

# O'Dwyer's

Communications & New Media

March 2022 | Vol. 36 No. 2

## THE FOOD ISSUE



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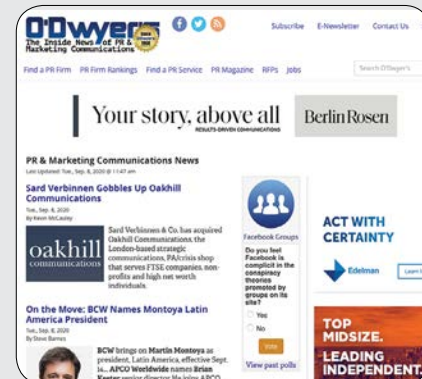
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# Final curtain for Putin's propaganda machine

As Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues, it's becoming increasingly clear that any military gains Russia makes will be tremendously offset by a different kind of catastrophe: an inability by the Kremlin and President Vladimir Putin to create any kind of cohesive narrative to assuage the Russian people, let alone the global community. No matter what happens, Russia has already lost the messaging war.

It's impossible to say exactly what global repercussions this crisis will have. The developments change by the hour, but already the immediate effects have been brutal. Europe is experiencing its greatest refugee crisis since World War II, oil prices have skyrocketed and the world's financial markets have been battered. For Russia, the financial fallout has been severe. Stiff sanctions levied by the U.S. and EU have crippled Russia's economy. Russia's oligarchs have lost their savings, their yachts and their luxury condos abroad. Companies like Ikea, H&M, Nike, Dell and Apple have pulled out of Russia, a bad development for a country so dependent on imported goods. Airbnb, BP, ExxonMobil, Boeing, Ford and others have halted Russian operations. Amex, Visa and MasterCard have suspended all transactions. The U.S. office of Russian-propaganda TV network RT was shuttered after being dropped by DirecTV. Russia's largest search engine, Yandex, is on the verge of collapse. CNN, the BBC and Canadian Broadcasting Corp ceased their Russia broadcasts. The ruble has been decimated. The International Olympic Committee has barred Russia from participating in sporting events. The entire world now considers Russia a pariah. Mission accomplished?

One gets the feeling Putin didn't plan this one too well. As far as his military objectives are concerned, a tougher-than-expected resistance from Ukrainian troops and Russia's manifold military bumbles—everything from low soldier morale to fuel shortages to nearly setting fire to Europe's largest nuclear power plant—suggest that maybe Russia has gotten in over its head. Still, Putin insists the invasion is going “strictly in accordance to the plan and the schedule,” and that “all objectives that were set are being resolved or achieved successfully.” Whatever you say, Vlad.

Then there's the messaging. Putin's justifications for the “special military operation”—that Ukraine belongs to Russia (not true), or that it's conducting a “denazification” of the country—don't carry weight. Everyone knows the autocratic Russian leader wants to reestablish the USSR and he's cagey about NATO's eastern advances into former Soviet-bloc territory. The wheels seem to be coming off Russia's propaganda machine, so it's no surprise that the Kremlin has resorted to cracking down on dissent at home. As it turns out, public opinion of the invasion in Russia isn't as strong as the Kremlin had hoped, with protests breaking out in many parts of the country. The Russian government has now warned that broadcasting “fake news” about the war—which includes calling it a “war”—is punishable by years-long prison sentences. The Kremlin has muzzled what remained of its free press, dismantling that last of Russia's independent radio and TV stations. Russia has even blocked its citizens' access to Facebook, joining the ranks of China and North Korea. Nobel-winning Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov said that “everything that's not propaganda is being eliminated.”

Putin's strategy for controlling the message is to control the people who receive it. That's not how it works. Putin lives with a Jay Gatsby-like affinity for the past. Total censorship is impossible in an interconnected world; you can't put the lid back on that genie's bottle. The USSR isn't coming back. This isn't the 1980s.

Writing for the *New York Times* on March 3, opinion columnist Farhad Manjoo suggested several theories regarding why Russia's propaganda efforts have fallen so flat this time. “Perhaps the most obvious is that the invasion is just too ugly a pig to pretty up—an act so baldly unjustified that no amount of propaganda could set it right,” Manjoo said. “But we're seeing something else, too: that our fear of Russian domination over digital discourse may have always been a little overblown.”

So, who's left in Putin's corner? There's always Donald Trump, who called Putin a “genius” for “just walking right in” to Ukraine. The former President later said Russia wouldn't have invaded Ukraine if he was still in office. He then attempted to take credit for the military aid he gave Ukraine's resistance. Trump, if you'll remember, threatened to halt U.S. military aid to Ukraine in 2019 lest Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky investigate alleged acts of corruption by Joe Biden and his son, Hunter.

Then there's Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who said “Democrats in Washington have told you it's your patriotic duty to hate Vladimir Putin.” Carlson's commentary has run so close to Kremlin propaganda in recent weeks that his talking points have been rebroadcast on Russian state TV. As reported by the *Washington Post*, it appears Russia's latest step is to take a page from the Fox playbook. “The West isn't simply trying to close off Russia behind a new iron curtain. This is about an attempt to ruin our government,” said Russian Foreign Intelligence Director Sergei Naryshkin, “to ‘cancel’ it, as they now say in ‘tolerant’ liberal-fascist circles.” Sound familiar? ○

— Jon Gingerich

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# Formula companies accused of 'aggressive' marketing

More than half of parents and pregnant women across multiple countries have been targeted with "aggressive" marketing from baby formula companies, messages that violate international standards on infant-feeding practices, according to a new WHO/UNICEF report.

By Jon Gingerich

**B**aby formula companies are responsible for "a sustained flow of misleading marketing messages," some of which are in violation of international standards on infant feeding practices, according to a new report commissioned by The World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund.

The report, which sought to uncover the marketing practices used by the companies that comprise the \$55 billion formula industry and how those tactics influence parents' decisions regarding infant feeding, found that 51 percent of parents and pregnant women said they've been targeted by baby formula companies with marketing messages in an attempt to persuade them to choose formula feeding over breastfeeding.

The WHO/UNICEF report claims the "aggressive" marketing practices employed by the baby formula industry to parents and

health workers include messages that are "often misleading, scientifically unsubstantiated" and reinforce myths about breast milk and breastfeeding. The report claims some of these tactics also violate the WHO International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes, a landmark public health agreement adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981 to promote safe and adequate nutrition for infants and protect mothers from aggressive marketing practices.

The report specifically cites the use of industry marketing techniques that include "unregulated and invasive online targeting; sponsored advice networks and helplines; promotions and free gifts; and practices to influence training and recommendations among health workers."

According to the report, exposure to formula milk marketing reached 84 percent of all women surveyed in the United King-

dom, 92 percent of women surveyed in Vietnam and 97 percent of women surveyed in China.

"False and misleading messages about formula feeding are a substantial barrier to breastfeeding, which we know is best for babies and mothers," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell in a statement. "We need robust policies, legislation and investments in breastfeeding to ensure that women are protected from unethical marketing practices—and have access to the information and support they need to raise their families."

The WHO/UNICEF report surveyed 8,500 parents and pregnant women, as well as 300 health workers in eight countries (Bangladesh, China, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Vietnam) between August 2019 and April 2021. ○

# Americans trust big tech, skeptical of social media

Americans largely believe the tech industry has had a positive impact on their lives, but they also distrust social media companies, according to a recent Ipsos report.

By Jon Gingerich

**A**mericans think the U.S. tech sector has had a positive impact on their lives, but distrust social media companies, according to a new poll from insights and analytics company Ipsos.

The report, which sought to investigate Americans' impressions of the tech sector, found that nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of U.S. adults believe the tech industry positively affects their lives, and 81 percent think technology is a good and important part of contemporary society. In total, more than half (53 percent) reported favorable sentiments of technology companies.

This sentiment seems to cross partisan lines, with majorities of both Republicans (68 percent) and Democrats (81 percent) in agreement that the tech industry has had a beneficial impact. When it comes to social media companies, however, opinion isn't so favorable.

More than half (59 percent) of Americans expressed unfavorable views regarding social media companies, and only 45 percent said they trust these platforms.

Specifically, a majority of Americans said

they like Google (74 percent), Amazon (70 percent), Microsoft (60 percent) and Apple (52 percent). Americans also overwhelmingly reported enjoying online stores and marketplaces (83 percent) as well as the ability to find things on the Internet (88 percent) and the use of video chat or conference systems (71 percent).

As far as social media is concerned, on the other hand, a majority of those polled (44 percent) said they hold an unfavorable view of Twitter. When it comes to Facebook, Americans appear somewhat ambivalent (46 percent unfavorable, compared to 45 favorable). A majority of those polled still retain favorable views of YouTube (70 percent) and Instagram (40 percent).

Regardless of Americans' apparent antipathy for social media, however, most (61 percent) still said that, if given the choice, they'd rather keep the technology sector as it is, warts and all. And most oppose the idea of the government limiting what can be said on social media (57 percent), although more than a third (38 percent) believe the government should take a more

active role in policing private-sector misbehavior. More than half (53 percent) also believe that significant change in the tech world is unlikely anyway, as that sector is too essential for our daily lives.

That said, 60 percent believe the degree of political bias exhibited by the tech sector is a major problem, and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) believe the amount of bad behavior the tech sector lets people get away with is a major problem. About two-thirds (64 percent) support the idea of breaking up large, monopolistic technology companies.

More than three-quarters (79 percent) said they're concerned about social media-driven radicalization in the United States. More than two-thirds (69 percent) believe the U.S. mainstream media is more interested in making money than telling the truth.

Findings for the report were based on two Ipsos surveys, one which polled 1,022 U.S. adults in September and another which polled 1,016 U.S. adults in October. Both surveys were conducted using opinion research unit KnowledgePanel. ○



# Rebuilding trust through food

**Trust in the food and beverage sector remains below levels we saw before the pandemic. Here's what the industry can do to win back trust and become effective drivers of positive change.**

By Heidi Hovland

It's never been a more exciting, opportune or challenging time to be in the food and beverage business. As we look across the landscape of issues facing individuals, communities and society at large—health equity, sustainability, climate, waste, hunger and access—food is a constant. In some cases, it's the root of the problem, and almost always a necessary part of the solution.

Edelman's newly released 2022 Trust Barometer data for the food and beverage sector shows that trust is highest among businesses and non-governmental organizations and continues to remain low for societal leaders, government and media. And while there's a high level of trust in employers and businesses overall, there's considerable drop-off when we get to the food and

beverage products we make, how we make them and how they get to our table: from concerns about climate change and sustainability to fears that automation will take food industry jobs and frustration around the incongruous clash of hunger and waste.

Without a doubt, there's work to be done. Overall trust in the food and beverage sector remains below pre-pandemic highs, with three of the world's largest food exporters—U.S., Germany and France—scoring among the lowest on trust, and the U.S. down six points since last year. We're seeing particular skepticism regarding new forms of tech in the food system—cell-cultured meats or gene editing, personalized medicine or gene mapping—underpinned by macro fears around privacy and safety.

## Super Bowl ads fail to spur consumer buys

**A new study found that while the Super Bowl remains a top-shelf forum for advertisements, the high viewership it commands doesn't necessarily lead to conversion.**

By Steve Barnes

The power of the Super Bowl ad is still considerable for both sports fans and non-fans—but it does have its limits, a new study from Seton Hall University says.

The Seton Hall Sports Poll, which surveyed more than 1,500 adults from Feb. 4-7, found that more than seven in 10 respondents (71 percent) said that they pay more attention to ads shown during the Super Bowl than they do to commercials on other TV shows.

That number was highest for avid sports fans (76 percent), followed by casual fans (71 percent) and non-fans (65 percent).

However, that level of attention does not necessarily lead to buying the advertised products. Overall, only 27 percent of respondents said they were more likely to buy a product or watch a program promoted during the Super Bowl. Once again, non-fans were the least likely to be swayed, with only 18 percent saying Super Bowl ads influenced their purchase decisions. That number rises to 41 percent for avid fans.

When it comes to what devices people use to watch the big game, TV is still the big leader, but its dominance is beginning

to crack a bit. Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of those viewing the Super Bowl said they would watch solely on a TV, down from 79 percent last year.

Those taking in the game solely on a non-TV device (smartphone, laptop, tablet) jumped from seven percent last year to 14 percent who planned to do so this year. The number of multi-taskers (those watching the game on more than one platform) held steady at 14 percent.

About one-third of respondents (34 percent) said they were also likely to take to social media to follow or discuss the Super Bowl during the broadcast, a number that sinks to 17 percent for non-fans and rises to 52 percent for avid fans.

A larger amount of respondents (44 percent) indicate that they planned to discuss or comment on the Super Bowl's ads during the telecast, with 28 percent of non-fans planning to do so and 51 percent of avid fans saying they would.

The Seton Hall Sports Poll, which has been done since 2006, was conducted online by YouGov plc for the Sharkey Institute at the university's Stillman School of Business. ○

Across sectors, the lack of trust in government runs deep. Not only do consumers not trust the government's ability to solve societal problems, the government is also seen as a dividing force in society (48 percent). Not far behind is media, which is also seen as a dividing force (46 percent). Since 2012, trust is down across traditional media, social media and search engines, and 76 percent of respondents cited concern about false information or fake news being used as a weapon.

On the flip side, consumers are looking to businesses and NGOs to act as competent and effective drivers of positive change. "Local" has been a virtue/quality signifier in food and beverage for decades. We see a similar correlation between familiarity and trust in individuals and leaders. While trust in CEOs overall is up slightly, trust in "my CEO" rose three points, to 66 percent. Even higher was trust in "my co-workers," at 74 percent, only slightly behind scientists at 75 percent. Sixty-one percent of food & beverage workers chose a place to work based on beliefs and values.

Our research shows an expectation for businesses to play a broader societal role and for CEOs to personally lead from the front on change. More than eight in ten believe CEOs should be personally visible when discussing public policy with external stakeholders or work their company has done to benefit society. And six in 10 employees expect their company's CEO to speak publicly about highly topical and sometimes controversial issues they care about—an expectation that has increased significantly since we asked this question three years ago.

Food makers and their leadership are well-positioned to allay the fears of their employees and consumers in a world they don't trust. We see dozens of examples, from *Fortune* 500 companies to startups, making it their business to improve equity, access and the health of people and the planet. As companies and their leaders pursue operational changes to improve sustainability, drive technology innovation to improve nutrition, access and mitigate environmental impact, and move from commitments to real change on the issues that truly matter, we're confident that trust is within reach.

Heidi Hovland is Global Food & Beverage Chair at Edelman. ○



Heidi Hovland

# Communicating effectively in an uncertain environment

How to communicate honestly and effectively with stakeholders as market volatility and disruptive food and beverage consumption patterns have put significant pressure on consumers' wallets as well as customers' bottom lines.

By Clay Crumbliss

There's no shortage of challenges for consumer packaged goods companies in 2022, perhaps more today than at any time in decades. With challenges comes uncertainty, and with uncertainty comes the question of how to communicate effectively and honestly with stakeholders.

Nearly full two years after our lives were abruptly disrupted by the onset of the pandemic, COVID-19 continues to dictate much of how we work, shop, learn and live our daily lives.

It's well known that most packaged food producers benefited enormously from housebound consumers eating more at home over the past couple of years. The greatest beneficiaries were those whose portfolios skew to meal categories which replaced many away-from-home consumption occasions as employees adopted remote working arrangements and children attended school virtually from their living rooms.

For beverage companies, the story was more mixed with certain categories accelerating in at-home retail channels, such as water, juice and sodas, while other categories suffered from the significant reduction in traffic at bars, restaurants and other venues that were closed or operated at reduced capacities. The most pronounced declines were alcoholic beverages where sales in the on-premise channel still haven't recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Recently, it appears that consumption habits are normalizing based on retail scanner data. However, the emergence of new variants of the virus—and how consumers, employers, governments and educators choose to respond—will likely continue to prove disruptive to food and beverage consumption patterns, at least in the short term.

While sales volatility from COVID-19 is arguably less of a factor today than it was this time last year, what remains a significant challenge for managers is the nearly unprecedented levels of input cost inflation. To whatever economists and market commentators might attribute the spike, these higher costs run the gamut of the food and beverage supply chain including ingredients, shipping, labor, packaging and logistics that are putting significant pressure on corporate margin structures.

This is evidenced by recent examples such as Kellogg, which said it expects “double-digit” input cost inflation in 2022, while competitor General Mills is targeting a sev-

en to eight percent increase for the year and Conagra told investors to expect a 14 percent jump. To put this into context, in the years preceding the pandemic, the annual cost of goods inflation for packaged food companies was in the two- and three-percent range, on average, based on a sampling of management comments.

For the consumer, the obvious result will be higher prices at the register. The Consumer Price Index, which measures prices across a basket of consumer goods, rose 7.5 percent over the last twelve months ending in January with at-home food prices up 7.4 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In general, as consumer prices aren't rising as quickly as the costs borne by manufacturers, margin pressures will likely persist throughout most of 2022.

All this volatility on both the top and bottom lines leaves management teams with the agonizing internal debate of how to set external expectations that balance their own optimism and pragmatism with hope and disappointment for their stakeholders.

In the early days of the pandemic, many companies elected to withdraw their guidance metrics given the total lack of visibility in the marketplace. Investors were generally understanding of the immense challenges associated with accurate forecasting and therefore gave management teams a pass, at least for a while.

As the quarters have since rolled by, that approach is now less acceptable even as the operating environment remains equally uncertain. It's clear how the demand for transparency from market participants can easily be in conflict with management's lack of future visibility, and it begs the question of how firms should be communicating in an exceptionally volatile 2022.

When it comes to the necessary, often burdensome—as many finance chiefs might candidly admit—task of providing annual guidance, marketplace complexity isn't an excuse for missing numbers. According to data from Nasdaq, investors are proving less tolerant of earnings misses this cycle with relatively more pronounced stock price compression, on average, than observed in previous years.

The market will judge executives on how well—or how poorly—they communicate almost as much as it will judge the operations and financial results they put forth. As we like to tell our clients, “the numbers

don't speak for themselves.” Of course, performance and results matter, and successful companies will ultimately be rewarded with higher valuations; but, the perception and understanding of those results can be a significant driver of a firm's market valuation and, importantly, its reputation. Therefore, when the stakes are this high, communications with your audience should be clear, consistent and realistic.

**Be clear.** If the message confuses your audience, it's highly unlikely it will achieve the intended outcome. When it comes to financial guidance, be as specific as possible. We advise clients not to leave key metrics open to interpretation. A thoughtful, deliberate approach to setting expectations will ensure a more accurate delivery of the message you are trying to send.

**Be consistent.** Investors demand consistency because it mitigates negative surprises. Stay on message in every interaction, whether with investors, analysts, the press and even your employees. While the level of detail you give certain constituencies may vary based on the audience (i.e., your board will be entitled to different information than your investors), communicate the same basic expectations to all your stakeholders with a consistent, almost predictable message.

**Be realistic.** This is often the most challenging point for managers—and sometimes even more difficult for founders. There's a fine line between “selling your story” and overstating the positives in the face of obvious adversity. Nothing will put stock in the penalty box faster than executives who gloss over reality. Your audience will appreciate the candor and may even reward you for it as investors seek transparency and stability. As it relates to giving guidance, the “beat-and-raise” approach is a time-tested, proven strategy to generate positive news that moves stock prices higher and creates trust between the investment community and management teams.

The truth is your audience values trust more than it values undue optimism. Today's dynamic marketplace means the tides



Clay Crumbliss

— Continued on page 11



# Communicating health benefits to consumers

**Vitamins and supplements experienced a massive uptick in growth and popularity during the pandemic, introducing new opportunities and new customer segments for marketing professionals to target.**

**By Lindsey Carnett**

**T**wo years of isolation, working from home and a limited amount of in-person social interaction have impacted how we eat, exercise and manage a healthy lifestyle. Today, consumers are more conscious of the importance of staying active, and the pandemic has, in some circumstances, forced us to make changes to our diet, introduced supplements to our daily routines and, generally, has overhauled our approach to health and fitness.

So, while the pandemic has reformed the way many of us take care of our health, for brands, it has brought about a seismic change in the way they can market products. It has also introduced new opportunities for product development and methods for targeting new customers.

Perhaps you're an individual who contracted COVID and suffering from the after-effects of the virus. Or maybe you're concerned about getting COVID, the virus giving a sudden wake-up call to make a change and improve health and fitness. Whatever the situation, the pandemic has provided companies and their marketing professionals with an opportunity to make a difference and capitalize on gaps in the market.

And what about existing customers? For those who've been steadfast in their support for a brand for many years, the pandemic has been an opportunity not only for brands to maintain their loyalty, but to tighten it, perhaps through trying new product variations and loyalty discounts.

For ambitious new brands, their challenge during the pandemic has been to carve out a niche and to figure out what's so unique about them and why customers would need their products or support at such a turbulent time.

Golde is an example of a relatively new brand to the market. Very much targeted towards the Millennial consumer, the su-

perfood brand looks to inspire its customers and has a Club Golde promotion, where customers can sign up to be brand ambassadors and share their health and wellbeing tips and tricks. Like with other initiatives, this group will have provided a welcome sense of community during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, we've seen an uptick in consumers introducing vitamins to their diet. As reported at the American Herbal Products Association's AHPA Botanical Congress, sales of supplements in the U.S. increased by \$7.08 billion, reflecting 14.5 percent growth. The total valuation of the market was \$55.75 billion in 2020.

Vitamins experienced a 22.3 percent sales growth as consumers embraced introducing vitamins C and D into their diet. Herbals and botanicals experienced similar growth. With this boom in popularity, it's evident that PR professionals need to find new approaches to persuade and target consumers. This doesn't mean just dusting off the same techniques and slogans. Onboarding with product education is a vital starting point. Understanding the benefits, restrictions and opportunities that a particular product can bring to a consumer's diet and way of life should be the very minimum that a PR professional understands. How else can you accurately and correctly market a product to a consumer otherwise?

Professionals representing the brand should truly immerse themselves in the product. So, for supplements, they should take a trial of them to see if they improve their health. For products designed to aid workouts, trying the supplements alongside their exercise routine will help in determining the health benefits from their experience. With that said, you can't truly understand something until you've experienced it.

In addition, it's very important for professionals to engage with scientific research. Speaking with experts and "deep-diving"

into how the products are made is a great way to understand at a greater level how the product works and can add a deeper edge to the marketing and communications campaign.

Many PR agencies work with health and fitness influencers to market products. This technique helps in building a level of trust, creates brand familiarity and is an effective way of building brand loyalty and awareness. Millennials and Gen Z, in particular, are avid users of Instagram, a particularly effective platform for targeting younger consumers interested in maintaining their health and wellbeing.



**Lindsey Carnett**

As consumers shift to buying more products online, marketers should be savvy in the way they use digital technology to promote supplements. The NBJ predicts e-commerce sales are expected to more than double between 2019 and 2024, reaching 24 percent by 2024, demonstrating the anticipated permanent shift in consumer behavior. To capitalize on this trend, marketers should offer exclusive online meet-and-greets with influencers or mix it up with Zoom calls that enable customers to ask the scientists and brands themselves about their products.

It's clear that the health and wellbeing industry will continue to experience growth and popularity as we return to a new way of living after the pandemic. COVID-19 has been devastating for many industries, but for supplements, it has created new opportunities and new customer segments for PR professionals to target. Consumers have woken up to the power of keeping well and are looking for brands that enable community and connection to help them reach their goals. For marketers to win their trust—and their dollar—they need to truly understand what they want. Immersing themselves in the products they represent is the best way of doing this.

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

## UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENTS

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can shift quickly in ways that may or may not be within the company's control: supply chain constraints, product out-of-stocks, or labor shortages, to name a few. The market's reaction and your company's reputation can depend on how proactively you acknowl-

edge the shift, provide transparency and reset expectations given the new realities.

Managing the message and controlling the narrative is a daily task for communications professionals. Whether it relates to corporate strategy, financial guidance, brand management or any other aspect of a CPG company's identity, we recommend a deliberate and precise approach to matters

of public relations and investor relations. While information is more widely available today than at any other time in human history, the markets in which companies operate are increasingly complex and interconnected. Your communications approach should be, too.

*Clay Crumbliss is a Managing Director at ICR, Inc. ●*

# A decade of dietary insights

A look back at some of the shifts that have taken place in the food marketing landscape over the past decade, as well as a look ahead with forecasts of future innovations highlighting what food marketers can expect in the next decade.

By Louise Pollock

From TikTok, online food shopping and snacking, to eating for health and immunity, the 10th annual Pollock Communications and Today's Dietitian "What's Trending in Nutrition" survey provides an analysis of food industry trends for 2022 and beyond, as well as a flashback to what we've learned from the past decade. The survey is the most comprehensive collection of data from nutrition experts actively working in the field, and this year's results—from a survey of nearly 1,200 Registered Dietitian Nutritionists—provide compelling new insights for food manufacturers and marketers.

The last decade of industry change highlighted by the survey reveals how changes in consumer behaviors have shaped how food manufacturers and marketers redefined their businesses. The industry has shifted to accommodate radical swings in eating patterns, the explosion of social media, and of course, the unexpected and most radical catalyst of change, COVID-19. An IFIC survey found that 85 percent of people reported a change to eating and food preparation due to the pandemic.

There's more change to come resulting from COVID-19's impact, as the survey findings indicate health and immunity will be the biggest trend shaping the industry in the next decade, continuing to fuel an era of food innovations. Here's a closer look at the data, as well as tips for how food manufacturers and marketers can translate these trends to benefit the bottom line.

## Glean insights from the past

RDNs agree that the most surprising food and nutrition change in the past decade is the shift from low-carb to high-fat diets like the ketogenic diet, underscoring how quickly consumers can go from one diet extreme to another. This overcorrection in diet culture reinforces that food manufacturers and marketers need to consistently monitor changing eating behaviors and be prepared to make necessary adjustments to product offerings. Flexibility is key to meeting these ever-changing consumer demands.

The survey cited other notable changes from the past decade, including the popularity of plant-based eating, dairy-free and plant-based milk products, vegetarian and vegan diets, and online grocery shopping. Many of these trends are responsible for

significant innovations. For example, we've seen a plethora of plant-based milk products, from nuts to oats to hemp and pea "milk." Danone's Silk brand was a leader in the trend, joined by a surplus of products trying to capture a portion of the market. Capitalizing on the plant-based eating trend, Impossible Burger increased its presence in U.S. supermarkets from about 150 to more than 20,000 during the pandemic, catapulting the brand from a 5 percent market share in fresh plant-based patties sold at retail to 55 percent, according to an AllinaBernstein analysis.

Monitoring trends and becoming an innovator in new category offerings that meet growing demand is the recipe for these brands' business success.

## Meaningful digital marketing is powerful

The continued explosion of social media platforms and influencers reveals that most consumers are getting information about health and wellness from digital media with Facebook, blogs/vlogs and Instagram taking the top three spots. New to the game, TikTok danced its way into the number-five spot for nutrition information sources. As the fastest growing social media platform, TikTok will be an important way for businesses to stay on top of food trends, engage with relevant influencers and reach broader target audiences.

In this digital age of easily accessible information comes the existence of misinformation—and nutrition is no exception. RDNs cite surprise at the proliferation of social media pseudoscience. In fact, RDNs say that consumers are getting the most nutrition misinformation from social media, with the top three sources being Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. It's imperative for food marketers to have a meaningful presence in digital marketing to ensure accurate information about products is being shared. This stresses the need for reputable food and beverage brands and commodities to create a digital presence with accurate information from RDNs, the qualified health experts, to crowd out false health tips.

## COVID continues to shape food's future

The global pandemic changed all aspects of normal living and ushered in an era where health and wellness are paramount decision drivers. This is especially true when it comes to food and beverage choices.

es. According to our survey, health and immunity will be the biggest trend shaping the food industry in the next decade, followed by plant-based eating and sustainability. Consumers are now keenly aware of how food can impact their overall health and longevity—and they're taking action to improve their bodies' natural defenses. As a result of the pandemic, RDNs predict the top purchase drivers of 2022 will be foods and beverages that support immunity, are affordable and value-based and promote comfort and emotional well-being.

Due to the pandemic, 95 percent of RDNs say that consumers are snacking more. RDNs believe that the increase in snacking is related to more consumers working from home, followed by an increased desire for comfort foods. According to IRI, e-commerce snacking sales grew 84 percent in 2020.

Frito-Lay capitalized on this trend during the height of the pandemic by creating a direct-to-consumer shopping option through its first e-commerce site, Snacks.com, which offered features like "Make Your Own Variety Pack" to meet consumer demands. The company saw an increase in their "Better Options" brands, such as Smartfood, SunChips and Simply.

Online food shopping is the biggest trend from the pandemic that 90 percent of RDNs say will continue, compelling marketers to reimagine ways to reach consumers on virtual shopping platforms, including more online promotions, digital coupons and immersive virtual branding experiences. According to *Forbes*, searches for "food delivery services" skyrocketed 300 percent during the pandemic, which included both restaurant services like DoorDash, Grubhub, Uber Eats and grocery services like Instacart, Amazon Fresh and Shipt. The line between fresh food and prepared meals is blurring as restaurant and grocery chains partner to meet changing consumer needs. DoorDash is teaming up with Albertson's



Louise Pollock

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# Talk dirt to me: communicating from the ground up

The importance of making sure your brand's communications strategy doesn't get lost in the details and remembers the larger story.

By Steve Halsey

*"Dirt's a funny thing," the Boss said. 'Come to think of it, there ain't a thing but dirt on this green God's globe except what's underwater, and that's dirt too. It's dirt makes the grass grow. A diamond ain't a thing in the world but a piece of dirt that got awful hot. And God-a-Mighty picked up a handful of dirt and blew on it and made you and me and George Washington and mankind blessed in faculty and apprehension. It all depends on what you do with the dirt. That right?"*

—"All the King's Men"  
Robert Penn Warren

There's a growing trend in the world of food production termed "regenerative agriculture." The idea is that the more we do to promote healthy soil, better water use and increased biodiversity, the better the food we take from the earth will be, and the better the earth will be because we're not doing harm to it. A pretty simple and sound strategy for farming success.

Given the natural tie to both food production and corporate responsibility, it's easy to see why companies like General Mills are starting to make significant commitments and long-term partnerships in this area. When they commit to advancing regenerative agriculture on a million acres of farmland by 2030, it's not only the right thing to do, it's a sound business strategy.

But what about the broader context? While there are varying opinions on the subject and definition of "sustainability," one thing that can't be argued is that we're going to need more food. Current estimates indicate the world population could reach 9.7 billion people by 2050 and that we will need to increase food production by 50 to 100 percent. That, in turn, puts a lot of pressure on the earth to produce more and more food from a finite amount of arable land.

Consumers are also showing increased care and consideration about the origin and journey of their food choices and its effects on climate change and the environment. According to the International Food Information Council's 2021 Food and Health Survey, 54 percent of Americans said it's at least somewhat important to them that the foods they buy or eat are produced in an environmentally sustainable way. And 42 percent believe that their individual food and beverage choices can have a moderate

to significant impact on the environment.

The tie between food and beverage and a concept like regenerative ag is pretty clear. What isn't as immediately apparent is how important soil health and sustainable practices are to industries *outside* of agriculture. Brands in fashion, construction and even aerospace are finding that they're being asked to develop messaging specific to what their businesses are doing to leave the soil better, where all of their products in some way begin.

Don't believe me? A recent article in *Vogue Business* started with the following line, "Fashion can't afford to overlook regenerative agriculture." That's a bold statement about dirt in a seemingly unlikely place.

At face value, it may seem like a stretch for a retailer like J.Crew to have an opinion on soil health and to sponsor a report on it. But, when the dots are connected—from the retail store to the factory, to the cotton supplier, to where the fiber was grown—it's not.

Their contention is pretty simple. If the fashion industry is serious about cutting carbon emissions, it can use regenerative agriculture as a tool. Not only could it help the industry make progress against climate goals, but it also brings a positive, additive effect by helping capture carbon, improve nutrient availability, increase soil biodiversity and support livelihoods in local communities. Suddenly, it makes a lot of sense for J.Crew to have a point of view on soil—from a business, brand and communications perspective.

When you think of it, almost everything made and everything that's a component of some other product can be traced back to a farm, mine or land-based operation. As with food, consumers' demands for plant-based and plant-derived products will only increase in the near future.

And, in our ever-more connected world, that's going to be true for every business eventually. In a way, this means we're all becoming environmental stewards, simply because our consumption of goods and services, as humans, can be directly related to the ground where it all begins.

This means more businesses outside of agriculture, food and beverage will find themselves having to craft messaging and tell stories on the subject and be ready to engage with informed communications

across industries. Here are three things to remember when putting that larger story together.

## Think big, but don't overpromise

Nothing can cause more damage to a brand's reputation than not achieving a stated goal. And, when it comes to climate-related topics, there's a wide margin of unpredictability to handle. It's always better to identify your overarching goal, like reducing waste, improving efficiencies or fixing specific problems, even if it's something that might seem unimpressive at first. A brand that reduces its carbon footprint by 10 percent each year is far less conspicuous than one that must reset a 25 percent goal year after year.

## Think global, act local

Look into the actual areas of the world where your products begin their journey. Find the farms and material sources where it all begins and determine what impacts are actually made at that specific level. You may find water quality, erosion or deforestation are challenges that need to be considered from a sustainable practice point-of-view, then develop your message around those specific stories.

## Connect the dots

Don't get lost in the details or keep your communications strategy too high above the story. It's all about providing transparency to the communities where your businesses operate and the consumers who buy your products. The more you can give your products their own "origin stories," the more context you're providing to the market. A strong brand will take pride in its successes and focus effort on its opportunities but never get caught just talking about one or the other.

Robert Penn Warren's novel, "All the King's Men," is about the corruption of a good man, one who forgets where he came from, what he believes and how he becomes what he once despised. Every day, it becomes harder and harder for businesses to succeed without acknowledging, understanding and addressing their impact from the ground up.

Steve Halsey is Chief Growth Officer at G&S Business Communications. ○



Steve Halsey

# Marketing your food and beverage brand in 2022

**Tips for creating effective food and beverage marketing strategies on a shoestring budget.**

**By Marc Paulenich**

According to a 2021 survey conducted by digital restaurant platforms BentoBox and the Infatuation, 84 percent of consumers order delivery/takeout an average of two times per week. Digimind, a social monitoring and intelligence company, found the industry's e-commerce revenue totaled \$18.7 billion during 2020 alone, and that number is expected to increase to \$25.7 billion by 2025.

Understandably, the food and beverage industry, like many industries, is quickly turning to digital solutions to reach consumers with online ordering, customer service, marketing strategies and more. With stay-at-home living expected to continue in the future, and online narratives evolving around societal care, health and well-being spurred by the pandemic, it's imperative that, as PR and marketing pros in the food and beverage industry, we adapt our strategy to stay relevant and meet the needs of our target customers.

Unfortunately, many of us are operating on a tight budget. In fact, Gartner's Annual CMO Spend Survey found that in 2021, marketing budgets fell to their lowest level in recent history, accounting for only 6.4 percent of company revenue. So, how can we take advantage of the booming opportunities in the food and beverage industry right now in a cost-effective way?

The simplest answer is usually the most overlooked: Go back to the basics. Use budget-friendly marketing solutions—including social media and digital tools—to identify trends, better evaluate your brand, your competitors and your audience as well as find your voice, set your strategy and measure.

## **Step 1: Identify the trends**

From an increase in digital ordering to a demand for more sustainable options, the food and beverage industry has shifted considerably in the last few years. Identifying these trends are a key first step in better marketing your brand.

Online food ordering: Consumers turned to online food ordering and delivery options in 2020-2021 like never before, and even as our world begins to open back up, this trend shows no sign of slowing down. The global online food-delivery service market is expected to increase at a compound annual growth rate of 10.3 percent, as consumers continue to demand instant access to meals and groceries.

Demand for healthy, sustainable and ac-

cessible: In the wake of the pandemic, health took center stage. The International Food Information Council found that 25 percent of consumers say knowing where their food comes from is very important to them, and more than 55 percent of 15-44-year-olds say they "Extensively research the products and services they use and consume."

Eating local: COVID-19 also spurred a huge movement for supporting local businesses, a trend that's expected to continue. Communities rallied together to keep their local establishments alive in the midst of shutdowns. According to Digimind, "buy local" was the seventh-top trending conversation across digital platforms in 2021. And *Forbes* reported that 35 percent of consumers are buying more local foods than before the pandemic.

Combatting cooking fatigue: A combination of in-person dining restrictions, a search for a new at-home hobby and an interest in healthier eating turned many consumers to cook for themselves during the pandemic. Brands got creative and began offering simple recipes and easy-to-prepare meal kits online, with six in 10 restaurant operators saying they will continue to offer online take-and-bake options post-pandemic.

## **Step 2: Evaluate your brand, competitors and audience**

Once you have a better understanding of industry trends, it's time to conduct an audit by taking a good look at three components: your organization, your competitors and your audience.

First, begin with a self-audit. Closely evaluate your current marketing and messaging practices. What messages and tactics seem to be resonating and which aren't? Do they still fully encompass and amplify all that your brand has to offer? Do they reflect where you want your brand to be in five years, or are they simply reflective of where you are today? Also, take a close look at emerging trends in the industry, such as those mentioned in step one. Are you amplifying aspects of your brand that align with those trends, like sustainability or online ordering?

Once you've taken some time to self-reflect, select a handful of competitors. Of these, three or four should be organizations comparable to your own (e.g. by geographical region, offering, etc.), as well as one or two aspirational organizations. Identify their strengths and weaknesses, and com-

pare them to your own. What's your organization doing better than others? And what are they doing that you might not be taking advantage of?

Finally, dive into your audience. Use social media as a real-time listening tool to learn more about your audience. Consider conducting an online survey and a small focus group to ensure you're collecting both qualitative and quantitative research. Make sure you're understanding not only how people feel about your brand, but also what they expect from the industry as a whole.



Marc Paulenich

## **Step 3: Find your voice**

Now that you have a better understanding of your organization, competitors and audience, it's time to consolidate and apply all of those learnings to either create or refresh your brand voice.

Start by establishing your brand's values and your mission statement. According to a 2021 survey by Ipsos, the link between consumer values and brand purpose has grown significantly over the last eight years, with 70 percent of consumers claiming they are more likely to buy from brands they believe reflect their own principles. It's incredibly important your mission statement reflects how you want your organization to be seen by current and prospective employees and customers. What do you want to stand for? How does this align with the values of your audience?

Once your values and mission are solidified, develop three or four supportive messaging pillars to guide all communications moving forward. Use these messages to create and establish an authentic tone of voice that truly reveals your brand's personality.

## **Step 4: Build a strategy**

With the groundwork done, it's time to put a plan in motion to build your brand community and achieve business results.

Start by identifying the channels and outlets that best reach your target audience. Make sure to include a healthy mix of traditional media relations, social media, influencer marketing and paid activations as well. While less traditional methods like influencer or paid tactics may seem daunting, they're incredibly scalable, and a smaller targeted approach, such as micro-influencers, will likely result in a big impact.

Then, outline content themes that will res-

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# The continued e-commerce evolution

Why profitability is driving more brands to direct-to-consumer.

By Kristen Ingraham

There's no doubt that consumers' food-buying behavior is fundamentally and permanently changed. E-commerce growth continues to eclipse in-store. But the evolution isn't nearly complete—and eliminating the middleman is the next step for many brands.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, decades of digital progress happened in a matter of months. Food and beverage companies around the world almost miraculously pivoted to e-commerce, seemingly overnight. Online ordering and delivery became available for restaurants and grocery stores that had long believed it impossible—or at least years away. And countless food, beverage and CPG brands were along for the ride.

It was a triumph of digital ingenuity that helped the industry keep its doors open. But as the dust settled on pandemic innovation, triumph turned to turmoil—because not everyone felt they had walked away a winner.

Small- and medium-sized brand manufacturers and food companies realized a much smaller portion of revenue from e-commerce than their big brand, big retail counterparts. Outsourced fulfillment, bulk warehouse minimums and third-party control of pricing models left many brands moving major volumes with minimal—or non-existent—financial returns.

With fresh eyes towards the fastest path to profitability, many brands are making the move to a direct-to-consumer path that eliminates retailer intermediaries. But profitability is only part of the story. Here's a look at several reasons why successful companies are switching to a DTC e-commerce approach.

## Developing DTC

The DTC e-commerce sales model is growing in importance because it offers businesses and brands key competitive advantages over traditional retail supply chain distribution models. Brands that adopt the DTC model are cultivating more loyal customers, enjoying fewer inventory hassles and generating higher profit margins, all while gaining a business edge over their competitors.

## Greater inventory insights and control

Retailers entered 2022 filled with challenges. The supply chain shortages mean empty retail shelves, and record-high inflation continues to force companies to raise prices (and increase frustrations felt by their customers).

Industry experts acknowledged these challenges but also pointed to numerous opportunities they created for DTC food and beverage. The first is that DTC creates enhanced inventory control for brands. Instead of having to maintain physical stock levels at a brick-and-mortar location (often based on mere educated estimates about demand levels), DTC e-commerce brands selling directly to consumers can scale their supply levels based on clear insights from big data into actual demand patterns. Less waste = greater return.

## Profitability opportunity for brands

DTC within the food segment—and the elimination of intermediary retailers—is the most obvious example of how brands can capture more profit margin (and offer lower prices). It's one of the biggest drivers of DTC e-commerce adoption. By streamlining the sales and distribution process and going directly to consumers, the DTC sales model allows brands to retain revenue that

would otherwise be going to wholesalers and supply chain partners. DTC also allows brands to directly control their customer relationships, opening the door to explore even more lucrative purchasing options, like subscriptions.

## Enhanced access to consumer data

As the food and beverage industry increasingly migrates online, brands are gaining access to more customer data than ever before. Beyond simple retargeting for trial and loyalty, this data can improve a brand's ability to satisfy desires for more personalized shopping experiences. In short, it creates a better customer experience.



Kristen Ingraham

Customers prefer to deal directly with brands because it provides a better guarantee of product authenticity, quality and freshness. Customers also feel more confident in receiving reliable customer support when they deal directly with brands. By meeting these consumer preferences, the DTC sales model promotes greater customer loyalty, repeat sales and advocacy.

## Faster product innovation

Finally, with a direct access point to customers via DTC, brands can also test, trial and distribute new product innovations faster than ever before. Without the need to fight for shelf space—or delays caused by needing to sell through proof-of-concept to a third-party retailer—more brands are able to shorten the cycle of product innovation and customer satisfaction.

This new model expedites the innovation lifecycle—allowing faster flow from screening to consumer testing, to commercialization. It also lowers the investment needed for concept marketing.

Kristen Ingraham is SVP, Group Lead at Padilla. ○

## MARKETING YOUR FOOD BRAND

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onate with your audience and support your brand values and mission. These themes should be set in a consistent cadence, which will guide how often you push messaging across all of your platforms.

Finally, don't neglect goal-setting as a part of your strategy. Set your benchmarks and then outline a handful of measurable goals and key performance indicators, like engagement on social media, media coverage or even conversion rates for online sales.

## Step 5: Measure, evaluate and improve

With your strategy in motion, you want

to consistently evaluate what's working well and what could be improved. Using the benchmarks you set in the strategy phase, take advantage of cost-effective measurement tools such as Google Analytics and Sprout Social to measure which of your messages, tactics and channels are working well, and which could be improved.

As you gather results and move forward, be flexible and pivot when something isn't working. Continue to use social media as a real-time listening tool to learn more about your audience, and continue to keep a close pulse on industry trends and best practices.

On a yearly—or even quarterly—basis,

take your measurement up a notch by circling back up to step two and conducting a mini self or competitor audit to make sure you're tracking in the right direction.

While keeping up with current industry trends may seem costly and time-consuming, rest assured, you don't need a massive budget to create an effective PR strategy. By taking a close look at the trends, your organization, your competitors and your audience, and then creating an actionable, measurable plan, you'll be able to leverage the major opportunities the food and beverage industry has to offer.

Marc Paulenich is President of Hart. ○

# Perfecting the partnership

Several factors to consider when evaluating your next strategic brand partnership.

By Jackie Peskin

**W**orking with strategic partners is one of the most valuable ways to drive brand loyalty, foster engagement with existing customers and reach new ones. But identifying the right partner is like dating: Sharing common interests and values are a great starting point before getting too deep into the relationship, which will benefit both parties in the long run.

Our agency helps clients in various capacities along this journey, from amplifying existing partnerships to recommending partners and developing the activations that maximize value. Let's examine some key factors that may help you evaluate your next partnership.

## Eyes on the prized partner

Are you looking to raise brand awareness? Introduce a product? Reinforce category expertise? Reach a niche demographic? There's a partner for that. "Partnership" is a fairly broad term encompassing brands, non-profits, organizations, academic institutions, specialized experts and influencers.

Before reaching out to anyone, it's critical to identify the goal of the partnership. It sets the stage for the nature of the relationship, lays the groundwork for the guiding strategy and helps weed out or help zero in on potential partners. Also, think through the duration: Is the goal a limited time offer, an extensive campaign, or a multi-year program? Our agency uses a "results first" framework with clients; we've found that asking a lot of questions upfront can avoid people searching for answers later.

## A match made in insights

Once you figure out your goals, it's time to take a deeper look at prospective partners. Beyond like-minded audiences, goals and values, understanding consumer behavior can take a collaboration to a whole new level of success.

For instance, we know people who work out generally tend to eat healthier. Faced with the challenge of getting health-conscious consumers to consider choosing more nutritious Eggland's Best eggs, Coyne PR went in search of a partner that would build brand awareness and drive trial for our client. While digging through potential partner consumer research and data, we uncovered that two out of three members at Life Time gyms go grocery shopping after visiting the gym. Bingo. Not only did this potential partner check the boxes on common interests, values and potential to reach a shared target demographic, but this

insight also revealed we could reach consumers at the exact moment when purchasing healthier products was top of mind. The team built a robust program with multiple touchpoints, including customized coupons to drive trial. The partnership ended up being one of the most successful campaigns for both Eggland's Best and Life Time, resulting in a 16.5 percent coupon redemption rate.

## Leveraging assets

Beyond the traditional cross-promotion efforts, the right partner can bring their unique set of assets to add value. One example is a partnership we proposed and implemented for our client Castello Cheese, a brand that continually looks for ways to educate consumers on Havarti cheese. The target audience over-indexes on the use of charcuterie boards and DIY projects. We combined both interests into a partnership with Board & Brush Creative Studio, a company that organizes workshops for DIYers around the United States, Canada and Japan (we utilized the U.S. system for this campaign). The Castello and Board & Brush target audience overlapped perfectly.

The initiative called on consumers across the country to attend Board & Brush cheeseboard workshops where they had the opportunity to discover Havarti along with other Castello varieties while learning how to create their own custom cheese tray. Castello Havarti was able to utilize the large built-in network of Board & Brush to deliver its message and encourage trial. For Board & Brush, the partnership provided attendees with a unique workshop experience that helped drive additional foot traffic.

## Commit to collaboration

Just as you know your brand better than anyone, so does your partner about their brand. Accept and embrace this fact. This means being open to compromise, to doing things slightly different than you're accustomed to, or moving in different directions than initially anticipated (which is perfectly fine if it continues to meet your original objective).

At Coyne, our goal is to be an extension of a client's internal team. Likewise, you and your partner should work as one team. Keep an honest and open dialogue. Communicate frequently. Be respectful of each other's internal structure and timing for approvals.

As part of our ongoing work with Just Born's PEEPS brand, Coyne provides media relations and social media support for the brand's limited-time partnerships during

the Easter season. Past collaborations include a who's who of iconic brands in their own right: Oreo, Kellogg's, Dunkin' and Crocs, to name a few. In every instance, our PR and social media teams collaborate with the corresponding brand team, melding together best practices, creative muscle and media relationships to drive attention.

## Watchouts and pitfalls

We can all agree that even the most thoughtfully designed program will encounter a hiccup or two along the way. It's no different with partnerships, but there are steps that can reduce the risk.

When vetting partners, brands should be clear about their expectations and ensure partners can deliver on the established objectives. Ask for case studies, sample content and referrals to better understand expected results and the experience of working with the potential partner.

If partnering with an individual, a thorough audit can help reveal any potential issues. Take note of your initial communications with the partner and most importantly, listen to your gut. Whether it's a question of culture compatibility or issues that may arise later down the line, if something feels off, chances are it is. A partnership can leave lasting impressions—both good and, unfortunately, sometimes bad.

Avoid the trap of the "shiny new object" syndrome, where you jump headfirst into a partnership without proper vetting or collaborating for the wrong reasons. Wrong reasons include, "They get lots of press!" and "Everyone I know knows them!" Unfortunately, shiny new object syndrome will inevitably increase your chance of heartbreak, to use our dating analogy.

Once a partner checks all the boxes, make sure to establish ownership roles ahead of time. Confusion over who is owning what during the execution phase can impact timelines, budgets and the overall success of the campaign.

Finding the right partner may seem like a lot of work. That's because it is. But the right partner paired with a well-executed plan will without a doubt deliver great results and set a blueprint for successful collaborations in the future. To end with our dating analogy, the result will be true love for everyone involved.

Jackie Peskin is VP, Food & Nutrition, at Coyne PR. ○



Jackie Peskin



# An appetite for culture, all in good taste

Food goes beyond the plate and drives conversations regarding history and the cultural connections we share.

By Marcus Braham

Food is inextricably linked to culture. When we think about the practices, beliefs, customs and symbols that produce a set of cultural mores, food is almost always at the center. Like many, observing my parents prepare family recipes in the kitchen spurred some of my earliest memories of conversations about my own cultural identity. My dad, who immigrated from Jamaica as a young adult, introduced me to his Caribbean homeland through a handful of traditional Jamaican dishes he proudly prepared, including rice and peas and spinners (a popular type of dumpling).

Not every meal, however, carries profound cultural significance, and not every meal we prepare can be a sentimental recipe. Many of the decisions we make about food are practical and banal out of necessity. On any given day, I select lunch based on how easily I can eat it at my desk, and plan my dinner based on how quickly I can cook—or order—a meal and still have some time to enjoy TV and relax for the evening. But when you go too long without having a meal that reminds you of the powerful cultural reflection food can be, you can easily forget what a luxury it is to have such an experience. That is why Harlem's The Cecil was such a consequential restaurant for me and continues to be even though it closed over four years ago.

By the time I had saved up enough money to afford a proper meal at The Cecil, it had already been designated as one of Harlem's most dynamic dining destinations, named *Esquire's* Best New Restaurant by prominent food writer Josh Ozersky, and attracted diners from all four corners of the city (and country). The Cecil had distinguished itself in a city with over 24,000 restaurants by introducing a concept that was then unique to New York City's dining scene. The restaurant described its menu as Afro-Asian-American cuisine, boasting signature dishes such as Citrus Jerk Golden Snapper, Feijoada

with Merguez Sausage and Oxtail, and Tamarind-Glazed Oxtails with Pickled Cabbage and Brown-Rice Grits.

That first meal was as spectacular as the *Esquire* writer and others said it would be, but I would not fully appreciate The Cecil and its culinary splendor immediately. It wasn't until I had the opportunity to return to the restaurant two years later that I would be able to forge my cultural connection to The Cecil. When I did return, it was not as a diner but as a publicist for Harlem EatUp!'s inaugural festival, which The Cecil was participating in. I returned to The Cecil on a weekday afternoon—before dinner service—to oversee a cooking demonstration and an interview between a journalist and the restaurant's chef, JJ Johnson.

Chef Johnson began the interview by talking about his excitement for Harlem EatUp! and the diversity of Harlem's dining scene that would make the festival exceptional. But as I was listening to him detail the inspiration behind his restaurant's Afro-Asian-American cuisine, he completely arrested my attention by describing his menu as diasporic. It seems so obvious now, but it was a bit of a paradigm shift in that moment to think about food in such geopolitical terms.

For me, the word "diaspora" evoked a history of forced migration and labor, centuries of expulsions and expansions, perilous crossings and colonial encounters, and resilience and adaptation. It was my first time hearing someone contextualize food in such culturally laden terms, and it allowed me to more fully understand the complexity, history and richness of Chef Johnson's Afro-Asian-American cuisine and his point of view as a chef.

There was no way for Chef Johnson to know this, but his language and insight not only gave me a global and historical perspective to reflect on to the restaurant but a localized one as well. I had recently un-

covered that my own diasporic heritage included Indian and Scottish roots by way of Jamaica.

I had the opportunity to have a few more leisurely dinners at The Cecil before the restaurant closed permanently a few years later, but eating there was never the same again. From that point on, I was more acutely aware of the ocean crossings and cultural adaptations ingredients that had survived in order to appear on my plate. And each time, the menu made me reflect on the ocean crossings and cultural adaptations my own genealogy had survived in order for me to be sitting at the table.



Marcus Braham

In that respect, visiting The Cecil was not just an epicurean treat, but an occasion for me to reflect on my own complexity. Because there are not many meals that can still do that, the experience is its own kind of indulgence. That kind of cultural connection to an ingredient or recipe lingers on the palette long after the taste of the ingredient or dish has abated.

I have been a food publicist for well over a decade, and one of the reasons I have found my work so fulfilling is because food is a lens for virtually any cultural issue—global or local. Food does not simply belong to the province of food writers. Its significance reaches far beyond the plate, the supermarket aisle, or the restaurant table. One of the most exciting aspects of working in this field has been to see how the food's cultural and global impact has become integral across different sectors. The future of the food practice is one that will continue to be interdisciplinary. Food has grown to be a key issue driving conversations around environmental movements, climate change, social justice, technology, mental health—and that momentum is showing no signs of slowing down.

Marcus Braham is Vice President, Food + Beverage, at Padilla. ○

## A DECADE OF DIETARY INSIGHTS

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to offer grocery delivery, while Kroger now offers an on-demand meal pick-up and delivery service from popular restaurants.

With the focus on health and immunity in the next decade and the increased

popularity of plant-based eating, nutrient-dense options will be an important part of consumer diets as they embrace food as medicine to help prevent disease. In addition, food manufacturers and marketers should note that there will likely be an increased interest in functional foods containing ingredients that provide health benefits beyond their nutrient profile. Be-

ing prepared to meet consumer demands with online marketing, new product innovations, better sustainability practices and educating consumers through experts like RDNs in meaningful digital marketing campaigns will help companies stay relevant and successful.

Louise Pollock is the President and Founder of Pollock Communications. ○

# Essential building blocks for equitable healthcare

How the communication industry can address inclusion and healthcare disparities for persons with disabilities.

By Sena Pottackal

**D**o you know how common disability is? Almost everyone will experience some form of disability during their lifetime, either temporary or permanent; it's the only minority group anyone can join at any point in one's life. More than 1.85 billion people around the globe and 61 million in the United States identify as a person with a disability. Nearly 300 million people have a visual disability, and I joined this community in 2004 when I learned I was legally blind due to a progressive eye condition called Retinitis Pigmentosa. I and other persons with disabilities face significant healthcare disparities in comparison to our non-disabled counterparts.

According to the World Health Organization, PWDs are "three times more likely to be denied healthcare and four times more likely to be treated badly in the healthcare system." As a blind woman, I observed firsthand how inaccessible communications have hindered disability inclusion and prevented our community from obtaining equitable healthcare during and before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The blind and partially sighted community in the U.S. continues to struggle to safeguard our health due to disability exclusion and inaccessible communications throughout the pandemic response. As a simple illustration, because we rely on our sense of touch to navigate the physical world, we're more likely to contract the virus. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ignored this and omitted blindness/low vision from the list of high-risk medical conditions prioritized as a vaccination group.

When we did become eligible, we faced accessibility barriers, further delaying our vaccination because the online vaccine portal wasn't designed to support the inclusion of blind and partially sighted patients through screen reader navigation. [A screen reader is an assistive software, and it renders text into Braille and speech output, enabling us to access digital spaces.] On the New Jersey Department of Health Vaccination portal, I struggled to select a vaccination site because the options were displayed as colored dots on a map rather than as an accessible textual list. Therefore, I and others needed help even completing the registration process. These accessibility issues exhibited themselves throughout the country's vaccine program.

According to Kaiser Health News, "A web

accessibility nonprofit, WebAim checked COVID vaccine websites gathered by KHN from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In January 2021, it found accessibility issues on nearly all 94 webpages, which included general vaccine information, list of vaccine providers and registration forms." By failing to meet accessibility standards, these web pages violated both the Americans with Disabilities Act and The Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Fortunately, the government learned from some of its past mistakes and went on to develop a screen-reader accessible website for requesting free COVID tests. However, these tests are inaccessible to blind consumers, creating another barrier to protecting our health during this pandemic. As our government and healthcare organizations prepare for future health crises, they must design websites, programs and products with better disability inclusion and accessible communications.

Even before the pandemic, blind and partially sighted patients encountered negative health interactions caused by numerous inaccessible touchpoints throughout the patient experience. Communication touchpoints are where informational transactions occur and include communication channels such as face-to-face conversations, phone calls, emails, websites, etc. From personal experience, the following is the sequence of inaccessible communication challenges we might face when attending a doctor's appointment.

- First, it may commence with the absence of accessible mechanisms to discretely disclose our disabilities, request accommodations and independently complete intake forms. Therefore, we can't provide our healthcare team with critical information in advance, which could have prepared them with valuable knowledge and guidance about how to provide us with a more equitable patient experience.

- Second, we may encounter medical professionals without exposure to disability etiquette or training, so they may not know how to provide verbal directions or facilitate a disability-inclusive conversation. As a result, they may invade our personal space by grabbing or touching us without permission in an attempt to direct us to an examination room. Upon arrival, they may ignore us and ask our companion questions about our health, restricting our participation in our own medical treatment.

- Finally, it may conclude with the distribution of inaccessible documents (e.g., patient summaries, doctor referrals, scripts, informational pamphlets and follow-up reminders). Because these documents are inaccessible, we must ask others to read them to us, sacrificing our privacy in exchange for access.

These are all avoidable and can be resolved through thoughtful collaboration. Therefore, healthcare professionals can provide valuable solutions by approaching inclusion gaps with an open mind, flexible attitude, and willingness



Sena Pottackal

to embrace the disability community's motto, "Nothing for us without us."

Moreover, professionals in the healthcare industry possess the power to catalyze change and curate a culture of disability inclusion by implementing accessible communications practices. The patient experience for blind and partially sighted individuals could be improved considerably by taking onboard these recommendations:

- Create an accessible communications mechanism to allow patients to electronically complete paperwork, disclose a disability and request accommodations before an appointment.

- Allow patients to choose their preferred method of communication. Because disability isn't a monolith, preferences can vary from person to person, even if they identify as having the same disability.

- Educate staff about how to guide patients to and from an examination room with verbal directions and/or sighted guide assistance.

- When directing patients to rooms, ask us if we need help. If we say yes, ask if we'd like guidance by a sighted guide and/or verbal directions. If we request a sighted guide, offer your arm and ask from which side we'd prefer guidance. We'll respond, hold onto your elbow on the indicated side and walk a half step behind you.

- If we request verbal directions, instruct us when to turn left or right, whether we're approaching stairs or an obstacle; etc.

- Train staff how to facilitate an inclusive conversation during the examination. Initiate the conversation, for example, by intro-

— Continued on next page



# Web3 entrepreneurs should seize the moment with PR

How can Web3 and the metaverse industry leaders grab media attention and market share if the news cycle and conversation surrounding these disruptive technologies change on a daily basis?

By Todd Barrish

**W**eb3. Crypto. Metaverse. NFTs. Is there anything buzzier at the moment than these disruptive, polarizing and world-building technologies? From Facebook's rebrand to NFT releases from GameStop and AMC, we're in a frenzied media environment for all things metaverse and crypto.

In these early innings, no one can claim to know how these technologies will evolve or which players will end up on top. Engineers and entrepreneurs are working tirelessly to innovate the type of products and solutions that will turn the metaverse and Web3 from novelties to necessities. However, these founders and entrepreneurs should also be thinking about what role communications and PR will play in the launch of their new brands and services.

If the news cycle and conversation surrounding Web3 and the metaverse change on a daily basis, how can industry leaders expect to grab media attention and create a coherent narrative? While it may seem daunting, a few key strategies can help thoughtful executives cut through the noise and make a name for themselves. There may never be a better moment to become a Web3 thought leader.

## Opportunity for Web3 leaders

When you work in public relations, one of the most common things you hear from clients is that they want to "create a category"—often one in which they're the only player. True moments of category creation don't come easily, and they often take years to establish and validate. But with Web3 and the metaverse, we're witnessing the creation not just of a new category, but of an entire industry that is ripe for leadership.

Cryptocurrencies, NFTs and the metaverse have captured the public imagination, yet they've also been met with a healthy dose of confusion and skepticism. This moment presents a major need for thought leadership. If a Web3 founder can explain how their technology works and why we should care, they'll be doing a service not just for their own organization, but for the industry at large. With so much left to be defined in the primordial soup of the metaverse and Web3, it won't take much for true thought leaders to establish credibility. And once a knowledgeable, visionary leader proves they have something valuable to

say, they'll become a go-to source for the thousands of media stories to come on these red-hot topics.

## The caveat

In a market defined more by hope and optimism than products and proof points, we're inevitably going to see companies trying to capitalize on the attention without having the technology to back up their claims. Five years ago, with companies clamoring to take advantage of artificial intelligence and digital transformation, hundreds of startups touted the "advanced algorithms and machine learning" that underpinned their products. And while some enterprise buyers may have been convinced by the marketing and invested in what amounted to vaporware, these wannabe AI innovators eventually found themselves pushed out of the market by those companies who could deliver what they promised.

The current Web3 environment cries out for thought leadership, but the last thing we need is the "fake it 'til you make it" entrepreneurs who believe they can succeed simply by gaining notoriety. We need real experts, creative thinkers who have done their homework and can explain what's coming next for the metaverse and our crypto economy. As Web3 founders fight for funding and market share, those who can deploy smart, thoughtful PR and content strategies will find that they have a much easier time attracting attention from top VCs and customers.

## Translators, teachers and students

The role of a good piece of thought lead-

ership is about bringing clarity to complexity: a subject matter expert takes their detailed, domain-specific knowledge and translates it into a narrative that is engaging and understandable for a less familiar audience. The thought leaders who rise to the top of the Web3 and metaverse spheres will be those who are skilled at both translating complex concepts and teaching readers about how they work. And like all of our favorite teachers, they'll be able to do it in a way that makes us care and want to learn more.

In a dynamic industry, our Web3 thought leaders will need to embrace one more role besides translator and teacher. These leaders will also need to commit to being perpetual students, always doing their research and learning more about the newest innovations and what might be coming around the corner. Those executives who reach a point of expertise and then rest on their laurels will quickly find that their knowledge is outdated and uninteresting, while those who do the hard work of staying on the cutting edge will discover that they've built an organic audience of fans and disciples.

It's time for a real thought leader in Web3 and the metaverse. Who's going to seize the moment?

*Todd Barrish is President of Indicate Media. ○*



Todd Barrish

## BUILDING EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE

— Continued from page 19

ducing yourself with your name and title, repeating this each time you reenter a room to help us understand to whom we're speaking. Throughout the visit, treat your patient as your primary point of contact and speak directly to them, unless they defer a particular question or the entire conversation to their companion.

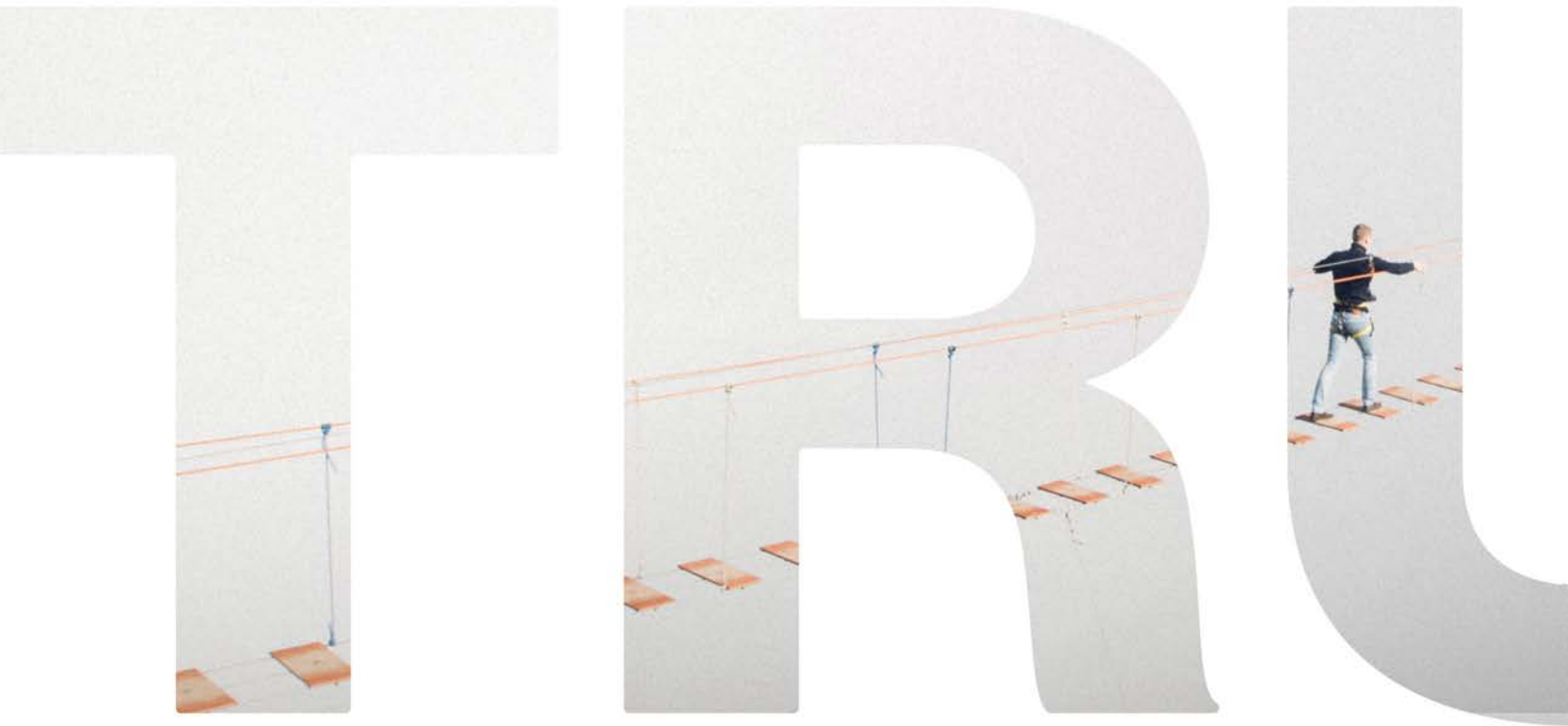
- Provide accessible materials in alternative formats, such as a Braille document, an accessible electronic format and/or a large print document with at least 16-point font and high color contrast.

In addition to the blind and partially

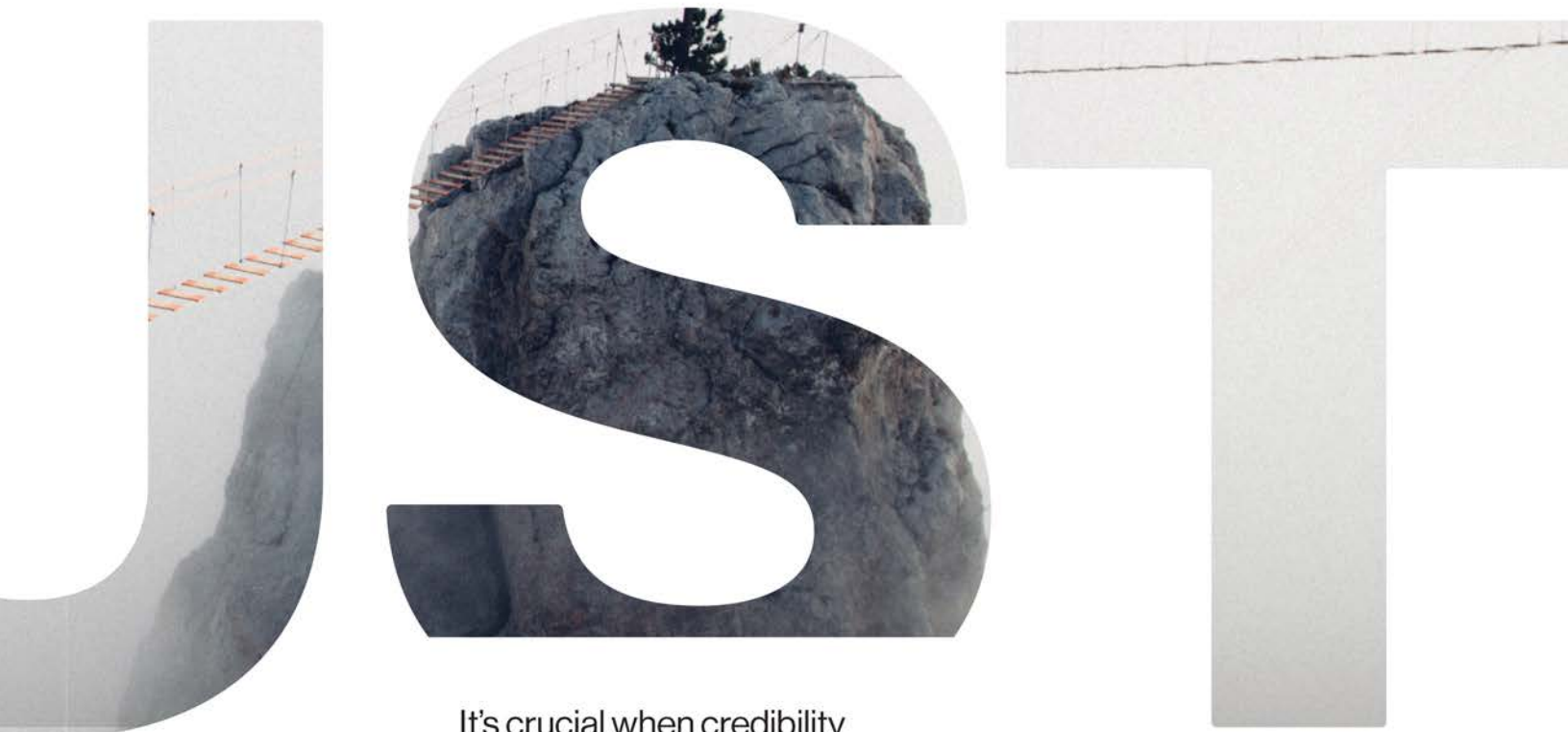
sighted community, accessible communications enable the inclusion of nearly 400 million with a hearing disability, approximately 200 million with a cognitive disability and about 18 million people with a speech-related disability. Recognizing this, Current Global conducted a study, "Digital Accessibility: The Necessity of Inclusion," which surveyed 800 people with disabilities to understand their lived experience consuming content as PWDs.

A community of nearly two billion with \$13 trillion in collective buying power is hard—and foolhardy—for any company or brand to overlook.

*Sena Pottackal is a Junior Associate at Current Global. ○*







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

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At 360PR+, you could say that food and beverage is our bread & butter, given our extensive experience working with food brands spanning every aisle of the grocery store in addition to food media, recipe sites, grocery distributors and retailers, food apps, kitchen appliances and more. With a passion for helping consumers eat and live better, our purposeful work helps consumers tackle not just what's for dinner, but also bigger-picture challenges such as living more sustainably and reducing food waste.

Our Food & Beverage team members are in constant contact with the tastemakers—food influencers including top chefs, RDs, cookbook authors, Instagrammers and of course media—who determine what consumers put into their grocery carts and on their tables. Our award-winning campaigns break through, educate and drive velocity at retail. They keep our clients present and relevant across the year as we help brands insert into and own a myriad of food occasions—and create news ones to get media, buyers and consumers to stand up and take notice.

It's why some of the most loved and trusted companies and brands have chosen 360PR+ as their partner: America's Test Kitchen, Buitoni, Giant Food supermarkets, illy coffee, Juicy Juice, Nasoya, One Degree Organics, Pete and Gerry's Organic Eggs, Silver Hills Sprouted Bakery, Sunny D and UNFI (United Natural Foods, Inc.) to name a few.

360PR+ is a certified women-owned business and a member



**Chef and TV personality Judy Joo on location for a 360PR+ produced content series filmed in Korea, celebrating client Nasoya's culinary heritage. When the plant-based brand, best known for its tofu, launched its new vegan Kimchi line, 360PR+ orchestrated an integrated campaign that introduced the authentic Korean flavors to homes across the US through earned media and digital content.**

of PROI Worldwide, offering clients reach and expertise in 100+ cities.

## 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 considers 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: Aquamar Seafood, Barebells, Bushwick Kitchen, Calavo, Electrolit, Golden West Food Group, KOE Kombucha, Mary's Gone Crackers, Meat District, NadaMoo!, Nature's Path Organic Foods, Pickle Juice, Skinny Butcher and Willamette Valley Pie Company.

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**Lydia Vargo**, VP of Global Strategic Accounts

ChicExecs is an award-winning PR and marketing agency bringing brands to the next level with the integrated marketing plans focusing on PR, retail strategy, social media, social influencers and digital marketing tactics. By offering a multi-channel marketing plan, ChicExecs helps small businesses find their way into retail stores like Target, Nordstrom and more, while earning attention from *The Today Show*, *People*, FOX News, *AllRecipes*, BuzzFeed and more. Nikki and Kailynn, the founders of ChicExecs believe in fueling entrepreneurial spirit both with clients and within the company, which is why ChicExec members are driven to earn results for their clients across all channels. Working with clients across the food space including Better Body Foods, DINO Bars, Just The Cheese, and more, ChicExecs works to make new brands category leaders with creative and driven-strategies.



## CAROLYN IZZO INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS (CIIC PR)

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

**Amy Sedeño**, Vice President & Partner

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

CIIC PR is an award-winning, full-service public relations, social media and communications firm specializing in creating dynamic campaigns for the food & beverage space. Our publicists bring many years of experience from several of the country's top PR firms. For 25 years, CIIC has been dedicated to servicing food & 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 many leading F&B brands, including Jovē Water, Stadaconē Gin, Sovány Beverage Company, Florida Wine Academy, 305 Wines, The Original Soupman, Opal Apples, Barton & Guestier Wines, Bibigo Foods, Morton's



**CIIC PR onsite in Miami to celebrate the launch of Jove's "Greatest Summer Ever! Hydration Truck Tour" in celebration of National Hydration Day.**

The Steakhouse, Kona Red Beverages, Coney Island Brewing Company, New Leaf Beverages, California Pizza Kitchen, Bohlsen Restaurant Group, 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 & operated business (WBENC Certified) and a proud member of latamPR, furthering our reach in Mexico and Latin America for brands looking to expand their footprint.

For more information or to inquire about new business opportunities, contact 845/358-3920 x 11 or email [connect@ciicpr.com](mailto:connect@ciicpr.com).

Learn more about us at [www.ciicpr.com](http://www.ciicpr.com).

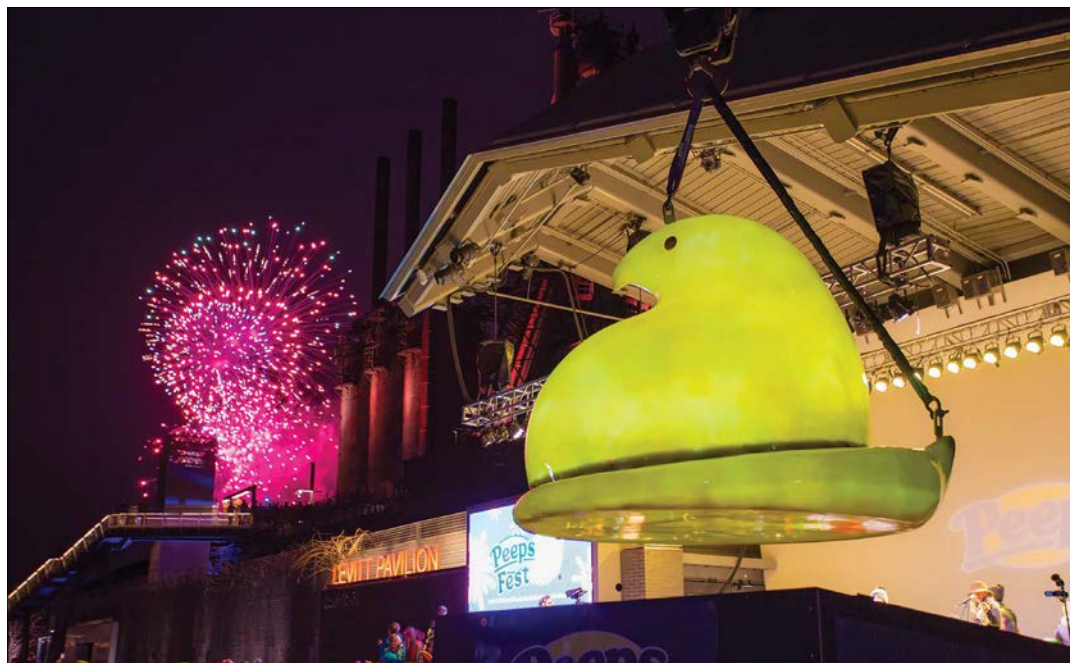
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**Thomas F. Coyne**, CEO  
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**Stacy Bataille**, Senior Vice President

The food and nutrition space has been a cornerstone of Coyne PR since the agency's inception



**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.**

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## COYNE PUBLIC RELATIONS

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more than 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 clients' 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 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.

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

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

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Food, Wine & Spirits

At Evins we know that the secret to building brand relevancy, consumer engagement and organic advocacy 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 & Spirits (FWS) practice has been crafting and communicating stories about brands, experiences and people. Over the last three decades, we have been honored and privileged to partner with brands including Colgin Cellars, Beebeater, Cakebread Cellars, Chef John Currence, Courvoisier, Crown Maple, Double Cross Vodka, H-Factor, Laphroaig, Maker's Mark, Old Overholt, Schaller & Weber, SmartWater, Tequila Avion, Trinchero Napa Valley, Vitamin Water and countless others. 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 Group skillfully creates experiential events, programs, and promotions in conjunction with compelling and inspiring media coverage that catalyze organic conversation and storytelling. Transparent in our practices, relentless in our commitment to results, and passionate about transforming client challenges into opportunities, 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).

## 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 Peet's Coffee; 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 retailer 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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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 Inspire Brands, FOCUS Brands, Blaze Pizza, Freddy's Frozen Custard & Steakburgers, Smoothie King, Bojangles, and Caribou Coffee, 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 Tampa, Dallas, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Atlanta, and London.

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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.

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)



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](mailto:kristie.sigler@fleishman.com).

## FOODMINDS

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At FoodMinds, we put passion into practice by harnessing global scientific affairs & communications; global food & nutrition affairs; influencer & stakeholder engagement; and healthy, sustainable food systems strategies to address business and public health objectives. FoodMinds is a collective of passionate nutrition experts—policy wonks, trend watchers, dietitians and storytellers—that helps organizations navigate a complex food system, from farm to table, to grow their business and nourish the world. The only agency with nearly 20 registered dietitians, as well as a Global ExpertBench™ of nutrition science, policy and communication professionals, we're boldly transforming the way the world thinks about food, nutrition and health to help our clients tell a better story.

FoodMinds, a division of Padilla, 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. Between FoodMinds and Padilla Food + Beverage, we are consumed by food. Together, we're re-imagining why, what and how the world eats and drinks—to help build a stronger, flourishing future for all. Our services span

the ecosystem of food, beverage and nutrition—from scientific research, market insights and nutrition affairs, to branding, digital, and integrated health professional and consumer marketing communications.

Contact us at [www.foodminds.com](http://www.foodminds.com) to get started.

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**Natalie Best**, Chief Operating Officer / Principal

French/West/Vaughan (FWV), 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. 15 on the list of the nation's largest PR firms overall (2021 *O'Dwyer's* Ranking of Top U.S. PR Firms) and has been in the top 20 for more than 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), 3 Loves, ConAgra (Slim Jim, Pemican 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, The Calling), BRAND Napa Valley, Grain and Barrel Spirits, Mother Earth Brewing, St. Michelle Wine Estates 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 22 times. Founded in April 1997 by agency Chairman & CEO Rick French, FWV employs more than 130 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts among its Raleigh (headquarters), New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Greater Boston and Tampa offices.

## HUNTER

One World Trade Center, Floor 68  
New York, NY 10007

**Grace Leong**, CEO  
**Jonathan Lyon**, Chief Operating Officer  
**Gigi Garcia Russo**, Chief Innovation and Growth Officer

Contact: [smormar@hunterpr.com](mailto:smormar@hunterpr.com)  
**Samara Farber Mormar**, CMO

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 33 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, King's Hawaiian, POST Consumer Brands and Danone.

With offices in New York, Los Angeles and London and partnerships that extend our reach globally, HUNTER's 200-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 mod-

ern 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

685 Third Ave., 2nd flr.  
New York, NY 10017  
646/277-1200  
[www.icrinc.com](http://www.icrinc.com)

Established in 1998, ICR partners with its clients 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 approximately 1,000 clients across more than 20 industry groups. 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 and Beijing. Learn more at [www.icrinc.com](http://www.icrinc.com). Follow us on

Continued on page 26

## ICR

Continued from page 25

Twitter at @ICRPR and LinkedIn.

Clients: Albertsons Companies, B&G Foods, Beyond Meat, Boot Barn, Checkers & Rally's, Darden Restaurants, Dutch Bros Coffee, First Watch, Fogo de Chao, Herbalife Ltd., Hostess, Laird Superfood, Limoneira, lululemon athletica, Macaroni Grill, Next Level Burger, Nomad Foods, Olo, Planet Fitness Inc., Portillo's, Ruth's Chris, Sav A Lot, Shake Shack, Sullivan's Steakhouse, Texas Roadhouse, The Duckhorn Portfolio, The National Restaurant Association, The One Group, Tilray Brands, Torchy's, Utz Quality Foods, Williams-Sonoma, Inc. and 7 Brew.

## LAMBERT & CO.

1420 Broadway St., Suite 100  
Detroit, MI 48226  
313/309-9500  
www.lambert.com  
engage@lambert.com

Detroit. Grand Rapids. New York City. Phoenix. Saint Louis.

**Michelle Olson**, APR, Chief Executive Officer

**Jeff Lambert**, Founder & Chairman

**Don Hunt**, President/Partner

**Matt Jackson**, Chief Brand Officer, Partner

**Mike Houston**, Managing Director, Partner

**Kimberly Hoyle**, Managing Director, Sales & Marketing

Lambert & Co. is a brand communications agency positioned as



Corporate R&D Chef and Product Development Manager, Ken Fryer, showcases the Seafood Medley by Harvest of the Sea at a product education event in Los Angeles with Marketing Maven.

the Challenger Agency for Challenger Brands™ to serve emerging and established brands with integrated marketing strategies that encourage new product trials and build brand affinity. Our experience includes nearly every aisle and 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—this philosophy has helped Lambert stand apart as an organization where leaders grow, and clients 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

1460 Broadway, 1st Floor  
New York, NY 10036  
212/967-5510  
www.MarketingMaven.com  
lindsey@marketingmaven.com

Los Angeles Headquarters  
310/994-7380

**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, influenc-



Lambert works closely with the team at Moose Tracks Ice Cream on all of the brand's digital and traditional public relations efforts for a truly integrated approach. From new flavor launches to social media content development to elaborate product photoshoots, Lambert is a trusted partner to the Moose Tracks team.



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

## MAXWELL

3934 S Corbett Ave.  
Portland, OR 97239  
503/231-3086  
www.thinkmaxwell.com

**Jen Maxwell-Muir**, Founder + Principal

Maxwell is an independent marketing agency of thinkers and doers motivated by leaders and change-makers in the natural food, wellness and hospitality industries. Our creative work carries meaningful stories, engaging content and impactful campaigns across the mediums that matter most. Our aim is to deepen connections, seize opportunities for growth and make a positive impact on behalf of our clients.

At our office in Portland, Oregon, we provide integrated communications support for category upstarts, game changers and brand leaders who are ready to expand their reach and impact, with areas of expertise in traditional public relations, influencer marketing, social/digital marketing, custom culinary content creation, digital advertising and branding & design. Some of our current clients include Bob's Red Mill, Dave's Killer Bread, USA Pulses, McMenamins and Cypress Grove.

As a woman-owned business, Maxwell is a mission-driven agency that believes in the power of good, with a commitment to sustainability both internally and on behalf of our clients, and a focus on spending agency time giving back to the community.

The current Maxwell team consists of 23 independent and curious thinkers inspired by the world around us and motivated by the potential of businesses to do good. Maxwell's rally cry is do better for tomorrow.

## PADILLA

4 World Trade Center  
150 Greenwich Street, 48th Floor  
New York, NY 10007  
212/229-0500  
PadillaCo.com

**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, foodservice, 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.

Padilla is a full-service public relations agency that transforms brands and organizations through strategically creative communications. Our work across deep areas of sector expertise in agriculture and environmental sciences, food, beverage and nutrition, health, technology and financial services, is consistently recognized by industry partners such as *PRWeek*, *PRovoke* and *PRSA*, among others. Padilla operates in seven cities in the U.S. through its family of brands which includes, *SHIFT*, *FoodMinds*, *Joe Smith* and *SMS Research Advisors*. As an *AVENIR GLOBAL* company and a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, the agency provides services to clients through 155 offices worldwide. Transform with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

## POLLOCK COMMUNICATIONS

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Fax: 212/334-2131  
lpollock@pollock-pr.com  
www.lpollockpr.com

**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, school 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 survey research generates media coverage in leading consumer food and nutrition publications and garners placements for our clients. We leverage the survey insights to align clients with news-making trends and inform their strategies

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**#MakeMilkMoments**  
this holiday season for a chance to  
win \$1,000 and a gift basket!



Pollock Communications encouraged milk consumption through a strategic digital campaign engaging millennial influencers and moms to #MakeMilkMoments with their families and share their special memories on Instagram or Twitter.

## POLLOCK COMMUNICATIONS

— Continued from page 27

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 won numerous industry awards for its #MakeMilkMoments digital campaign driving milk nostalgia, enjoyment and consumption for American Dairy Association North East. We positioned Moon Cheese as the perfect snack to garner national media coverage, awareness and sales. 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 #IndividualiTEA, resulting in 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 to capitalize on Friendsgiving, the trendy millennial holiday, to break through the digital noise and reinvent the cranberry.

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 are often quoted in consumer outlets like *Cosmopolitan* and *Parade* because they 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 develop an executable, strategic plan that delivers measurable results—every time.

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

## RFIBINDER

950 3rd Ave., Floor 8  
New York, NY 10022

**Amy Binder**, Founder and CEO  
**Atalanta Rafferty**, Co-Founder and 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 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 and people on the ground across the country.

## SPM COMMUNICATIONS INC.

2332 Irving Blvd., Ste 110  
Dallas, TX 75207  
214/379-7000  
info@spmcommunications.com  
www.spmcommunications.com

**Suzanne Parsonage Miller**, President and 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 two years to help clients continue working through the challenges of the prolonged pandemic while building and maintaining 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, franchise development, new market entry or company acquisition.

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 named to *Forbes'* inaugural "America's Best PR Agencies" list.

Additional food, beverage and restaurant brand experience includes Nothing Bundt Cakes, Tropical Smoothie Cafe, Chuck E. Cheese, Community Coffee, Pollo Campero, RW Garcia, Miller's Ale House, Shipley Do-Nuts,



For its first year as an Official Vodka Sponsor of the NFL, Smirnoff partnered with Taylor to conduct an independent study that found two percent of adult football fans are not able to watch the Super Bowl. For Smirnoff, even one football fan missing the Super Bowl is too many. So, the world's no. 1 vodka journeyed to the frozen tundra of Alaska to bring Super Bowl LVI to a group of hard-working, football-loving, ice road trucking, gold miners who lack the modern-day amenities to tune into the Big Game. Super Bowl Champion Vernon Davis was the face of the campaign, showing up in top-tier national media reminding everyone that Smirnoff is truly For the People. Stay tuned—the fun continues in 2022.

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





**Trevelino/Keller focuses on driving franchise sales for Roy Rogers. A recent 10-store deal with One Holland Corp. restaurant group was inked in 2021 for growth in the Greater Cincinnati area.**

Veggies Made Great, Hopdoddy Burger Bar, Peter Piper Pizza, la Madeleine, Velvet Taco, Chipotle, Bruegger's Bagels, True Food Kitchen, Stubb's Bar-B-Q sauces, Van's Foods, Boulder Organic, Lantana Hummus, Golden Island Jerky, Whataburger and many more.

## TAYLOR

1540 Broadway, 40th Floor  
New York, NY 10036  
212/714-1280  
www.taylorstrategy.com

**Tony Signore**, CEO & Managing Partner

**Mike Costabile**, Managing Partner  
**Maeve Hagen**, President

As "Shapers of Influence," Taylor partners exclusively with category leading, purpose driven 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 Charlotte and Los Angeles. 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 35 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 packaged food brands for a wide range of services, including product introductions, sponsorship activations, and digital strategy/social activation.

## TREVELINO/KELLER

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gkeller@trevelinokeller.com  
www.trevelinokeller.com

**Dean Trevelino**, Founder & Principal

**Genna Keller**, Founder & Principal

Trevelino/Keller continues to build a strong and diverse food and beverage portfolio with some of the most iconic and recognizable brands in the industry. Its established food & beverage practice has experienced success through both its franchise work as well as its ability to cross fertilize across its technology practice, supporting a portfolio of food-tech clients.

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, the launch of a new concept, Wings of New York and the re-launch of Arthur Treacher's. In addition to

Nathan's fully integrated work, the firm successfully delivered franchise public relations and leadgen strategies for another classic brand, Roy Rogers, which is seeing success in building out its Mid-Atlantic footprint.

Entering the new year, Trevelino/Keller has been supporting the West Coast launch of the plant-based industry's newest player, Un-Meat, out of Manilla 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.

On the food-tech side of the house, the firm is working with established player, Tillster which has been empowering restaurants to expand their online ordering capabilities. In 2021, T/K began work with Franklin Junction, an early pioneer of Host Kitchens to optimize existing restaurant infrastructure to serve established brands.

The agency recently launched T/K Raise—www.tkraise.com—its corporate social responsibility platform designed to raise awareness and funds for non-profits identified by its staff. It launched the program focusing on ATL Family Meals which feeds restaurant employees affected by COVID.

## WILKS COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

448 N LaSalle Drive, 9th Floor  
312/815-5505  
Chicago, IL 60654  
www.wilksgrp.com  
brad@wilksgrp.com

**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

118 N. Peoria, 4th Floor  
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www.zapwater.com

**David Zapata**, CEO and Founder  
**Jennifer Lake**, Executive Vice President

**Stephanie Poquette**, Senior Vice President

Zapwater Communications, Inc. is an award-winning integrated communications agency specializing in trendsetting food and consumer brands. Headquartered in Chicago, the agency also has offices in Los Angeles and Miami.

The team has extensive experience 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, Fleurs de Prairie, GoodSam Foods, Hestan Culinary, Layer Cake Wines, Snapdragon Foods and Sonoma Gourmet. ○



# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

## FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

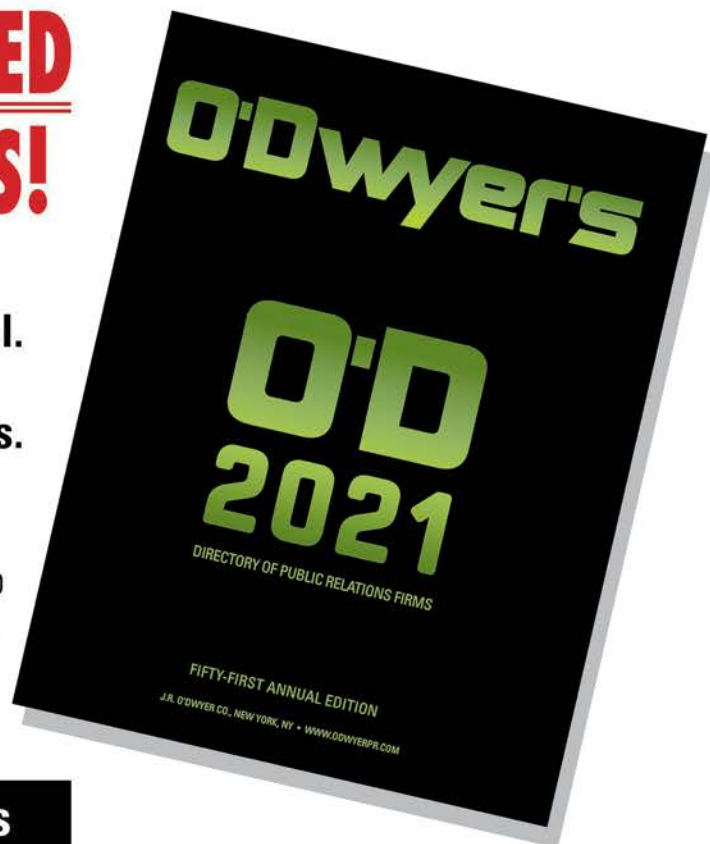
Firm	Net Fees (2020)	Firm	Net Fees (2020)
1. <b>Edelman</b> , New York, NY	<b>\$107,883,000</b>	25. <b>Stuntman PR</b> , New York, NY	<b>608,708</b>
2. <b>Hunter</b> , New York, NY	<b>17,300,000</b>	26. <b>LaunchSquad</b> , San Francisco, CA	<b>\$510,000</b>
3. <b>Padilla</b> , Minneapolis, MN	<b>15,980,003</b>	27. <b>O'Malley Hansen Communications</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>448,429</b>
4. <b>Zeno Group</b> , New York, NY	<b>12,181,516</b>	28. <b>IW Group, Inc.</b> , West Hollywood, CA	<b>425,229</b>
5. <b>APCO Worldwide</b> , Washington, DC	<b>10,692,400</b>	29. <b>Trevelino/Keller</b> , Atlanta, GA	<b>400,000</b>
6. <b>MWW</b> , New York, NY	<b>8,375,400</b>	30. <b>Buchanan Public Relations</b> , Bryn Mawr, PA	<b>346,994</b>
7. <b>Havas Formula</b> , New York, NY	<b>8,254,657</b>	31. <b>MP&amp;F Strategic Communications</b> , Nashville, TN	<b>331,714</b>
8. <b>Taylor</b> , New York, NY	<b>6,800,000</b>	32. <b>rbb Communications</b> , Miami, FL	<b>307,692</b>
9. <b>Real Chemistry</b> , San Francisco, CA	<b>6,300,000</b>	33. <b>Rasky Partners, Inc.</b> , Boston, MA	<b>293,209</b>
10. <b>Coyne PR</b> , Parsippany, NJ	<b>6,000,000</b>	34. <b>imre, LLC</b> , Baltimore, MD	<b>259,300</b>
11. <b>5W Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	<b>5,000,000</b>	35. <b>L.C. Williams &amp; Associates</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>202,220</b>
12. <b>Citizen Relations</b> , Los Angeles, CA	<b>4,988,553</b>	36. <b>Hodges Partnership, The</b> , Richmond, VA	<b>168,000</b>
13. <b>Jackson Spalding</b> , Atlanta, GA	<b>4,598,362</b>	37. <b>TruePoint Communications</b> , Dallas, TX	<b>139,983</b>
14. <b>French   West   Vaughan</b> , Raleigh, NC	<b>3,648,775</b>	38. <b>BizCom Associates</b> , Plano, TX	<b>124,445</b>
15. <b>Champion Management Group</b> , Dallas, TX	<b>3,534,990</b>	39. <b>Hemsworth Communications</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>114,867</b>
16. <b>360PR+</b> , Boston, MA	<b>3,402,308</b>	40. <b>Racepoint Global</b> , Boston, MA	<b>108,360</b>
17. <b>Finn Partners</b> , New York, NY	<b>3,380,000</b>	41. <b>BoardroomPR</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>100,000</b>
18. <b>Lambert</b> , Grand Rapids, MI	<b>1,688,000</b>	42. <b>Brownstein Group</b> , Philadelphia, PA	<b>98,962</b>
19. <b>Tunheim</b> , Minneapolis, MN	<b>1,257,349</b>	43. <b>Ehrhardt Group, The</b> , New Orleans, LA	<b>78,302</b>
20. <b>SPM Communications</b> , Dallas, TX	<b>1,230,040</b>	44. <b>Inkhouse</b> , Waltham, MA	<b>69,243</b>
21. <b>Berk Communications</b> , New York, NY	<b>1,083,743</b>	45. <b>WordWrite Communications LLC</b> , Pittsburgh, PA	<b>60,000</b>
22. <b>Fish Consulting</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	<b>1,070,000</b>	46. <b>Lawlor Media Group</b> , New York, NY	<b>53,250</b>
23. <b>Peppercomm</b> , New York, NY	<b>758,060</b>	47. <b>Rosica Communications</b> , Fair Lawn, NJ	<b>25,000</b>
24. <b>Kivvit</b> , Chicago, IL	<b>706,118</b>	48. <b>FrazierHeiby</b> , Columbus, OH	<b>6,000</b>



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

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## Why O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms is so popular:

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- ✓ *Cross-Client Index: O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms is the only place you can look up a company & determine its outside counsel.*
- ✓ *Articles on how to find outside PR counsel, tips for owners on understanding agency valuation & the myths of being acquired, retirement planning, & the industry's renewed call for diversity.*
- ✓ *Leaders ranked in 19 specialized categories: agriculture, automotive/transportation, beauty/fashion/lifestyle, education, energy, entertainment/cultural, environmental/sustainability/greentech/PA, financial PR/IR, food & beverage, healthcare, home furnishings, industrial, non-profits, professional services, purpose/CSR, real estate finance & development, sports, technology, travel & economic development.*

*"One of a kind resource for anyone involved in public relations—from clients to potential clients, from recent graduates to experienced practitioners—this is the directory to have close at hand."*

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

*"The O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms is the most trusted resource for PR firm profiles and a platform for their brands. I have been a very satisfied user for my 33 years in PR."*

—Rick Gould, Gould+Partners

*"Up-to-date, indispensable resource. Saves time and money. Every PR pro should have one."*

—Robert L. Dilenschneider, The Dilenschneider Group

*"A phenomenal job-seeking aid."*

—Marie Raperto, CIMSearch

*"The most comprehensive PR industry reference tool for clients and agencies. The gold standard in PR industry reference materials."*

—Henry P. Feintuch, Feintuch Communications

## CNN's Gollust resigns CMO post

Allison Gollust, Chief Marketing Officer of CNN, has resigned her post, according to a Feb. 15 memo from WarnerMedia CEO Jason Kilar that said she violated company policy.

A CNN probe into the activities of former anchor Chris Cuomo and his brother & then-New York governor, Andrew, also looked into the relationship between CEO Jeff Zucker and Gollust.

"Based on interviews of more than 40 individuals and a review of over 100,000 texts and emails, the investigation found violations of company policies, including CNN's News standards and practices, by Jeff Zucker, Allison Gollust and Chris Cuomo," said Kilar in his memo.

Zucker stepped down Feb. 2 for failing to disclose a personal relationship with Gollust.

"We have the highest standards of journalistic integrity at CNN, and those rules must apply to everyone equally," Kilar said. "Given the information provided to me in the investigation, I strongly believe we have taken the right actions and the right decisions have been made."

Gollust called Kilar's memo "an attempt to retaliate against me and change the media narrative in the wake of their disastrous handling of the last two weeks."

She is deeply disappointed that "after spending the past nine years defending and upholding CNN's highest standards of journalistic integrity, I would be treated this way as I leave." ○



Allison Gollust

## Pfizer alum Jones joins Mercury

Robert Jones, who was Senior VP-Government Relations and PA at Pfizer, has joined Mercury as Managing Director.

During his 19-year run at Pfizer, he led its federal, state and local advocacy efforts and strengthened the drug-maker's relationships with PhRMA, BIO, National Governors Assn. and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.



Robert Jones

With the COVID-19 outbreak, Jones provided guidance to Pfizer's leadership team and other stakeholders on communications and crisis management matters.

He also worked with the governors of 14 states to assure them that Pfizer's US plants would continue to operate.

Jay Propes, Mercury partner, said Jones' "tenure at the highest levels of corporate and public affairs team leadership" will be an invaluable addition to the firm. ○

## Libra Group names Teitelbaum CCO

The Libra Group hires Edelman and Wells Fargo vet Emily Teitelbaum as Chief Communications Officer. Teitelbaum was most recently at Wells Fargo as Vice President of Public Affairs Communication. She was previously a Vice President at Edelman Public Affairs. Before that, she served on the staff of U.S. Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA). In her new post, she will lead all external and strategic communications across Libra Group, which has assets and operations across 50 countries. ○



Emily Teitelbaum

## Harri takes over as Johnson spokesperson

Guto Harri, a former journalist at the BBC and GB News, is UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's new communications director.

He took over for Jack Doyle, who resigned amid the Partygate scandal, saying that he only planned to stay on the job for two years.

Harri was Johnson's Communications Director when the Prime Minister was Mayor of London.

He quit GB News in 2021 after he was suspended for taking a knee during a report about racism against Black soccer players.

Earlier, he was Chief Political Editor for the BBC and Director of Communications and Corporate Affairs at Rupert Murdoch's News UK.

Harri told a Welch news site that he had a serious discussion with Johnson about getting his office back on track and moving forward. ○



Guto Harri

## Lazar succeeds Kuhl at FP health unit

Finn Partners has named Fern Lazar Global Practice Leader of its health unit.

She succeeds Kristie Kuhl, who will take over Zeno Group's health and wellness practice at the end of March.

Lazar joined Finn Partners after it acquired her shop, Lazar Partners, in 2019.

She will now head the more than 200-member health practice, while continuing to lead Lazar/Finn.

Kuhl succeeded Bashe as health chief in July 2021. ○



Fern Lazar

## RFIBinder adds Epps

Rebecca Epps, a producer, writer and reporter for CBS, NBC and ABC, has joined RFIBinder as Head of Corporate Media.

She will forge media strategies and identity opportunities for client feature stories.

Working closely with Jim Furrer, head of consumer media, Epps will develop strategic communications campaigns and executive thought leadership platforms.

Most recently, she was Broadcast Media Lead at Lewis Global Communications. ○



Rebecca Epps

## APCO hires Shearman as NA health chief

APCO Worldwide has named Mathew Shearman North America Healthcare Practice Lead.

Most recently, he was Senior VP for PA and Crisis Communications at BCW, where he advised *Fortune* 500 companies in the healthcare category. Prior to that, Sherman worked in London at Ogilvy Healthworld and Portcullis Public Affairs.

He has handled clinical data readouts, diagnostics, cybersecurity, product recalls, Alzheimer's, HIV/AIDS and COVID-19. ○



Mathew Shearman



# It's time for PR to cut ties with fossil fuel clients

By Aric Caplan

For decades, too many in the public relations industry have conspired with fossil fuel companies to spread misinformation about climate change. Their actions help imperil the planet and poison the national discourse about the existential threat of our time: global warming.

In case you haven't seen "Don't Look Up,"

don't delay! Truth is always stranger than fiction as hundreds of scientists in January called on PR and ad firms to cut ties with their fossil fuel clients. They warned deceptive campaigns "represent one of the biggest barriers to the government action science shows is necessary to mitigate the ongoing climate emergency."



Aric Caplan is President of Caplan Communications, which represents the conservation, environmental and renewable energy sectors.

Consider BP's high-profile "Beyond Petroleum" re-branding campaign that Ogilvy & Mather designed for British Petroleum. The slogan and its corresponding ads with ecologically minded ethos ("It's time to think outside the barrel," one ad suggests) redefined the fossil fuel giant as "environmentally friendly," along with a newly designed flowery green and yellow sunburst logo. In 2010, BP was responsible for the largest oil spill in U.S. history, the Deepwater Horizon blowout. That disaster dumped more than 130 million gallons of oil into pristine waters in the Gulf of Mexico, affecting 70,000 square miles, killing eleven rig workers and destroying thousands of marine mammals and sea turtles. That's only one of the egregious incidents in the company's sordid 100-year history of appalling accidents, spills and exploitation.

PR has been so successful in helping the fossil fuel industry greenwash its image that the industry's marketing campaigns often seep into common vernacular. Burson Cohn & Wolfe developed the "clean coal" campaign for Peabody Energy in 2014 to help torpedo President Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan, the first-ever initiative to regulate carbon emissions from the nation's power sector (it never went into effect). Scholars note that could be the first time the Supreme Court ever stayed a rule before any court ruled on the merits. Today, "clean

coal" remains a popular talking point, even though there's no such thing. So is "natural gas," an industry term commonly used when referring to fracked gas to clean up its image (regarding the molecular structures of natural gas, 70 to 90 percent of it consists primarily of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 80 times more potent at warming the atmosphere than carbon dioxide.).

It seems there's no end in sight to greenwashing, or to the blind eye that some PR firms take in their complicity. Following COP26, the Chicago Tribune reported Edelman, one of the largest PR firms, rejected criticism that their communications practice enables climate change denial and rejects science, even though the firm represents ExxonMobil, one of the most valuable fossil fuel energy companies in history.

Brown University recently issued a peer-reviewed investigation, "The Role of Public Relations Firms in Climate Change Politics" published in *Climatic Change*. It reveals the PR industry's profound influence, confirming what many already know: various PR firms are complicit in helping the fossil fuel industry to communicate. The most prominent segment to wield PR firms in advancing their agenda are the coal/steel/rail, gas & oil and utilities sectors.

Researchers at Brown discovered that PR influences climate policy in work that requires them to "remain invisible." They also conclude that agencies haven't been "held to account for their activities." Big polluters, the study found, used PR to affect perceptions about climate science at the national level. They include Burson Cohn & Wolfe, Charles Ryan, Weber Shandwick, Cerrell, Hill+Knowlton and DF King, in addition to the more mainstream names like Ogilvy, which have represented hundreds of oil

and gas disinformation campaigns between 1988 and 2020.

"Everybody knows about the Heartland Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute and the Koch brothers," wrote Robert Brulle, a visiting professor and the report's co-author at Brown. "That's not really news anymore. But the other 95 percent of these companies' efforts to greenwash their reputations and shift public opinion are being ignored." Ironically, the children of long-time oil company employees are now confronting the climate crisis with their parents.

We live at a time when the climate crisis threatens the future of our planet, and the future of the children and grandchildren we bequeath to it. It's time for PR companies traditionally supporting the fossil fuel industry, which is squarely responsible for this crisis, to get real. It's time for PR to commit to no longer accept any contracts with fossil fuel companies looking to greenwash their image and to declare they will divest from them for good.

Some of the largest and successful PR firms have defied science and contrived multibillion-dollar propaganda operations that enable and advance fossil fuels whose business models literally destroy our planet. Their fictions have delayed climate action, frustrated the public, politicized the climate crisis and paused practical solutions.

How much longer can our industry remain silent about its complicity when the writing is on the wall? "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things than matter," the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said.

It's time to break the silence. It's time for the PR industry to begin thinking outside the barrel. ○

## Mobile to account for 70% of digital ads by 2026

Advertising that targets consumers using mobile phones and devices is expected to account for 70 percent of all digital ad spends within the next four years, according to a report from financial insights hub StockApps.com.

According to StockApps' report, mobile is responsible for driving significant gains in the digital advertising world. Mobile platforms accounted for 60 percent of digital ad revenues last year, and will make up 62 percent of digital ad spends this year and 64 percent in 2023. Mobile's share of digital ad spending is expected to increase by approximately two percent every year for the next five years, with estimates indicat-

ing that mobile's share of the digital ad pie is expected to account for 70 percent of all digital advertising by 2026.

However, an overview of mobile's rapidly escalating gains in the last five years reveals that the annual rate of growth for mobile ads has actually slowed down considerably. According to the StockApps report, the annual growth rate of overall ad spending on mobile platforms was 11 percent in 2018, when mobile accounted for less than half of digital ad spends. This growth fell to nine percent in 2019 and then to seven percent in 2020. Last year, StockApps estimates the annual growth rate is expected to hover somewhere between three and four percent. ○

# Mark Zuckerberg should fire himself

By Fraser Seitel

**F**orget the “Great Resignation.” What about the “Great Cancellation?”

Everybody these days seems to want somebody to lose his/her/its job. Fire Joe Rogan! Down with Jeff Zucker! Can Whoopi Goldberg! Oh no, not Whoopi! Nobody's safe from the beheading buzzards. And it's just not fair.



**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*.

Most of us, alas, need to work to earn a living. And it isn't civil to call for somebody else to lose their income, no matter how miserable or unqualified or obnoxious you believe them to be. Oh sure, there are some individuals so grotesquely annoying—Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump and Stephen A. Smith come to mind—that you may wish

Schadenfreude to rein down upon them, but it's still wrong.

That's why it's with great reluctance and a heavy heart that I feel compelled to urge that Mark Zuckerberg should fire himself.

Mr. Zuckerberg, the CEO of Meta or Facebook or whatever he's calling his company these days, must relinquish his post immediately; and, unlike Tom Brady, vow never to return. For the sake of the millions of Meta shareholders (Full disclosure: I'm one of 'em!), Mr. Zuckerberg needs to resign.

Now, clearly, Zuckerberg deserves great credit for building a technological colossus rivaling the greatest corporations in history. His story, of course, is well known. After creating “Facemash” at Harvard in 2003, along with his roommates and assistance from fellow students Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss, he quickly outmaneuvered—i.e. “dumped”—his friends and started down the road to fame and billionaire-ship.

While the Winklevoss brothers and other sore-loser, multi-millionaire early investors may condemn his methods and tactics, Zuckerberg over the past decade has proven an astute leader, whose company, with two billion daily users, still ranks as the world's number-one social medium.

But now his time is up.

Early in February, with growth slowing and TikTok making significant inroads into its market, Meta announced that quarterly profits declined eight percent year-over-year, after spending \$10 billion in the “metaverse” of augmented and virtual reality. Meta's shares lost 23 percent in one day, and \$240 billion of company value was wiped out. And it has remained thus ever since the disastrous earnings announcement and conference call.

Obviously, Zuckerberg alone isn't wholly responsible for Meta's current problems and stock market nose dive (There's an impending WWIII, after all). But for the following reasons, Mark Zuckerberg's ability to manage the company he founded has reached the point of diminishing returns.

## He's terrible at public relations

In an era where positive communications and effective PR has become a priority for any leader, Mark Zuckerberg is now, has always been and will continue to be the worst public face/voice/spokesman for his company.

First, he doesn't enjoy the spotlight. He rarely talks to the press or addresses investors. And while years of media training have made less painful his infrequent appearances before Congress, he's still hugely uncomfortable answering the preening gasbags' questions.

Second, like a few other CEOs and politicians at the top of the pile, Mr. Zuckerberg is too arrogant for his own good. He's convinced, as he says repeatedly, that Facebook is “a force for social good,” and that the company's primary problem is one of controlling the narrative, rather than acknowledging its flaws or refining its programs or strategies.

Third, Meta's myriad public problems demand an aggressive public relations response. Some companies, even big ones, can get away with staying in the background and not getting sucked into public controversies. Meta doesn't have that luxury. From Cambridge Analytica privacy breaches to whistleblower charges of profits over safety to allegations of political misinformation, the company desperately needs a CEO willing and capable enough to handle its massive public relations challenges.

## He's too detached

To deliver the kind of positive PR Meta requires, the company must be led by a skilled communicator. Which Mark Zuckerberg ain't.

Like others of similar acumen, wealth and success—Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk,

for example—Mr. Zuckerberg is a reluctant public spokesman. That's understandable. His skill lies in computer programming, not public speaking. But whereas both Mr. Bezos, a computer scientist, and Mr. Musk, a physicist, come alive when discussing their quest for innovations on earth and elsewhere, there's no such twinkle in the eye of Mr. Zuckerberg. Indeed, on those rare occasions when he's obligated to speak, the Meta CEO comes across as passive, detached and, well, dull.

Now, if you're CEO of a bank, dullness can be considered a virtue. Bank of America's CEO Brian Moynihan, for instance, is dull as dishwater. But since he's steward of a \$3 trillion empire in business to safeguard people's money, his dullness translates to “stability” and “prudence.”

The CEO of a visionary social media company, on the other hand, must communicate the opposite of dullness.

## He has no succession plan

An essential element for any CEO to assure shareholders of corporate continuity is planning for who takes over once the chief bids adieu.

Apple shareholders feared the worst in 2009, when the company reluctantly acknowledged that Founder and CEO Steve Jobs had a fast-moving cancer. But a year-and-a-half later, when Jobs finally stepped down, Tim Cook was groomed and ready to succeed him.

In Meta's case, by contrast, Mark Zuckerberg's number two, Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg, has acquired nearly as much public relations baggage as her long-time fellow-billionaire benefactor. Once the high profile darling of feminist activists, Ms. Sandberg's performance in recent years—leading Facebook's fumbling efforts to “handle” the Cambridge Analytica scandal, snooping into high tech critic George Soros' financial dealings and other assorted public embarrassments—have driven her into relative corporate seclusion.

So, the company, now in free fall, has no one inside to turn to, other than competent and articulate public relations professional Nick Clegg, who's good but not ready for prime time CEOmanship.

So, what's a Meta to do?

Well, here's what once hot bike-maker Peloton did this month after announcing a \$439 million quarterly loss and watching its stock descend from \$115 a share to the low \$20s in one year. Peloton Founder and CEO John Foley announced he'd step down immediately and bring in the Chief Financial Officer of Spotify to replace him as CEO.

— Continued on next page



# Tax changes for 2022

By Dominic Rovano

**A**s we approach the end of 2022's first quarter, now's a good time to make sure you're focusing on some strategic and money-saving items for the remainder of the year. The change in business during the pandemic, along with some programs from the government, have created many opportunities for public relations and marketing firms.



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

There are things you need to look at for the remainder of the year, as well as items that will impact your tax position for 2021 now that you're getting ready to file your 2021 tax returns (or extensions).

## **You're suddenly a multi-state employer**

Did you recently hire new employees in another state? Or have plans to grow your team this year and look outside of your normal local

market? For any newly hired employees, you must provide information within 20 calendar days from the hiring date or rehiring date to the state in which the employee performs services. Failure to do so may result in penalties.

Reporting requirements differ from state to state. Your payroll processing company may or may not report new hires as part of the services provided. Contact your payroll service provider to determine whether this is being reported for you.

If you're hiring new staff outside of the state where your business operates, you should be aware of the tax implications.

Under normal circumstances, nexus is established by having a physical presence of employees within a state. This connection creates a tax obligation for state taxes such as income tax, payroll tax and sales and use tax. When businesses began permitting employees to work remotely in 2020, some states allowed companies with remote employees who were working temporarily in the state to do so without imposing nexus. Others like New York considered workers that were temporarily remote to be liable

for New York income tax.

The expansion of remote work, and expansion to workers residing in different states other than the one where your company is located, may have nexus implications for you. Hiring employees outside your primary state may create a requirement to file income taxes in the state your remote employees are located in. Because of this, businesses must track where staff performs their services and then assess whether they need to file returns in those states—or have their tax professional take care of this.

According to the "convenience of the employer" rule, which is in use by some states, if an employer requires an employee to work in another state, withholding is taken only in the state where the work is performed. If, however, the employee chooses to work in another state, they may be subject to tax in both states: the employer's location and the employee's location. It's important to note that each state's interpretations of the law are constantly evolving as a result of changing workforce dynamics.

## **Meals are back on the table**

Are you planning to meet with clients in-person this year? Did you spend money on business meals at restaurants in 2021? As many businesses are starting to travel again and feel comfortable meeting with clients face to face, one thing to note is that under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, business meals are 100 percent deductible for 2021 and 2022. Prior to 2021, meals were only 50 percent deductible.

Per IRS guidance issued last year, meals must be purchased from a restaurant, be for meetings with clients or prospects of the taxpayer, and the taxpayer or their employees must be present at the meeting. In addition, the meals cannot be lavish and if the meal is part of an entertainment event, such as a sporting event, then the meal is not deductible, as entertainment, amusement or recreational events continue to be non-deductible.

As your staff reconnects at employee events, any meals provided at a company event, such as a holiday party, would also be 100 percent deductible.

## **SALT deduction cap workaround programs are hot**

Are you familiar with SALT deduction cap workaround programs in the states where you do business? These optional programs, which are available in several states, including New York and California, can provide a workaround for the individual state and local tax deduction currently capped at

\$10,000 due to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

These programs permit the entity to pay the state tax attributable to the income from the entities passed through to the owners at the entity level, taken as a partnership or S corporation deduction. This passes through to the partners as a credit on their individual state returns and creates a deduction at the entity level, creating a federal deduction. This deduction is in addition to the \$10,000 itemized deduction limit on your personal return. For many taxpayers in high tax states, these programs can save you real money.

Under this rule, Partnerships and S corporations may annually elect to pay this tax on certain income for tax years. The election for many states needs to be made by March 15, 2022, for the 2022 tax year. Make sure reviewing these types of programs in your state is on your to-do list.

## **Employee retention credit reminder**

The pandemic hit many PR and marketing firms hard, especially in 2020's second quarter. The Employee Retention Credit is a program created under the CARES ACT designed to encourage businesses to maintain their staff throughout the pandemic. The ERC allows businesses to claim a cash refund of up to \$26,000 per employee for qualified wages paid from March 13, 2020, through September 30, 2021.

More detailed information about the ERC and qualification information is covered in a previous O'Dwyer's article, "Are You Leaving ERC Money on the Table?" Note that after this article was published, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ended the ERC program early, making wages paid after September 30, 2021, ineligible for the credit, except for wages paid by an eligible recovery startup business. While the Build Back Better legislation may bring additional changes to the program, this development makes applying for the credit today more important than ever to ensure you get the relief your business needs.

In this new environment, your business likely looks different than it did a few years ago. Whether you're hiring new staff in different locations, scheduling business meals and employee events again, or looking for ways you can maximize tax deductions and credits, make sure you review and consider these items sooner rather than later. ○

## **ZUCKERBERG**

— Continued from page 34

In response to the news, shareholders rejoiced, and Peloton's stock immediately rose 25 percent.

My fellow Meta shareholders and I only hope Mr. Foley has Zuck's cell number. ○

## FBI vet Hale joins FTI Consulting

**B**rian Hale, who worked in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's public affairs unit, has joined FTI Consulting in its Cybersecurity practice.

At the FBI, Hale counseled leadership on cybersecurity operational and policy matters and managed national crisis response regarding high-stakes cybersecurity matters.

He also was the FBI's liaison to the National Security Council, federal agencies and foreign intelligence services.

Prior to becoming Assistant Director at the FBI, Hale worked at the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence handling outreach and engagement with the private sector and at the Dept. of Homeland Security.

Hale will offer "clients a unique view of cybersecurity challenges and opportunities that will enable them to protect and enhance enterprise value," said Anthony Ferrante, FTI's Global Head of Cybersecurity.

He will be based in FTI's D.C. office. ○



Brian Hale



## Meta ups Ginsberg to PA post

**F**acebook parent Meta promotes David Ginsberg to Vice President, Head of Global Communications and Public Affairs, reporting to Nick Clegg who will now serve as Meta's President of Public Affairs.

The moves come as Meta reorganizes its communications and public affairs team. Ginsberg was previously VP of Product, Choice and Competition at the company. Before joining Facebook in 2017, he was Chief Strategy Officer at Intel. While at Intel, he took time off to lead debate prep efforts for then-vice president Biden during the 2012 campaign. As another part of the reorganization, Tucker Bounds, currently a Vice President of Communications at the company, will lead the company's global public affairs team. ○



David Ginsberg

## Ballard Partners adds State Dept. vet Bryza

**B**allard Partners has recruited State Department veteran Matt Bryza as a Senior Policy Advisor.

He has a 23-year career as a U.S. diplomat, including a stint as ambassador to Azerbaijan.

Bryza served as deputy assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia and Director on the White House's National Security Council staff.

Currently, Bryza, who lives in Istanbul, sits on the board of Turcas, publicly traded fuel/power generation company, and is CEO of a Turkish-Finnish environmental clean-up firm.

Brian Ballard said Bryza brings "a new dimension of international expertise" to his firm and his "unique perspective will be invaluable" to its clients. ○



Matt Bryza

## BerlinRosen hires D.C. Mayor Bowser's aide

**B**erlinRosen has hired Shayne Wells, who was a communications director in Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser's Administration, to head its PA, land use and real estate work in the D.C. area.

Wells headed communications for economic and business development priorities for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development in Bowser's administration, serving as principal spokesperson.

He also managed external communications related to Washington, D.C.'s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wells has served in the D.C. government as press secretary for public schools, and traveling Chief of Staff to the Mayor. ○



Shayne Wells

## Bloomberg's Ad Guru Joins SKDK

**M**ackey Reed, who was Deputy Director for Paid Media for Mike Bloomberg's presidential campaign, has joined SKDK as Senior VP as the Stagwell unit gears up its political advertising unit ahead of the 2022 midterm elections.

She was in charge of creative and production of Bloomberg's more than \$400 million TV advertising push.

Earlier, she was spokesperson and strategist for Everytown for Gun Safety, which is largely bankrolled by Bloomberg Philanthropies to advocate for gun control laws.

Reed began her career as an intern on John McCain's 2008 presidential run.

SKDK played a major role in the 2020 presidential campaign.

Anita Dunn, a founding member of SKDK, was a Senior Advisor to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris during the campaign and worked in the White House during the transition before returning to the firm. ○



Mackey Reed



## BGR takes Nord Stream hit

**B**GR Government Affairs terminated its relationship with Nord Stream 2 AG, the company behind construction of a pipeline between Germany and Russia, after President Biden sanctioned it on Feb. 23 following Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Nord Stream 2, which is controlled by Russian energy giant Gazprom, had stepped up its lobbying push at BGR as Putin massed troops along Ukraine's border.

It shelled out \$420,000 in lobbying fees from Jan. 1 at BGR until the firm ended the relationship on Feb. 24.

That outlay compared to \$210,000 during Q4 2021 and \$870,000 for all of last year.

Gazprom funds 50 percent of Nord Stream 2's operating budget and is 38 percent owned by the Russian Federation.

Walker Roberts, co-head of BGR's international and trade practice, led the push for Nord Stream 2.

He served in the Reagan White House and was chief foreign policy aide to Congressman Henry Hyde when he chaired the House Committee on International Relations. ○

## SKDK supplies speech writing support to Ukraine

**S**KDKnickerbocker has signed on to provide speech writing support to Ukraine's Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

Working on a pro-bono basis, the Stagwell unit advised the Mission ahead of ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya's appearance before an emergency session of the Security Council during the evening of Feb. 23.

He urged the Russian ambassador to call foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and president Vladimir Putin and urge them to call off the invasion of his country.

He concluded by saying, "There is no purgatory for war criminals. They go straight to hell, Ambassador."

Stephen Krupin, SKDK's Managing Director and Head of Executive Communications, handles the Ukraine account.

He was Senior Presidential Speechwriter for Barack Obama and earlier was Chief Speechwriter for Secretary of State John Kerry and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

SKDK does not have a formal contract with Ukraine. ○

## Edelman drives Ontario auto push

**T**he Ontario Ministry of Economic Development has hired Edelman to promote the Canadian province as a top automotive manufacturing center and a strong partner to the U.S.

The contract went into effect Jan. 26, which was before the Ottawa truckers strike forced automakers to cut production.

The No. 1 independent PR firm will highlight collaboration and trade ties between the U.S. and Ontario and how the relationship results in mutually beneficial job creation.

Vehicle assembly and auto parts production accounts for more than 100 jobs in Ontario. Global automakers have invested more than \$6 billion in Ontario during the past two years, including \$4 billion to fund the transformation to electric vehicle production.

Edelman also will attempt to block any "Buy American" provision of U.S. infrastructure legislation and advocate for an integrated "Buy North American" approach, instead.

Edelman's team includes Scott Evans, Toronto GM; Daniel Workman, Senior VP; and Lauren Nucciarone, Neil Trotter and Rajiv Prasad. ○

### 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).

**Empire Consulting Group, Inc.**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 18, 2022 for Tapei Economic & Cultural Representative Office in the United States**, Washington, D.C., regarding federal policy matters of importance to the principal.

**Latin America Advisory Group, LLC**, Wilmington, Del., **registered Feb. 8, 2022 for Embassy of the Republic of Haiti**, Washington, D.C., regarding continuing to provide public relations and communications support and outreach to the federal executive branch and Congress on behalf of the principal.

**Park Strategies, LLC**, Albany, N.Y., **registered Feb. 3, 2022 for Hydro-Quebec Energy Services (US) Inc.**, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, through Forbes Tate Partners, to provide additional services on behalf of the principal pertaining to public education outreach services for the Champlain Hudson Power Express project.

### 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).

**Atlantic Strategies Group**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 17, 2022 for Mystery Ranch**, Bozeman, Mont., regarding advocating for higher standards for PPE issued to federal wildland firefighters.

**Blank Rome Government Relations**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 14, 2022 for SpaceX**, Washington, D.C., concerning regulatory uncertainties about SpaceX at sea recovery operations.

**Federal Hall Policy Advisors, LLC**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 4, 2022 for Fir Tree Partners**, New York, N.Y., regarding issues related to digital assets, stablecoins and decentralized finance.

**Van Scoyoc Associates**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 15, 2022 for New Classrooms Innovation Partners, Inc.**, New York, N.Y., regarding federal education research and development, including Innovative Learning Models.

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j public relations

## J Public Relations

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

letstalk@jpublicrelations.com

www.jpublicrelations.com

Employees: 56. Founded: 2005.

## Agency Statement:

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

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

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

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

## Office Locations:

### New York

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

### San Diego

2341 Fifth Ave., San Diego, CA 92101  
619/255-7069

### Los Angeles

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

### London

123 Buckingham Palace Rd.  
Victoria, London SW1W 9SH, UK  
+44 (020) 3890 5838

## Clients Include:

Adare Manor - Co. Limerick, Ireland

Africa Adventure Consultants

Andronis Exclusive (multiple properties) - Santorini, Greece

Château du Grand-Luce - Loire Valley, France

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