationships to share our brands' positive news to drive bottom-line results and layered in influencer partnerships to further drive messaging to multiple audiences.

Developed new media relations tactics and creative strategies to help build brands during difficult economic times while also helping to preserve brand equity and reputation through bankruptcies, permanent location closures and mandated shutdowns to emerge strong on the other side.

In addition to building food and restaurant brands, we help protect brands through our robust crisis communications practice. We've managed more than 5,000 crises and our media protocol is currently deployed in more than a thousand restaurant and retail locations nationwide.

Our culture-driven agency was founded on our "No Jerks" policy, which fosters strong agency-client relationships with mutual trust and respect and leads to greater creativity, productivity and true partnership between agency and

client. SPM has been lauded as a PR industry "Best Places to Work" and was recently listed on *Forbes'* prestigious new "America's Best PR Agencies 2021."

Additional food, beverage and restaurant brand experience includes Nothing Bundt Cakes, Community Coffee, Pollo Camp-ero, RW Garcia, Velvet Taco, Mi Cocina, Del Frisco's Restaurant Group, Chipotle, Bruegger's Bagels, True Food Kitchen, Stubb's Bar-B-Q, Van's Foods, Pei Wei, P.F. Chang's, Boulder Organic, Lantana Hummus, Whataburger, Taco Cabana, Salata and many more.

## TAYLOR

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**Tony Signore,** CEO & Managing Partner

**Mike Costabile,** Managing Partner  
**Maeve Hagen,** 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 is headquartered in New York with 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; D,E,&I; measurement and evaluation; event creative and production, and talent procurement and training.

Taylor develops and executes marketing communications programs for category leading food and beverage brands, including—for more than 30 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 and QSR brands for a wide range of services, including product introductions, sponsorship activations, and digital strategy/social activation.



**GoodSam offers vegan, sugar-free, direct-trade goodies that are good for you, good for farmers and good for the planet. Zapwater was instrumental in the brand's successful launch.**

## TREVELINO/KELLER

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**Dean Trevelino**, Founder & Principal  
**Genna Keller**, Founder & Principal

In late 2020, Trevelino/Keller

launched Remember The Octanes—www.remembertheoctanes.com—recognition for restaurant and retail brands lost as a result of COVID-19. Octane was a folk-hero coffee brand that opened within weeks and blocks of Trevelino/Keller's launch in 2003. Beyond Octane, Trevelino/Keller is busy supporting those brands who took an aggressive approach to the changing world.

Trevelino/Keller had the opportunity to continue support of Nathan's Famous, its food donation efforts in

New York, its progressive ghost kitchen restaurant strategy and even the launch of a new concept, Wings of New York. In addition to Nathan's fully integrated work, the firm successfully delivered franchise public relations and leadgen strategies for international brand, Paris Baguette. Under the campaign, "Why Franchise Now," the firm delivered record leads in the US as well as Canada.

Entering the new year, Trevelino/Keller has been readying the launch of the plant-based industry's newest player, UnMeat, out of Manila from global brand, Century Pacific Food. The brand intends to compete with the likes of Impossible and Beyond with "familiar" ingredients priced at, yes, the cost of meat. Tapping 2018 Burger Champion, Nicole Ponseca whose Filipino restaurant, Jeepney, has a cult and celebrity following in New York, ceremoniously flipped the first UnMeat burger in the US.

## WILKS COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

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**Gardi Wilks**, President  
**Brad Wilks**, Managing Director  
**Sarah Hintze**, VP of Consumer & Food

Wilks Communications Group is an award-winning PR and integrated marketing communications agency with a proven track record built over 25+ years of helping

food, beverage and spirits clients strengthen their brand awareness, enhance consumer engagement and drive sales.

Our client engagements range from brand campaigns and product introductions to earned and social media programs, influencer partnerships, content marketing, digital advertising, website creation and design, and more. Our expertise is derived from years spent as big agency leaders, communications professionals within large consumer packaged goods companies, as food journalists, bloggers and digital strategists. We pride ourselves on our deep understanding of food and beverage trends and helping food brands build strong emotional connections with their consumers and customers. We are results-oriented and purpose-driven, which is why many of our client relationships span years and even decades.

## ZAPWATER COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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**Jennifer Lake**, Senior VP  
**Stephanie Poquette**, Vice President, Social Media and Influencer Programming

Zapwater Communications, Inc. is an award-winning integrated communications agency specializing in trendsetting lifestyle brands. The team curates innovative campaigns for leading food and beverage brands, including wine and spirits, gluten-free and non-GMO product lines and specialty products.

The agency's food and beverage campaigns are driven by passion and metrics-driven results, and our multidisciplinary services include a mix of digital engagement, experiential tactics, influencer and media relations and social media.

Current clients include Burpee Home Gardens, Fleur de Prairie, GoodSam Foods, Laver Cake Wines, Snap Dragon Foods and Sonoma Gourmet. ○



**New York Restaurant and Filipino Nicole Ponseca, a Trevelino/Keller client, who has established a following in New York with her restaurant, Jeepney, cooks up her hometown's new entry into the plant-based burger category with UnMeat from Century Pacific Food.**



# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

## FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

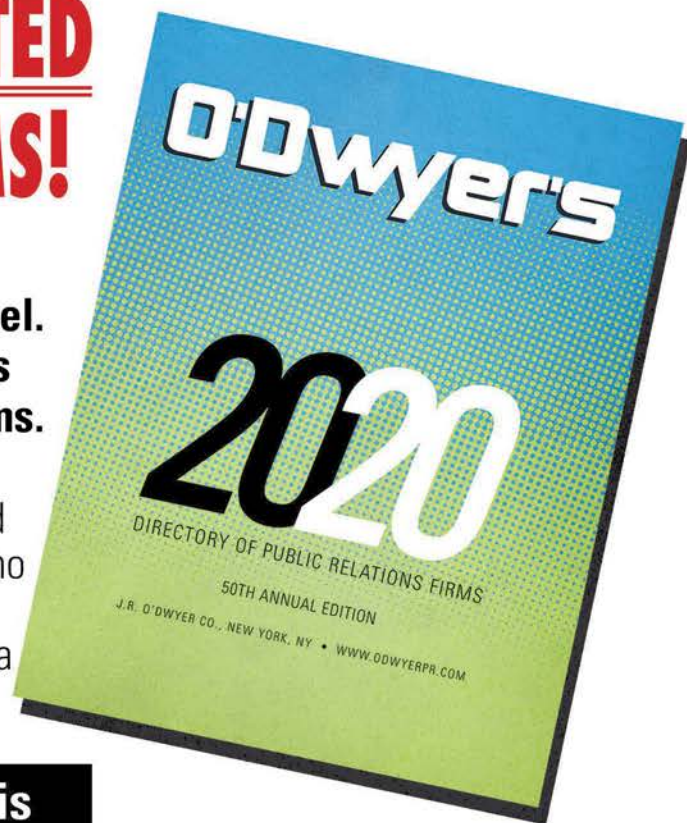
Firm	Net Fees (2019)	Firm	Net Fees (2019)
1. <b>Edelman</b> , New York, NY	<b>\$109,260,000</b>	24. <b>Peppercomm</b> , New York, NY	<b>\$1,037,075</b>
2. <b>APCO Worldwide</b> , Washington, DC	<b>18,817,400</b>	25. <b>Berk Communications</b> , New York, NY	<b>936,500</b>
3. <b>Hunter</b> , New York,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



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

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—Henry P. Feintuch, Feintuch Communications

# Cuomo's crisis lessons in failed leadership

By Fraser Seitel

Governor Andrew Cuomo's book, "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic," debuted at number-seven on *The New York Times* best seller list in October and remained on top through the year's end.

Three months later, his sequel, "Gubernatorial Crisis: Failed Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic," ought to be mandatory reading for every public relations counselor.



Fraser P. Seitel has been a communications consultant, author and teacher for more than 30 years. He is the author of the Prentice-Hall text, *The Practice of Public Relations*.

The *New Yorker's* dizzying fall from grace—from first to worst among U.S. governors—provides a cautionary tale not only for public figures, but also for those who advise them.

The reason, in a word, for the once-respected

Governor's rapid decline in esteem, trust and credibility is "hubris," i.e., excessive pride, conceit or arrogance.

And Gov. Cuomo's unbridled hubris—demonstrated over nine months of preening, preaching and self-promoting followed by three months of back-pedaling, blaming and alibiing—has landed the erstwhile Democrat darling squarely in the middle of an untenable, unwinnable and, for Andrew Cuomo himself, "unimaginable," public relations disaster.

For those unwilling to wait for the sequel's publication, here is the CliffsNotes version of the public relations rules Cuomo violated on his way to political purgatory.

## Violation one: Cuomo took full credit

Early on as the virus spread, Cuomo took to the airwaves to assure the nation that he, like Al Haig—look it up—was "in charge."

Cuomo's daily press conferences, wherein the media-savvy Governor held forth with a mix of COVID updates, personal anecdotes and homespun wisdom, quickly became must-see TV both on eager liberal networks CNN and MSNBC and reluctant conservative network Fox.

The Governor, a consummate showman, dutifully dodged a daily dose of mainly softball questions from distanced—but still mostly awed—reporters, while taking full credit for New York's—i.e. his!—han-

dling of the COVID crisis. As he humbly recounted on opening night of the August virtual Democratic Convention, "For all the pain and all the tears, our way worked. And it was beautiful."

Just as Cuomo was oblivious to his cringe-worthy choice of describing the pandemic as "beautiful," so, too, was he loathe to share the stage with any of his underlings. This stood in stark contrast to his New Jersey counterpart, Gov. Phil Murphy, who understood the importance of crediting others, and every day at his COVID press conferences called on subordinates to report and commended them effusively.

At Cuomo's press conferences, ironically, the only subordinate who dared speak when not called upon was the Governor's top assistant, Melissa DeRosa, who in January ultimately lowered the boom on Prince Andrew with damning leaked remarks to legislators.

## Violation two: Cuomo believed his own publicity

As the crisis wore on and the more the media fawned over Cuomo's virtuoso daily performances, the more his acclaim ascended. And the Governor reveled in his grandiosity.

His daily press conference that began as a deadly serious news briefing morphed into a variety show, with Andrew as the gregarious MC. He beamed in Chris Rock and Rosie Perez to talk up New York, Sean Penn to discuss new COVID relief centers and his duller fellow governors, Murphy in New Jersey and Ned Lamont in Connecticut, to express their "togetherness."

The Cuomo coup de grace was live interviewing his CNN brother Chris, who had contracted COVID. The brothers were so entertaining, trading playful family banter and praising one another's dedication and resolve, that the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences awarded the Governor an Emmy for his TV service to humanity.

And then, eight months into the crisis in the blunder of all blunders, Andrew decided to write a 320-page book to share with a grateful COVID-ravaged nation his "hard-won lessons in leadership and his vision for the path forward."

Cuomo's vainglorious publishing victory lap, like President George W. Bush's "mission accomplished" declaration three years before the end of the Iraqi War, would backfire ferociously three months later.

## Violation three: Cuomo feigned empathy

In early February, after DeRosa let slip

that Cuomo purposely withheld New York's skyrocketing COVID-19 nursing home death count, the Governor sprang into full damage control mode to try to tamp down the mounting furor.

It hasn't worked. Try as he might, Andrew Cuomo has a tough time expressing true empathy.

Typical were his comments at his first post-DeRosa bombshell press conference, when he tried to relate to loved ones of nursing home victims by citing the loss of his own father.

"I still go through it over and over and over again. What should I have done? What could I have done? What should I have said to the doctor? I probably always will."

Cuomo's father, of course, died six years ago from heart problems at the age of 82, with his family by his side. Mario Cuomo's demise stood in stark contrast to most of the 15,000 New York nursing home COVID victims who were prohibited from seeing their loved ones when they died. Andrew's comparison to his father was ill-conceived, if not simply tone-deaf.

Compare that attempt at empathy to Gov. Murphy's inclusion at every press conference of real life stories and photos of at least three randomly-selected and mostly unknown New Jersey COVID victims. The latter is empathetic; the former is manipulative.

## Violation four: Cuomo accepted no blame

Finally, Prince Andrew, like King Donald before him, was quick to point fingers at others, rather than accepting blame himself, when things went horribly wrong.

Faced with scorn from both parties, criticism from the media—except for Chris Cuomo, who CNN, on second thought, suddenly barred from reporting on his brother's travails—and looming state and federal investigations, Cuomo reluctantly acknowledged that his administration should have provided more information faster.

But ...

"The truth is, everyone did everything they could do. The truth is you had the best medical professionals and advice on the globe. The truth is it was in the middle of a pandemic. The truth is COVID attacks senior citizens," the Governor explained.

He then went on to blame social media, 24 hour news stations, Republicans with agendas and even—in an admirably-inven-

— Continued on next page



# Communications in a post-COVID world

By Robert L. Dilenschneider

Sometime later this year, the COVID pandemic will come to an end, or at least will be under control. When that happens, organizations of all kinds—from corporations to foundations, from municipalities to museums—will start anew to address the future.

Communications will be the key. Those who handle it well will create enormous opportunities for their enterprises. Those who don't? Well, enough said.



**Robert Dilenschneider** is Founder and CEO of The Dilenschneider Group, an international communications firm that provides strategic advice and counsel to *Fortune* 500 companies and individuals in fields ranging from mergers and acquisitions, crisis communications, marketing, government affairs and foreign media.

The challenge will be to get it right. This will be the time to be strong minded, to eliminate wishful thinking and self-deception, to make the hard decisions that will bring value to your clients.

There will be many factors clients will need to consider: customer service, employee morale, supply

chains, investor relations and so forth.

But the one I want to look at right now is government relations. It's a certainty that a lot of decisions are going to be made and policies set in city halls, state capitals and the corridors of Washington. The organizations that get the most skillful advice for communicating with those power centers will be among those that are best positioned for the future.

One key will be advancing your clients' ideas, not waiting for legislators, mayors and governors to put their ideas out there and forcing everyone to react. We know, for instance, that Washington is going to

consider a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure bill. If that passes, it's going to mean a lot of contracts will be negotiated and a lot of government regulations will be proposed, debated and put into effect.

So, among the big questions right now is first, will any of your clients be affected by this initiative? If so, how can you help them? Will it be important to ensure, for example, that the contracting process is open and transparent? Or will they be concerned about the regulatory process? Whatever their needs, your goal will be to make sure their voices are heard in the right places.

This may be, in fact, a good moment for your clients to reach out to important members of Congress and to local and state executives and legislators with ideas and suggestions for how the future should unfold. Waiting could be a big mistake. You and your clients don't want to let the politicians and career officials advance their ideas without any input.

A good recent example of how inaction and hesitancy can have real costs: Not every business applied for a Paycheck Protection Program loan even when they were qualified and could have gotten one. Many renters did not take advantage of the moratorium on paying rent put in place by some states, and still fewer applied for government assistance.

So, if we know there are likely to be many public initiatives in the future as America remakes itself, how can you ensure your clients are heard in the rooms where the decisions are made?

First, develop a detailed communications plan that outlines the benefits your organization can provide and the places where you have contacts and can get clients' viewpoints presented.

Even though the media focus will be mainly on Washington, don't overlook state and municipal officials. We can expect all kinds of recovery projects to take place on those levels in the months ahead. So,

take a look at what makes the most sense for your clients and give advice on how to advance their interests.

Speaking of the media, they must be, as always, a big part of any communications strategy. Journalists will be busy reporting on the progress—or lack of it—of government initiatives. A big part of their coverage should be the reactions of the organizations that will be affected, and so if you have clients that are in that basket, you need to be pro-active on their behalf.

You'll need to stay on top of events so that you know when something Senator Doe or Secretary Roe has done affects Client XYZ. Then you'll need to get a reaction statement drafted, approved and into reporters' hands on a timely basis. I don't have to tell you that timing is everything in media relations. Miss the deadline, and the best-prepared statement never gets in the papers or on the air.

Don't forget about your clients' internal communications challenges. Their employees may be shellshocked at what has happened to them in the COVID period. Some may have had to go on unemployment lines to get through the hard times, for example, and all of them are bound to be anxious about their futures. So, ask yourself how you can help clients build new levels of support and trust.

We know that the pandemic restrictions have caused many people to build up savings. Much of that money is going to get loosened up when the all-clear sounds, with a whole lot of consumer spending. If you've got clients who stand to benefit from this pent-up demand, now is the time to develop communications plans for them that put every tool in the kit—public relations, media contacts, marketing, advertising—into full effect.

Now is the moment to look at all the communications demands your clients are going to have and to think through what you need to do for a future that will take a very different shape from the past. ○

## CUOMO'S CRISIS LESSONS

Continued from page 34

tive deflection—pointed to his own state public health director, Howard Zucker, as a possible culprit.

"You couldn't find a more qualified man to do this at this time than Dr. Zucker," the Governor intoned, even though nobody

asked. "I would trust him with my mother's care. I can't offer a more ringing endorsement than that. And it's his decisions that people now question with no credential."

Oh boy.

In the end, Andrew Cuomo is as ambitious and chameleonic a political creature as ever there was. And no doubt this crisis,

too, will pass. But Andrew and his legacy have been mightily wounded.

Going forward, Gov. Cuomo might consider the advice proffered in another book, admittedly far less noteworthy than "Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic." That book was the Bible. And the advice: "Pride Goeth Before a Fall." ○

## Ex-WH press secretary McEnany lands at Fox

**K**ayleigh McEnany, who was Donald Trump's White House Press Secretary, has joined Fox News as an on-air commentator.

During a March 2 interview on Fox's "The Faulkner Focus" about her experience at the White House, Harris Faulkner welcomed her to the network.

McEnany had a contentious relationship with the White House press corps as she took on more of a role as cheerleader for Trump's re-election campaign and his effort to discredit the results of the election.

Kayleigh McEnany

Before joining the White House, McEnany was Spokesperson for the Republican National Committee and commentator at CNN. ○

## Ballard bolsters democratic bench

**B**allard Partners has hired Tola Thompson, who served as Chief of Staff for veteran Florida Democratic Congressman Al Lawson and Communications Director for Congresswoman Carrie Meeks.

Thompson served as primary media contact for the appropriations committee handling telecommunications, education, labor, health and agricultural issues. He also worked on a Congressional Black Caucus health initiative, addressing HIV and AIDS in communities of color.

Brian Ballard, who was Donald Trump's top fundraiser in Florida, said his firm is eager to share Thompson's "unique perspective with our clients."

Before working on Capitol Hill, Thompson was Assistant VP and Director of Government Relations for Florida A&M University. ○



Tola Thompson

## Qorvis hires Trump WH alum Baum

**K**ristina Baum, who served in the Trump administration as Communications Director for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, has joined Qorvis Communications as VP-Public Affairs.

At the WHOSTP, Baum served as on-the-record spokesperson for the COVID-19 pandemic response and developed messaging strategies for more than 90 policy streams.

She's a veteran of Capitol Hill, serving as Communications Director at the House Committee on Natural Resources; Committee on Science, Space and Technology; and Press Secretary at the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee.

Baum also did a stint as Chief Spokesperson for Chevron Phillips Chemical Co.

Michael Petruzzello, Qorvis CEO, said Baum's work on Capitol Hill and her role as "communications director in the highest office of American government during one of the most challenging public health crises in our nation's history, makes her strategic counsel unparalleled." ○



Kristina Baum



## NYC Dept. of Ed's Barbot joins BerlinRosen

**M**iranda Barbot, Press Secretary at the New York City Dept. of Education, will join BerlinRosen March 22 as VP-Strategic Campaigns.

She did a more than three-year stint at the nation's largest public school system with 1.1 million students and 150,000 staff members.

Barbot handled the Dept.'s PR and policy rollouts during the COVID-19 pandemic, including school shutdowns in March, transition to remote learning and the reopening of facilities last fall.

Prior to the DOE, Barbot was Director of Communications at the Hispanic Federation and staffer at Goodman Media International.

BerlinRosen's strategic communications clients are Service Employees International Union, Color of Change, HBO Max, International Brotherhood of Teamsters and 15 Percent Pledge. ○



Miranda Barbot

## H+K grabs top aide to Rep. Nadler

**D**aniel Schwarz, who was Strategic Communications Director for the House Judiciary Committee during the inquiry into the impeachment of Donald Trump, has joined Hill+Knowlton Strategies as Senior VP for its US public affairs practice.

He handled communications planning, messaging and strategy for the Committee under the leadership of Chairman Congressman Jerry Nadler (D-Manhattan/Brooklyn).

Since 2015, Schwarz has worked as Communications Director for Nadler, who also sits on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, handling day-to-day communications, as well as foreign policy and Jewish affairs covering the New York and D.C. media markets.

Richard Millar, H+K Global President/CEO for the Americas, expects clients to benefit from Schwarz's "unique analysis and insights covering legislative, regulatory, and political issues of significance." ○



Daniel Schwarz



## H&K inks Cayman Islands pact

**H**ill+Knowlton Strategies has a \$300,000 deal to provide a range of PR services to the Cayman Islands Ministry of Financial Services, Commerce and Environment.

The effort to ensure that the British overseas territory's positions are effectively communicated to the U.S. government began Feb. 1 and continues through December.

H+K's work includes information gathering; "stakeholder mapping" of policymakers, business/association leaders in D.C., New York and Miami; PA counsel, strategic messaging/content development; and media outreach/monitoring.

The WPP unit stands ready to provide crisis communications expertise "in the event of unexpected political developments that have an adverse effect on the Cayman Islands' reputation or its financial services industry," according to its "statement of work."

The firm will prepare and submit to its London global hub bi-weekly reports "covering regulatory and legislative trends and developments of interest to the ministry, along with guidance and recommendations regarding how to respond to those developments."

H+K's five-member team includes Brussels-based Global PA Chair Philippe Maze-Sencier de Brouville; D.C. Senior VPs Joseph Householder, Ronald Hutcheson and Daniel Schwarz and Assistant Account Executive Christopher Bull. ○

## Ethiopia turns to Venable

**V**enable is providing U.S. government outreach to Ethiopia under a \$35,000 per-month contract that went into effect Feb. 1.

Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched an invasion of the separatist Tigray region of the country in November. That attack has triggered a humanitarian crisis as more than 60,000 Ethiopians, who are largely Christian, fled across the border to Sudan, which is a Muslim nation, seeking refuge.

Abiy took the helm of Africa's second-most populous nation in 2018 with a promise to unite Ethiopia, but has struggled to contain growing ethnic violence, reported the *New York Times*.

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken spoke with Abiy on Feb. 4 and "expressed grave concern about the humanitarian crisis in the Tigray region and urged immediate, full, and unhindered humanitarian access to prevent further loss of life," according to the State Dept.

Venable Partner Thomas Quinn, a long-time Democratic activist who worked on the Hubert Humphrey and Ted Kennedy presidential campaigns, heads the Ethiopian work. Policy advisor Loren Aho, a former Aide to Democratic Congressman Bart Stupak, assists Quinn. ○

## FGH bolsters US/Ukraine ties

**F**insbury Glover Hering has signed a \$50,000 monthly retainer pact with Ukraine's Transatlantic Dialogue and Engagement Center to bolster that country's relations with the U.S., European Union and other Democratic nations.

TDEC works in close cooperation with Ukraine's "Servant of the People" political party, one of the major players in the Ukrainian parliament.

FGH provides government relations, strategic counsel to TDEC in its effort to facilitate interactions with members of the US government and multilateral organizations.

That effort began Feb. 2 and runs through the rest of the year. ○

### FARA News



## NEW FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT FILINGS

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

**ADLAB, LLC**, New York, NY, **registered Jan. 25, 2021, for Huawei Technologies USA, Inc.**, Plano, TX, regarding providing social creative concept and production, performance analytics, community management, paid social media management and social strategy and brand voice.

**K&L Gates LLP**, Pittsburgh, PA, **registered Feb. 5, 2021 for Government of Peru, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism (MINCETUR)**, Lima, Peru, regarding outreach to key stakeholders before relevant federal agencies and Congress (as appropriate) related to the outcome of the U.S. International Trade Commission's (ITC) Safeguard Investigation of imports of fresh, chilled, or frozen blueberries.

**Navigators Global LLC**, Washington, DC, **registered Feb. 13, 2021, for Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport Corporation, Ltd.** (through DC International Advisory, LLC), Taoyuan City, Taiwan, regarding providing government relations counseling in seeking approval for a U.S. Customs and Border Protection preclearance facility at Taoyuan International Airport.

### Lobbying News



## NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT FILINGS

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

**Bloom Strategic Counsel**, Washington, DC, **registered Feb. 1, 2021 for Apple Inc.**, Washington, D.C., regarding competition issues in the consumer electronics, software and Internet sectors.

**Da Vinci Group**, Purcellville, VA, **registered Feb. 1, 2021 for Sorrento Therapeutics Inc.**, San Diego, CA, regarding advice and counsel relative to matters affecting client products and services.

**Holland & Knight LLP**, Washington, DC, **registered Jan. 6, 2021 for Wing Aviation LLC**, Mountain View, CA, regarding air delivery of goods by unmanned aircraft systems and the safety of drone navigation using unmanned traffic management.

**Strategies 360**, Washington, DC, **registered Feb. 8, 2021 for Alaska Native Village Corporation Association**, regarding Alaska Native engagement on CARES Act funding.

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**j public relations**  
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**J Public Relations**  
530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018  
212/924-3600  
letstalk@publicrelations.com  
www.jpublicrelations.com  
Employees: 65. Founded: 2005.

**Agency Statement:** J Public Relations (JPR) is an international luxury PR and social media agency specializing in hospitality, travel and luxury lifestyle brands with offices in New York City, London, Los Angeles and San Diego. JPR is a trusted leader in media relations and brand strategy, trend forecasting, brand partnerships, influencer relations, social media strategy and unparalleled media placements worldwide.

Established in 2005, the award-winning agency has consistently risen to become the country's fastest growing, bi-coastal agency in the travel and hospitality spaces. JPR's global roster includes more than 125 hotels in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai, Europe, New Zealand, Asia and more. JPR steadily garners and retains notable clients including Relais & Châteaux, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Vail Resorts Hospitality, Grace Hotels, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, Newport Beach & Company, Four Seasons Lanai and 15 Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts.

JPR is listed on the Observer's annual "PR Power 50" as one of the country's most powerful PR firms. The agency also garnered "Top Places to Work" by PR News and "Agency of the Year" by *Bulldog Reporter* in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success.

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

### Locations:

**New York**  
530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018  
212/924-3600

**San Diego**  
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619/255-7069

**Los Angeles**  
429 Santa Monica Blvd., #280, Santa Monica, CA 90401  
310/722-7066

**London**  
14 Gray's Inn Rd., 3063, London, WC1X 8HN, UK  
(011) 44 (20) 38905838

### Sampling of highlighted clients:

Adare Manor, Ireland  
Adventures by Disney (project work)  
Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort (project work)  
Chateau du Grand-Luce, France  
Chewton Glen, UK  
Cliveden House, UK  
Discover Baja California  
Four Seasons Resort Lanai  
Golden Oak Development by Walt Disney World Resort  
Grace Hotels  
Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Lake Como  
Gurney's Resorts - Montauk & Newport  
Helena Bay, New Zealand  
Hotel del Coronado  
InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown  
InterContinental, Washington DC - The Wharf  
Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts  
Newport Beach & Company  
Rancho La Puerta  
Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa  
Regent Seven Seas Cruises (project work)  
Relais & Châteaux  
The Palms and The Shore Club, Turks & Caicos  
The Private Suite at LAX  
The Resort at Pedregal  
The Ritz-Carlton Hotels (15 properties)  
Vail Resorts Hospitality  
Vail Mountain Resorts



Jamie Sigler O'Grady & Sarah Evans,  
partners

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PORTER NOVELLI SALUTES THE

# *frontline workers*

who have supported us through COVID-19 to make sure  
that there's food on the shelves and in our homes.  
We couldn't be safer at home without you.

Thank you to the heroes who:

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*Dig  
Bag  
Sort  
Cook  
Grow  
Drive  
Stock  
Plant  
Serve  
Deliver  
Harvest  
Process  
Manage  
Nourish  
Checkout  
Distribute  
Manufacture*

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To support these frontline workers, Porter Novelli has made a donation to World Central Kitchen. We encourage others to support this and similar organizations that are using the power of food to help communities in need.

