

# O'Dwyer's

Communications & New Media

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## THE FOOD ISSUE

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IN 2023

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March: Food & Beverage

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# If you like bad writing, you'll love ChatGPT

A lot has been said recently about ChatGPT, the sophisticated AI chatbot that's taken the world by storm. Launched in November by OpenAI, ChatGPT in February surpassed a hundred million active users, effectively making it the fast-growing consumer app in history.

ChatGPT can take virtually any written prompt you give it and generate a remarkably fast, remarkably detailed answer—in a remarkably conversational tone. It can translate languages, write computer code, process data and summarize complex topics with impressive clarity. It can also tell jokes and write news copy and essays—even write song lyrics and stories.

Curious, I spent a week toying with it. My analysis? It's fun. Addictive, even. For some applications, it's incredibly useful. If you're a programmer, I can imagine it might make your job easier. And, yes, it can perform certain tasks with a fluency that I'm afraid might threaten some sectors of the workforce. But the software has some serious limitations. Don't count on it to produce anything resembling quality writing anytime soon.

I started with some simple prompts, asking it things I already know how to do. *How do you play an E-minor pentatonic scale on the guitar? How do you perform an armbar in Brazilian jiu-jitsu? How do you set up a freshwater fish tank?* In each case, the answers it provided were clear, correct and impressively detailed. Frankly, in some cases it gave better instructions than I could've. In one instance, it offered tips I didn't know.

I queried another subject I know about: me. I've published a lot over the years in a number of publications, so I figured I have a digital footprint large enough for ChatGPT to work with. According to ChatGPT, I've written for the Huffington Post, *Esquire* and *Forbes* (all wrong). It said I had taught writing courses at NYU and Pace University (also wrong). It said I've been editor of this magazine since 2018 (more like 2006) and that a short story I published in *The Saturday Evening Post* was written in 1931 by William Faulkner. How annoying.

I lobbed in a few controversial topics at ChatGPT as a litmus test, considering it trawls an Internet overflowing with fake news. When I asked how COVID-19 originated, it responded, with noted impartiality, that while the exact origin of the virus isn't known, it's believed to have come from bats, although there are various competing theories worth merit, including the possibility that it might've escaped from a lab in Wuhan. Not bad.

I wanted to test ChatGPT's critical capabilities. More than anything, I wanted to see if it could be creative. So, I asked it to write a series of essays, one arguing that college should be free, another on how to combat global warming and one on ways to curb overpopulation. In all cases, the work it produced was clear, well-argued and reasonably well-written, albeit on a high-school level. Granted, the essays were boilerplate and utilized the same voice every time. For most teachers, I'm guessing the style would be quickly recognizable. They weren't original, and in only one case did it offer statistics. Still, with a bit of revision, if treated as a first draft, I'd hasten to guess these papers might pass as college term papers. To me, this was the most troubling revelation, and frankly, I have no idea how we—and especially educators—can unring this bell.

I wasn't convinced ChatGPT could be creative, so I asked it to come up with some prospective titles for the new novel I'm writing. I typed out the book's subject and supplied it with a trove of keywords. Despite some names that sounded clever by accident, this exercise was a bust. It read like the bot was spinning its wheels, just randomly generating names. Titles by committee, if the committee was utterly incompetent.

Finally, I asked it to write a 2,000-word story based on my new novel's synopsis and fed it a list of specific plot, character and thematic details I've been mulling over for months. The result? hilariously awful. Uninspired. Turgid. The language made Hemingway sound florid. It was riddled with clichés. There was no voice, no personality aside from this oddly moralizing tone you might find in a Hallmark Channel movie. I repeated the experiment with several other story ideas I had lying around, then summarized several literary classics. In each case, the result was the same. ChatGPT is incapable of telling a story. It seemed to understand plot, but virtually every other component—character, theme, language, even dialogue—was missing. And on the plot level, every development was predictable. At no point did it say anything interesting or make any effort to surprise or engage me as a reader, to place me in the story. On a craft level, it was vapid. Painfully unaware. It lacked a fluency in the complexities of the human experience, and without that, the joys of reading are lost. ChatGPT can't write. It can only type.

Two things are certain: AI-powered chatbots like ChatGPT aren't going anywhere. ChatGPT is a great tool that has tremendous potential and can be used by people to solve problems, kick the tires on new ideas or even format press releases, blogs or any of the uncreative, uninspired content-mill clickbait that crowds out much of the Internet. So, if bad writing is your bag, you're in luck. At its best, if finessed by an editing human hand, ChatGPT might be competent enough to write quality financial news and other copy-desk items. But don't hold your breath for an AI-penned Great American Novel or even a worthwhile college term paper. There are some things AI will never be able to do, and I'm betting quality writing is one of them. ○

—Jon Gingerich

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# More Americans distrust news than ever

Half of Americans now believe the news media intentionally misinforms or misleads them to adopt a particular point of view, according to a new survey published by the Knight Foundation and Gallup.

By Jon Gingerich

For years, the U.S. news media has had a trust problem. Just when you think Americans' views of the press couldn't get any worse, a new survey by the Knight Foundation and opinion poll giant Gallup shows Americans' confidence in the fourth estate has sunk to shocking news lows.

The annual survey, which examines Americans' trust in news media and their current attitudes toward the press, found that 50 percent of Americans now believe most national news organizations deliberately mislead, misinform or work to persuade the public.

More than half (53 percent) of those polled said they hold an unfavorable view of the press, and only a quarter (26 percent) of Americans reported having a favorable opinion of the media, the lowest level Gallup/Knight have recorded since they began tracking news trust in 2017. Only 35 percent of respondents said they believe most national news organizations care about how their reporting affects American society, culture and politics, and less than a

quarter (23 percent) said most national news groups care about their audiences' best interests. In total, only about one in five Americans (21 percent) said they currently have high emotional trust in national news organizations.

Even those who trust the news perceive some bias in it: 84 percent of Americans with high emotional trust in national news organizations believe bias is present in the news, and while nearly three-quarters (72 percent) believe national news organizations have the resources to report the news accurately and fairly, only about a third (35 percent) think most national news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information Americans need.

Perhaps as a result of this, more Americans than ever reported having a hard time feeling well-informed. Half (50 percent) said there's so much bias in the news media today that it's often difficult to sort out the facts, and 61 percent said the increase in information today makes it harder to be well-informed.

Another troubling trend: while Americans who identify as Republican have historically exhibited less trust in the press than those of other political parties, the latest Gallup/Knight poll suggests that an unfavorable opinion of the media is now spreading across all partisan affiliations.

One group especially driving this trend is independents, who are now reporting more distrust and perceived bias in news coverage than ever. Independents exhibited the greatest shift in their attitudes toward the media in the latest Gallup/Knight poll, with two-thirds (66 percent) of independents now holding a very or somewhat unfavorable view of the press, a big upswing from less than half (48 percent) recorded in Gallup/Knight's late 2019-early 2020 iteration of the same study.

Even Democrats, who have consistently expressed a significantly more favorable view of news organizations than members of other political parties since Gallup/Knight began analyzing news trust five years ago, appear to have experienced a change of heart. Only 45 percent of Democrats currently hold a favorable view of the press, compared to 51 percent in 2019-early 2020 and 54 percent in 2017. The number of Democrats who also said they now see a great deal of political bias in news coverage has also shot up, to 33 percent from 27 percent in the previous Gallup/Knight poll.

The trend of Republican media distrust has continued, meanwhile, with 79 percent of Republicans viewing the news media unfavorably, up from 67 percent in late 2019-early 2020.

One silver lining: the Gallup/Knight poll found that Americans' trust in the local news remains markedly higher than their trust in national news. According to the poll, more than half of respondents (53 percent) believe most local news organizations care about how their reporting affects their community, and 52 percent believe most local news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information they need.

Nearly half (44 percent) of Americans also said they have high emotional trust in local news organizations, compared with less than a quarter (21 percent) who reported high emotional trust in national news companies. Only 18 percent of Americans reported having low emotional trust in local news organizations, compared with 41 percent said they who have low trust in national news organizations.

## Consumers want to be heard by companies

Consumers are happy when brands demonstrate that they've heard their point of view, according to a new Ruder Finn survey.

By Steve Barnes

Consumers want to be heard by companies—even if their opinions are at odds. That's the conclusion of "Collaboration & Consensus: Do Consumers Feel Heard?," a new survey conducted by Ruder Finn.

More than four in ten of the survey respondents (43 percent) said that as long as a brand "demonstrated that it heard their point of view," they would feel that the brand had listened to them, even if it wound up taking a stance on an issue that disagreed with their own. When the brand failed to give an explanation, however, only 19 percent of respondents said that they would feel listened to if they were on the opposite side of an issue.

There was also broad agreement from respondents (93 percent) that brands should react to public opinion.

Overall, many consumers are taking an active role in their interactions with brands. More than half (57 percent) said they actively engage with brands either through online commenting or direct outreach.

For many, that sense of engagement translated to an improved relationship with the brand. More than half (55 percent) noted that they had "a better opinion of a brand" after engaging with them, as opposed to just 8 percent saying their opinion of the brand went down after the interaction.

There are obstacles to engagement, however. Only about 1 in 2 say it's easy to contact brands, with 38 percent of Gen Z saying it's easy to contact brands compared to 53 percent of Millennials and 58 percent of Gen Xers.

"The results of our latest survey indicate the importance of an empathetic leadership style that demonstrates listening when engaging today's consumer," said Ruder Finn CEO Kathy Bloomgarden. "It's more important to show that you're listening than it is to speak out. This has significant implications for today's leadership style and determining how leaders engage with groups with different opinions."

The survey polled 1,000 U.S. consumers in December. ○



# Another banner year for influencer marketing in 2023

The influencer marketing segment shows no signs of slowing down, according to new research.

By Jon Gingerich

Despite all the speculation we've heard surrounding influencer marketing's supposed forthcoming demise, the influencer landscape continues to expand, with marketing in this sector becoming a higher priority in brands' marketing budgets, according to research conducted by marketing company Open Influence.

The survey, which sought to uncover what's shaping brands' current influencer marketing strategies and where the industry is going, found that nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of brand marketing leaders surveyed expect their influencer budgets to grow this year.

In fact, 13 percent of brand marketing leaders polled said their brands plan to allocate at least \$1 million to influencer campaigns in 2023. More than a quarter (28 percent) said they'll spend between \$250,000 and \$1 million, and more than a third (36 percent) said they'll spend between \$50,000-250,000 on influencer marketing. Fewer than a quarter (23 percent) reported influencer expenditures of \$50,000 or less for 2023.

An overwhelming majority of brands' in-

fluencer campaigns are still being coordinated through an agency: the report found that 81 percent of brand managers handle their influencer marketing partially or fully with an influencer agency. Only 19 percent manage their influencer campaigns completely in-house.

When it comes to what factors make brands sign the dotted line on an influencer partnership, most (49 percent) still say an influencer's follower count is their top determination in choosing an influencer, followed by their engagement rate (47 percent), the influencer's audience demographic (45 percent) and the quality of the content they post (41 percent). Impression rates bottomed out the list, at 34 percent.

According to the survey, most brand leaders (77 percent) said they want long-term relationships with influencers, as opposed to one-off campaigns.

Instagram, the original hub for modern-day influencer marketing, remains the top platform for brands (76 percent), followed by Facebook (67 percent) and TikTok (59 percent), though that short-form video platform has made massive year-over-year

gains among the influencer contingent.

When it comes to the type of content used, short-form video (57 percent) has now surpassed static image posts (47 percent) as the preferred medium, thanks in part to TikTok's meteoric rise. Only slightly more than a third of brands (37 percent) currently prefer long-form video content.

Access to reliable analytics on the effectiveness of campaign performance remains a challenge in the influencer world, however, as only 40 percent of brand marketing leaders reported being able to get accurate influencer-marketing metrics easily. Perhaps as a result of this, nearly a third (29 percent) said selling the idea of influencer marketing to upper management remains a challenge.

Most of the agencies polled (40 percent) said they've been involved in influencer marketing for between two and five years. More than a third (36 percent) reported using influencer marketing between five and ten years. Only 13 percent said they've been involved in influencer marketing for less than two years.

Open Influence's "The State of Creator Marketing: Top Insights for 2023" survey polled a random sample of 150 brand marketing leaders between November and December. ○

## Workers fault their company's internal communications

Employees and company leaders are often at odds when it comes to what they feel should be the top priorities for internal communications

By Steve Barnes

Most company leaders feel that they're doing a good job when it comes to internal comms, according to communications management platform Axios HQ. Employees, however, aren't quite so sure.

Out of the more than 1,000 leaders that Axios polled last November, 77 percent said that essential communications at their organizations were "helpful and relevant." Even more (78 percent) said those communications were "clear and engaging."

A poll of more than 1,000 employees uncovered a different story. Only 46 percent of the respondents in that poll said their employer's internal communications were relevant, though slightly more (51 percent) gave them high marks for clarity and level of engagement.

Employees and leaders also differed on what they felt the top priorities for internal communications should be.

Leaders placed "culture and values" at the top of their priority list, while employees most wanted to hear about operational changes (processes and policy updates).

And while the goal of most of internal communications is to get management and workers on the same page, there seems to be a disconnect on that as well. Two-thirds of leaders said that thought they were "aligned with employees," while only 44 percent of employees agreed.

So, what can company leaders do to make internal communications more effective? Some top employee suggestions: "Offer more thoughtful and insightful details" (cited by 49 percent) and "cover more relevant topics" (39 percent). Employees also voiced a desire for more frequent communications and the opportunity to provide feedback (36 percent for both).

However, there is once again disagreement on how easy leaders make it for em-

ployees to give feedback. While 67 percent of leaders says that employees have "an easy way to share feedback on essential communications they receive," only 43 of employees agree with that.

The study notes that remote working has made successful internal communications more difficult, "Technology was meant to ease the transition and keep folks informed," the study author wrote, "but as organizations added new platforms faster than they could define their purpose, communication not noisy."

To combat that situation, the study suggests that leader put a greater emphasis on the quality of their communications with employees.

"To improve communications, leaders have to prioritize it—put it at the center of their business strategy, learn what readers need, invest in the tools to deliver it well and build feedback loops." ○



# From field to fork: communicating food traceability

How to ensure a brand's communication strategy aligns with consumer expectations when it comes to the food they eat.

By Jennifer Becker

**F**rançois de la Rochefoucauld, a French writer in the 1600s, once said, "To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art." It appears today's consumers have taken this message to heart.

According to MarketsandMarkets, the food traceability market is expected to reach \$26.1 billion by 2025. This space has grown thanks to consumer demand for information. Over the past several decades, food safety, the origin of food and eating a healthy diet have been top of mind for consumers.

As more studies are released about climate change and its effects on the planet, consumers are also interested in how their food was processed, how it traveled through the supply chain and if it was sustainably produced. So, what does this mean in the food and beverage space? Brands that are transparent beyond the nutrition label will earn more consumer trust and loyalty.

## Transparency builds trust

According to the latest Transparency in an Evolving Omnichannel World report produced by the Food Industry Association and NielsenIQ, shoppers surveyed expect disclosure of manufacturing practices, ingredient sourcing and company sustainability practices, among other details. In fact, 64 percent of shoppers said they would switch from a brand they typically buy to one that provides more in-depth product information.

For communicators, this is an opportunity to help their brands shine. Loyal customers can be gained by addressing their desire for more information and explaining that traceability runs deeper than FDA compliance.

## Share beyond the nutritional label

While traceability efforts are a government mandate, they're also a vital business practice. While food and beverage manufacturers track their goods to keep the lights on, they realize it's also imperative to share the full details of the process with consumers. This practice helps reinforce how the product has been produced safely and with the welfare of the environment in mind.

As consumers demand more transparency about the food and beverage manufacturing process, communicators have an opportunity to create brand-reinforcing narratives. Here are a few examples:

- Consumers can track a bag of Lay's potato chips. Using Lay's website, a consumer can punch in a code located on the bag to see where the potatoes were grown and processed. Additionally, Frito-Lay has other standards their potato growers must follow and record. Everything is traceable from the seed planted to crop protection products used to when the potatoes were harvested and where they were stored prior to processing.

This transparency offers consumers a glimpse into the process and what it takes to get the chips in their hands. Frito-Lay communicated this level of detail through a media relations blitz to help ensure consumers were aware they could digest this information.

- You can even find out if your parmesan cheese is authentic. The Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium, a trade union established in 1934, places a scannable food tag on wheels of parmesan cheese. Consumers can use the tag to verify they're purchasing true parmesan as opposed to a product that claims to be parmesan cheese.

- Veracruz Almonds responded to consumer demands for transparency using smart farming tools and technology. Veracruz placed a QR code on the food label and consumers can scan it and visit a website that explains the path of their almonds.

What does this all mean? As consumers continue to receive more detail about their food, the story from farm gate to dinner plate will become even more important.

## It's about telling a story beyond taste and ingredients

Communicating about food traceability and offering transparency on the full manufacturing process allows food and beverage brands to connect with consumers on another level. Communicators need to think beyond the label and weave more robust storytelling into their marketing and communications plans.

Possible stories revolve around the brand's commitments and the people involved throughout the manufacturing process. The priority for this type of content strategy is to produce messages that consistently and effectively reinforce the same behaviors with consumers. It's about getting the right message in front of the right person at the right time. Don't worry about covering all the brand's stories at once. The most important message to deliver is the

brand's desire to offer the consumer the best, most responsibly sourced and produced product.

## Reinforce the brand's promise

There's a story to tell about a brand's commitment, whether it's to food safety or sustainable production. It's being transparent about the brand's values. The best approach is to build the year-over-year message about the commitments vs. rattle off some one-off impressive statistics. The longevity reinforces the brand's promise and commitment to its goals, which will help build trust and foster loyal consumers of the brand.

## Show and tell


The origin of many food and beverage brands can be found in the field, so show the farms and tell their story. Explore topics from the grower's point of view, from their years in the farming profession to water conservation to impacts on the surrounding community.

As communicators follow the product through processing, tout improvements in the manufacturing process, such as reducing carbon emissions and the use of more sustainable packaging. Look for opportunities to bring a human face to the product's journey to create a more personal connection with the brand. And, as obvious as it sounds, don't forget to convey these stories in a compelling, interactive manner that reinforces the brand's image and helps consumers connect to the brand.

## Measure and improve

Landing pages, tracking codes and social listening can help communicators determine if their stories are getting traction. It's also a good idea to conduct regular market research and focus groups to make sure messages satisfy what consumers want to learn about the product's journey.

In summary, don't think about traceability as simply fulfilling a requirement. It's an opportunity to help consumers better understand and appreciate the process of getting their favorite food to them from field to fork—and to build brand loyalty along the way.

Jennifer Becker is Vice President of G&S Business Communications. 



Jennifer Becker





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# Making science messages stick in a crowded landscape

Top five tips for effectively communicating scientific messaging with credible, compelling storytelling that appeals to consumers and science stakeholders alike.

By Allison Mikita and Jean Owen Curran

**F**oods and beverages have to communicate a lot to win over today's health-conscious consumers: the authenticity or naturalness of their ingredients, their unique and bona fide nutritional content and the role they play in supporting healthy lifestyles and dietary patterns. And, with the continued growth of functional foods and ingredients, and disruptive product formats and formulations, brands have never had to work harder to build consumer trust—all while establishing and maintaining a sufficient share of voice to reach them in the first place.

Amidst the cacophony of competing health and wellness solutions, it's no wonder many shoppers remain wary of innovative new offerings and marketing claims. In McKinsey & Company's October 2022 report, "Hungry and Confused: The Winding Road to Conscious Eating," they found that while half of consumers across age groups cite healthy eating as a top priority, the same proportion of consumers say they have a hard time knowing what constitutes a healthy choice. And, perhaps maddeningly, the key to unlocking consumer understanding, trust and buy-in can also be a significant barrier: science communications.

Without question, objective data, peer-reviewed findings and other evidence-based proof points are essential to the development of credible health messaging. Despite the widespread perception that public trust in science has been eroding, a 2021 report by the Wellcome Trust showed that about 80 percent of people polled across 113 countries reported they trusted science either "a lot" or "some," marking an increase from 2018. Yet, there are inherent tensions when it comes to communicating science effectively. Increasingly, it's an expectation of the food and beverage industry to bolster credibility, and industry-funded research is presumed to be biased and unreliable. Consumers look to science for reasons to believe, and their purchasing decisions are often driven by emotion. As communications and marketing professionals, you need to share clear, accurate and often nuanced scientific messages that can tie into consumers' emotions and values—and you're also competing for their attention with puppy pictures and viral videos.

Though these are significant challenges, following a few science communications best practices can help ensure your science-backed food and beverage messaging cuts through the noise while strengthening your brand's credibility.

## Find common ground across target audiences

Often times, science communications need to pull double duty, effectively informing both a general consumer audience and a highly educated and specialized stakeholder audience. Messaging must be thoughtfully adapted for these two vastly different groups. For each, you're often addressing different knowledge gaps, driving different calls to action and certainly leaning into different lexicons. However, we have a tendency to underestimate the average consumer's interest in data and research and to overestimate the level of engagement from our insider stakeholder audience. Science can be the gatekeeper to trust and allegiance for both, but both need a compelling hook, eye-catching visuals and simplified summaries. Everyone loves a good story. But regardless of the target audience's level of expertise, the fundamentals remain the same: keep copy short and punchy, marry the message with design, and stick to the rule of three.

## Blend science with emotion

It's tempting to think that the data speaks for itself, or that publication in a top-tier peer-reviewed journal is the final stop on the science communications journey. Too often, science translation and promotion are afterthoughts or even missed opportunities altogether, when in fact, your research strategy should be developed in parallel with your science communications strategy. Evidence in and of itself isn't enough. Data points need to be artfully woven together into a narrative to make them meaningful and relevant to your audience and to connect the dots between research findings and tailored takeaways.

## Pledge allegiance to transparency

Science generated within the food and beverage industry ought to be held to the highest possible standards to demonstrate scientific rigor and credibility and address issues of bias. From how research questions are crafted to how funding and conflicts of interest are disclosed, any privately funded

research should pass key sniff tests along the way. The American Society for Nutrition provides guiding principles for industry funders and other entities of interest to ensure scientific integrity in nutrition research. Transparency is the common thread through the guidelines, which should serve as the North Star for all credible research efforts.

## Socialize the science

In today's crowded landscape, effectively disseminating scientific messaging requires a multi-channel approach and a mixed approach of owned, earned, paid and shared media. Though science storytelling may have been confined to smaller, more specialized outlets in the past—and Twitter has long been the favored social channel for research news—those lines are blurring. A spectrum of consumer and trade outlets and more audio- and visual-based media (think podcasts and TikTok) can be perfect platforms for science translation and promotion. Ensuring the channel is the right match for your target audience and tailoring your content for each channel are key drivers of campaign success.

## Lead with equity, diversity and inclusion

For science to resonate, it must reflect the needs and the lived experiences of a diverse and inclusive population. Whether you're thinking about who you're including on your research team or in your study cohorts, the influencer partners and spokespeople you work with to help spread the word, or the language you use to tell your evidence-based story, equity goes hand-in-hand with credibility.

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# Sipping with the sober curious

Alcohol abstinence has become one of the biggest trends in the spirits landscape today, creating massive implications for the food and beverage industry.

By Kristen Ingraham

I'm a wine lover, a brewery explorer and a devotee to cocktail culture. Varietals, craft beer, mixology—it all fascinates me. I worked behind the bar throughout my college years and, I'll admit, still love to flex my bartending muscles from time to time, to surprise and delight friends. If you're anything like me—when I tell you that the hottest trend in spirits right now isn't partaking in spirits at all—well, you're bound to have a lot of questions.

## Why has 'sober curious' become popular?

The term "sober curious" was first coined by the author Ruby Warrington, who wrote a book on the topic in 2018. What began as a moniker for folks exploring the simple idea of mindful drinking has now become perhaps the biggest movement in the alcohol industry.

There are plenty of theories behind the rapid increase in "sober curious" popularity, but two most often lead the conversation: Gen Z and marijuana legalization.

Is Gen Z steering the way on "sober curious," or have other substances surpassed alcohol's popularity? The answer is both. Many Gen Zers are proudly—and loudly, thanks to TikTok—taking a step back on drinking or cutting out alcohol altogether. According to a recent Think by Google study, drinking is in full decline among the younger generation. The study found three key behavioral motivations impacting and empowering the drinking decrease:

**Public image:** nearly half (49 percent) of Gen Z claim their online image is always at the back of their mind when they go out socializing and drinking, and 76 percent feel it's important to be in control of their image at all times.

**Productivity = success:** Gen Z places work and school performance above socializing in their priorities and will adopt behaviors that support higher productivity to achieve their success.

**Health concerns (mental and physical):** 86 percent of Gen Z feel mental health is just as important a consideration as their physical health when considering drinking. 70 percent of Gen Z consider binge drinking a "very risky" activity and 41 percent negatively associate alcohol with "vulnerability," "anxiety" and "abuse."

But the "sober curious" movement isn't only growing in accordance with a new generation of legal drinkers—it's also grow-

ing in accordance with a new reality of legal substances. Enter "California Sober."

According to a recent piece in *Real Simple*, "California Sober" is a term typically used to describe people who decide to quit consuming drugs and alcohol, with a few exceptions. Sort of like a mini-movement in the larger "sober curious" trend. While everyone interprets this lifestyle choice differently, marijuana is the most commonly cited "acceptable substance" (i.e., alcohol alternative) for someone who considers themselves "California Sober." There are other alternative substances, but they're not yet legalized in the United States, so we'll stick with cannabis specifically.

Is this really a new concept—consciously choosing not to mix alcohol and marijuana—or does it just feel new because cannabis is no longer illegal, and people feel comfortable talking about their habits? Again, the answer is both, but I think it's more of the former. The concept feels new. It used to be that there were two choices when it came to drugs and alcohol: you used, or you abstained. Now there are so many preferences and so much personalization to apply, and they're all welcome under the "sober curious" umbrella.

Whether it's choosing quality over quantity when it comes to reduced booze intake, limiting yourself to one specific substance of choice or swapping to a low-or-no ABV beverage to accompany cannabis—all are welcome in the "sober curious" lifestyle. And every choice is intended to accomplish the same two things: removing all judgment from personal choices and not feeling terrible post-consumption. In that vein, Gen Z and California Sober are united in amplifying the adoption of a "sober curious" life.

## What 'sober curious' means for the food and beverage industry landscape

It means change: in what consumers are ordering when they're out socializing; in the key beverages in development and impacting sales and in the larger cultural moments where alcohol has been a centerpiece.

**Hospitality: mocktail mania on menus.** According to the Datassential 2022 Trends report, this new sobriety movement is capturing the attention of all consumers, with 57 percent aware of craft "mocktails" and 48 percent seeking to try them. Restaurants and hospitality groups are accidentally (or purposefully—hello upselling!) helping to

expedite the adoption of this "sober curious" experience with growing mocktail offerings. Even major players, like Hyatt, are committing to consumers' interest with the launch of the brand's Zero Proof, Zero Judgment beverage program, an entire menu for mocktails. These are not your run-of-the-mill Shirley Temples, but an entire artisanal menu full of flavors and aromas that share the same cultural and culinary exploration found primarily in wine and spirits menus, until now.

## Spirits industry: the rapid rise of alt-beverages.

Consumers have picked up on the growing non-alcoholic beverage market, too. Non-alcoholic spirit sales nearly doubled in 2022, according to Nielsen IQ data. As of August 2022:

- Non-alcoholic beer took up 85.3 percent of sales, with a market worth \$328.6 million, up 19.5 percent from 2021.

- Non-alcoholic wine took up 13.4 percent of sales, with a market worth \$52.04 million, up 23.2 percent from 2021.

- Non-alcoholic spirits took up 1.3 percent, worth \$5.03 million, up 88.4 percent from 2021.

**Entertainment: more inclusive inclusivity.** The "sober curious" movement has even spread to the biggest stage for food and alcohol consumption: the sports arena. Look no further than the NFL. Stadiums nationwide—led first by the Green Bay Packers Section Yellow, a completely sober section of the stadium devoted to those in alcohol recovery and those who just prefer to surround themselves with other like-minded abstainers—have adopted a far more welcoming approach to those looking to enjoy the game without needing to enjoy an ice cold beer. According to an interview with the "Today Show," the NFL expects every stadium in its league to offer a similar sobriety section in the next couple of seasons.

## What's the key takeaway

The "sober curious" movement is not to be ignored. In fact, it should be embraced. At its core, it's all about the removal of judgment. Brands have an entirely new way to connect in and around this trend—whether by seeking greater inclusivity in cocktail culture, celebrating sober socialization, innovating low-to-no ABV flavors or simply creating connections to an incredibly welcoming—and highly influential—group of consumers. It's time for us all to sit down and start sipping with the "sober curious."

Kristen Ingraham is Senior Vice President, Group Lead at Padilla. ○



Kristen Ingraham

# Rising food costs dominated consumer concerns in 2022

Inflation concerns are driving changes in consumer needs and behaviors, which will require a shift in marketing communication strategies.

By Hedly DeMaria

Marketing communication professionals understand that as consumer needs and behaviors shift, so too will the need to evolve our approach to providing them with the solutions they seek. However, as we reach for our trusty Inflationary Environment Playbook, one that was happily shelved back in 2009 after our country's last big recession, it becomes apparent that the world around us has changed dramatically.

The strategies and tactics employed more than a decade ago will need to be further nuanced to allow us to embrace the unique opportunities that 2023 will bring.

An annual Food News study commissioned by us at HUNTER—a leading food and beverage marketing communications consultancy—in partnership with Libran Research & Consulting, polls Americans every year to determine the food news headlines most capturing consumer attention and how this news is changing their attitudes and actions. Results from this study reveal concerns regarding inflation and shortages dominate the list of top stories, representing four of the top five most memorable headlines in 2022:

- Baby formula shortages.
- Grocery supply-chain shortage.
- Fast food exits Russia.
- Restaurant labor shortages.
- Inflation impacting food prices.

Additionally, the study found that the increasing cost of food was deemed the most important food news topic in 2022, and consumers are bracing for the long haul, believing this will continue to be the most important food news topic in 2023.

The 2022 HUNTER: Food News Study found that 81 percent of Americans polled considered food news more important than ever, and more than half believe that food news stories are relatively more important than other types of news, the highest this has been in over a decade.

This longitudinal study, now conducted for 20 years, indicates that consumers are more likely to change their behaviors based on food news (62 percent), the highest number in almost a decade, with 48 percent changing what foods they buy and 44 percent changing how they shop or get food.

This shift in mindset is also reflected in New Year's resolutions, as most Americans (75 percent) continue to have food-based goals, but now their aspiration has turned

to saving money on groceries versus a decade ago, when weight loss or healthier, cleaner eating was on their minds.

Given these conditions, implications for food marketers include:

## Invest in the fundamentals

Marketing on its most fundamental level builds the connection between consumers and brands. The stronger this relationship, the deeper the loyalty and the lower the price sensitivity. Brands that truly live into this philosophy will remain in American cupboards despite the economic conditions surrounding them. While often in times of economic uncertainty, many brands look to cut investment in communication, it's actually the worse time to be quiet. This is the time to reinforce your relationship with consumers. It's also the time when consumers are most actively looking for information and it will be important to connect with them where they're searching.



## Food as a little luxury

This is the first time in our country's history that an inflationary economy comes on the heels of such an extremely restrictive period brought on by the pandemic. Thus, in many ways, we're entering uncharted territory, where the traditional desire to cut back spending runs head-long into the pent-up need to overcome restraints. As a result, consumers are more likely to splurge than in prior recessions, and food can play an important role of providing them an affordable luxury. Lean into providing consumers with premium experiences that allow them to indulge within limits.

## Two sides to the value equation

As consumers seek greater value, it will be

important to remember the value equation: cost divided by benefits, which allows us to deliver enhanced value not only by providing reduced costs but also by strengthening perceived benefits. We're seeing that convenience, quality and nutrition are still critically important benefits when it comes to food, and ones that continue to warrant greater expenditures. So, when looking to build value perception, the entire benefit bundle matters—elements like clean ingredient lines, quick-prep, free shipping, speedy deliveries, longer shelf life, flexible returns and money-back guarantees go a long way toward driving value perception.

## Affordability beyond price reduction

Consumers are looking to reduce food costs and are seeking the best value for their dollar. They are adopting behaviors like shopping more at value-based retailers, switching to lower-cost and store-brand products and cooking at home. Tried and true merchandising and promotional tactics will continue to be impactful in this environment but recognize there are other ways at demonstrating cost-related value including alternative payment plans, promoting multifunctionality of products and tips for reducing food waste. Additionally, loyalty programs and partnerships can not only heighten value perception but can also build equity—and combining these tactics can be a power pact.

This is also true across the pond. In 2022, the HUNTER Food News Study not only celebrated its 20th anniversary in the U.S. but also, for the first time examines food news and culture in the United Kingdom, the home of HUNTER: London. Study results in the UK exhibited very similar findings to the U.S., with rising food prices considered the most important food news topic of the day and inflation and shortage news stories dominating as the most memorable headlines.

Visit the 2022 HUNTER Food News Study Website for the Full US Study and UK Study Results: <https://www.hunterpr.com/foodstudy/2022>.

Hedly DeMaria is Chief Insights and Strategy Officer at HUNTER. ○



Hedly DeMaria



# The truth about earned media

Three core tenets to achieve earned media coverage in today's disrupted news and information ecosystem.

By Stacy Bataille

When I started my career in PR more than two decades ago, the media landscape was much different. My Rolodex—remember those?—was filled with two or three food writers working at every newspaper and magazine. Today, the newspaper's food “page” might be a quarter page or no longer exist at all, while food writers have become “writers.” (According to Muck Rack, the average reporter covers four to five subject areas and files eight or more stories weekly.) Newspapers and magazines have adopted a hybrid print/online model or have shifted entirely online. That list of television producers? It still exists—updated, of course—but today you might be forwarded to a producer in charge of paid integrations.

Shrinking newsrooms, busier reporters, paid integrations and the evolution of the role social media now plays may lead one to think earned media has irrevocably changed and requires an entirely new approach.

I couldn't disagree more.

Earned media has always been—and continues to be—fueled by foundational truths, admittedly adjusted for today's environment. To achieve earned media coverage, it's up to our industry to stay grounded in three core tenets.

## Tenet one: tell me a story

“Tell me a story” has been sound advice for garnering earned media since the inception of the PR industry. A compelling pitch, written succinctly, captures attention and lets a reporter's natural curiosity take over. Executed correctly, “tell me a story” leads to “tell me more.” Some examples of our success:

- Encouraging America to embrace hygge in its time of need (CASTELLO® Cheese)
- A problem-solving student and a football chest pass change the game for a tuition giveaway contest (Dr Pepper)
- Tailgating is a party in the parking lot. For the world's only professional tailgater, it's a job and a calling. (Chunky soup)

A great media contact gets you an immediate response. “Tell me a story” inspires an article or a segment.

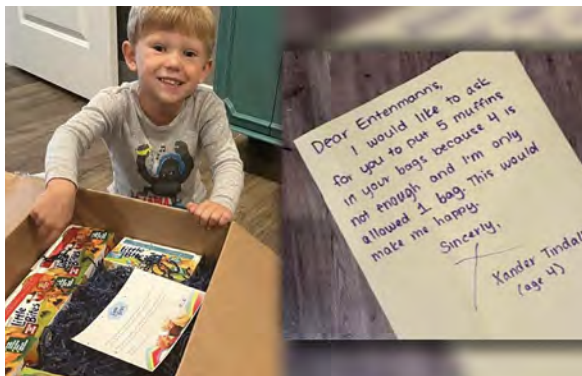
## Tenet two: media influences media

Media has always influenced other media. It's an ecosystem that feeds off other stories. Years ago, it was an article in a newspaper or magazine—print edition!—that could lead to a television segment or vice versa.

Radio was certainly in the mix as well.

It continues today, but the ecosystem now includes social media. Why? That's where people are accessing news and information. According to a survey from the Pew Research Center, 82 percent of U.S. adults say they often or sometimes get news from a smartphone, tablet or computer. While search, news websites and apps are at least sometimes the entry points for news, half of Americans may get their news directly from social media.

Much like the “old days,” today's news and information feed off each other. Social platforms are often inspired by or aggregating topics from earned media. And vice versa.



When four-year-old Xander Tindall asked Little Bites® Snacks if they could add an extra muffin in its pack, the brand sent a heartfelt reply and package.

For instance, in 2021, to announce that the Easter favorite PEEPS Marshmallow Chicks and Bunnies were back on store shelves, Coyne teased the news on the brand's Instagram account. Inquisitive media quickly reached out to confirm the details. Before the first press release was issued or a pitch had been sent, the media had taken notice and started filing stories. When the customer service team at Coyne client Little Bites Snacks received a letter from a four-year-old looking for a fifth muffin in the four-muffin pack, a heartfelt reply and package from the brand led to a thankful post from the boy's mom on her Instagram account. A local news reporter picked up the story and then the local story led to another one on “Good Morning America.”

Top consumer outlets are often pulling stories from social platforms. For instance, Food Network.com and “Good Morning

America” source trending recipes from TikTok and Instagram as part of their reporting.

To meet today's news and information environment, we recommend that earned media efforts not overlook the power and influence of social media and influencer engagement. Neglecting to do so would be like creating an “olden days” earned media strategy that focused solely on broadcast media while overlooking the influence and opportunity of newspapers and magazines.

To be fair, the percentage of a client's focus on earned media can and does shift based on the target audience, among other factors.

Our client base includes a range: from brands built and maintained on earned, to those that have shifted almost exclusively to digital and social media to those that fall somewhere in between.

## Tenet three: make it easy to say ‘yes’

There's a reason reporters still often say in meet-the-media sessions: “If you want to know what I cover, watch my program/read my column.” Let's just admit it: not all PR professionals are doing it.

You can make it easy for reporters to say “yes” by understanding what they like to report on and explaining why what you're pitching is relevant to their audience (the latter is sometimes overlooked; do so at your peril).

You can also make it easy for them to say “yes” by providing all the assets to make their lives easier: Can they speak to someone from the brand (don't offer if you can't deliver)? Can they speak to a consumer or other stakeholder that fills out the story? Are there visuals to accompany the story (not just for broadcast; online media is increasingly utilizing video to accompany stories)? Are there data points, research or anecdotes that help bring the story to life?

The world continues to evolve, and the media and PR industry is no different. But as the saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Stacy Bataille is Senior Vice President at Coyne PR. ○



Stacy Bataille

# Building followers through experiences

How restaurants can build loyal fans with experience-based PR tactics.

By Lacey Outten

In the ever-changing landscape of the restaurant industry, consumer demand for personalization and experience-oriented dining continues to dominate. There are several ways restaurants can cater to this trend regardless of their size or budget. From developing unique programming or an event series that resonates with guests, to tapping into technology-driven loyalty programs or social media initiatives, here are four tactics that restaurants can utilize to captivate consumer attention and drive sales.

## Build unique event and happy-hour programming

While not a revolutionary solution, effective happy-hour programming continues to drive sales for restaurants and bars. According to Modern Restaurant Management, data reveals that bars with happy-hour programs have an average increase in revenue of 26 percent during happy hours. The key to successful programming is to identify the slower time periods of business and develop a menu of options that's easy to execute and relatively inexpensive in terms of cost. Depending on the concept, simply having a limited menu of discounted items may be the best solution as guests can also order full-priced items from the regular menu, further adding to overall sales revenue.

Beyond discounts and offers, hosting special events is an impactful way to generate excitement and boost traffic. Chef and restaurant collaborations continue to spark interest among diners, as well as pop-up events. From food trucks and chef takeovers to more lifestyle-oriented events such as a flower-arranging seminar or jewelry-making workshop, there are endless opportunities to target and delight your desired demographic and audience.

## Engage with guests on social media

Tapping into social media is an effective and low-cost way to enhance customer interactions and engagements. Simply re-posting your guests' Instagram stories is a beneficial way to engage and to generate new content for your page. In addition, putting together contests and giveaways with prizes like gift cards, swag or branded merchandise is a valuable tactic for increasing traffic and interactions on your page. These initiatives will also create guest loyalty.

Furthermore, utilizing social media as a way to reveal off-menu items or a secret offering is an impactful way to further engage with your following. This makes followers feel like they're "in-the-know" with your company and brand and again further drives customer retention.

Instagram reels and Tiktok videos are important aspects of social media, so remember to pay attention to them. As the platform algorithms favor the use of these newer formats, restaurant brands are finding it very beneficial to take advantage of them. However, the creation of videos and reels are typically more time and labor intensive, so it might be the most efficient to employ your social media or PR agency for assistance or look into user-generated options.

## Create impactful influencer marketing programs

Over the years, influencer marketing has evolved into a powerful promotional tool. Beyond generating additional exposure for the brand or restaurant, influencer marketing can help promote a new campaign. As an example, our agency worked with a destination marketing organization to promote a new passport program that encourages locals and visitors to support their local dining scene. We tapped influencers local to the area to serve as ambassadors for the program. This initiative helped demonstrate how the passport works with step-by-step instructions featured in the influencers' stories and reels explaining how to check in, earn points and redeem prizes. Beyond explaining how the campaign works, the influencer marketing program also highlighted the participating restaurants themselves, showcasing featured menu items, the overall atmosphere, the chef team and more.

Influencer marketing is especially beneficial for reaching younger market segments. According to Business Wire, 39 percent of Gen Z diners say they've tried a new restaurant based solely on the recommendation of an online influencer. Gen Z's number, influence and spending power continue to grow by the day, creating a significant opportunity to invest in marketing to this demographic.

When putting together any influencer program, it's very important to properly vet influencer partners to ensure their au-

dience aligns and that their engagement rate is strong. Furthermore, it's important to establish clear parameters for what the restaurant is willing to provide and what the influencer will provide in turn. At our agency, we've found it beneficial to outline contracts for all influencer marketing initiatives so that all parties are held accountable for what they have agreed to provide.

## Establish a technology-driven guest loyalty program

Guest loyalty programs are not only a great way to keep your diners coming back, but they will also keep your customers happy. There are a variety of ways to create this program depending on your concept. For one option, diners can earn loyalty points redeemable for discounts or free items, or the restaurant can offer a more tiered approach. As an example, with a customer ranking-based loyalty program customers can leverage specific program benefits based off the tier that they are placed in.

Given the fact that many of the online ordering apps take large percentages of restaurants' to-go and delivery profits, it could be beneficial to invest in the technology needed to create a dedicated online ordering platform. Incentivize diners with discounts and rewards to encourage use of your platform over your competitors. With today's technology options, there are so many new ways to track your customers' spending habits and create opportunities aligned with their behaviors.

In the highly competitive restaurant industry, employing effective PR and marketing tactics is a critical key to success. By tapping into social media trends, hosting unique events and providing loyalty offerings, restaurants can leverage endless opportunities to create a wonderful experience and build a loyal fan base.

Lacey Outten is an Associate VP at Hemsworth Communications, a nationally ranked PR and social media agency with three divisions: Food, Wine & Spirits; Travel & Tourism; and Franchising/Business Services. For more information, visit [www.hemsworthcommunications.com](http://www.hemsworthcommunications.com). ○



Lacey Outten



# Bringing everyone to the table

How inclusive communication principles can be used to address diet-related disease and encourage all Americans to make healthy food choices.

By Candice Watkins Robinson

**L**ower diet quality is associated with higher rates of chronic disease in the United States, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease. For many Americans, accessing healthy, safe and affordable foods consistently is a challenge due to structural and health inequities that make accessing healthier foods and beverages difficult.

This past fall, the Biden-Harris Administration reconvened the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health and released a national strategy for ending hunger and reducing diet-related diseases. Embedded in this work is a call to address disparities preventing equitable access to healthy and affordable foods using a “Whole-of-Society Response” that urges involvement from various sectors, including state and local government, healthcare and community-based organizations.

There is a clear role for health communication professionals in this response as the strategy’s third pillar, “Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices,” calls for building and promoting environments that enable all Americans to make healthy food choices.

This pillar calls for investment in culturally appropriate public education campaigns and support for tailored nutrition education programs grounded in cultural understanding.

Inclusive communication is the practice of creating information products that address all people—across the full spectrum of diversity, including age, gender, gender identity, ability, race and ethnicity, language and socioeconomic status—in a manner that makes them feel included, represented and respected.

Creating inclusive content extends beyond language translation and showing images of diverse groups of people and often involves adapting content to meet the unique information needs and values of a population or community. The select principles offered below are some of the many we can use in our work.

## Different materials and messages for different cultures and communities

In the context of communications, cultural adaptation is the tailoring of messages and interventions to reflect an audience’s culture, language and values. Adaptations are largely done to ensure success among a particular culture or group and often in-

volves designing core strategies and messages with input from the affected community to create an initiative that builds from and addresses their beliefs, cultural norms and barriers to acceptance.

Many of the nation’s leading health initiatives for reducing diet-related diseases over the past 25 years—such as the National Diabetes Prevention Program, Million Hearts, National Diabetes Education Program and National Kidney Disease Education Program—have followed cultural adaptation principles.

Program planners recognized that “one-size-fits-all” approaches that do not account for differences between audiences would not drive message acceptance or behavior change. Instead, they relied on gathering and applying input from people with lived experiences, addressed social determinants impacting the groups at greatest risk and introduced educational resources that incorporated culturally appropriate elements, such as language, faith and storytelling to create impactful messages.

## Use respectful language

Respectful communication is critical for making your audience feel valued, encouraged to share ideas and open to the possibility of continued engagement. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication, respectful communication is a faceted principle with many elements, including using preferred terms for population groups and communities, using people-first language that puts the person before the condition or circumstance being discussed (for example, “person with type 2 diabetes” instead of “diabetic”) and avoiding terms that carry a violent connotation when referring to groups, communities and health conditions.

This last point happens commonly in our work as it can lead to attention-grabbing names or slogans. An internet search of the term “fight obesity” yields thousands of results that include campaign names, news headlines, nutrition programs and products. But does this term oversimplify the complexities of diet, weight loss and reversing obesity trends? Could it lead to stigma, making a person feel as if they have a flaw that needs to be fought or resolved through forceful means?

## Make messages clear & understandable

Acceptance and credibility of your mes-

sage often depends on how well the audience understands it. In its guidelines for developing effective communications, the World Health Organization encourages communicators to develop clear messages after first answering audience-centered planning questions, such as, “How familiar is the audience with the topic?” and “What action do we want the audience to take?” These simple yet critical questions can help you develop messages that provide actionable steps for the audience to follow.

Clear communication also considers plain language principles and the value of using words, sentence structures and design elements to make content easier to read and understand. Health numeracy, which is the ability to understand and use numbers for health decision-making, is another important consideration, especially for diet-related content which often requires measurements and calculations.

## Use images that are inclusive and reflective

People want to see themselves, their communities and their cultures reflected in positive and accurate ways. When developing inclusive communication products, use audience-appropriate images and design elements that help your messages resonate.

Real-person storytelling through testimonials may also help audience members see themselves reflected and feel more motivated to act. Get audience input and reaction to all creative elements to ensure it feels reflective and authentic and doesn’t stereotype or stigmatize.

Whether we are working to develop public education initiatives, guide advocacy or policy efforts, or build programs that increase access to healthy foods and reduce disease, it’s imperative that we help all Americans feel represented and respected. Using inclusive communication principles, we can work towards achieving health equity with tailored approaches that resonate with communities most affected by diet-related disease.

*Candice Watkins Robinson is Vice President, Director of Multicultural Marketing and Communications for Hager Sharp. ○*



Candice Watkins Robinson

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Martha Stewart



Sur La Table



Cuisinart

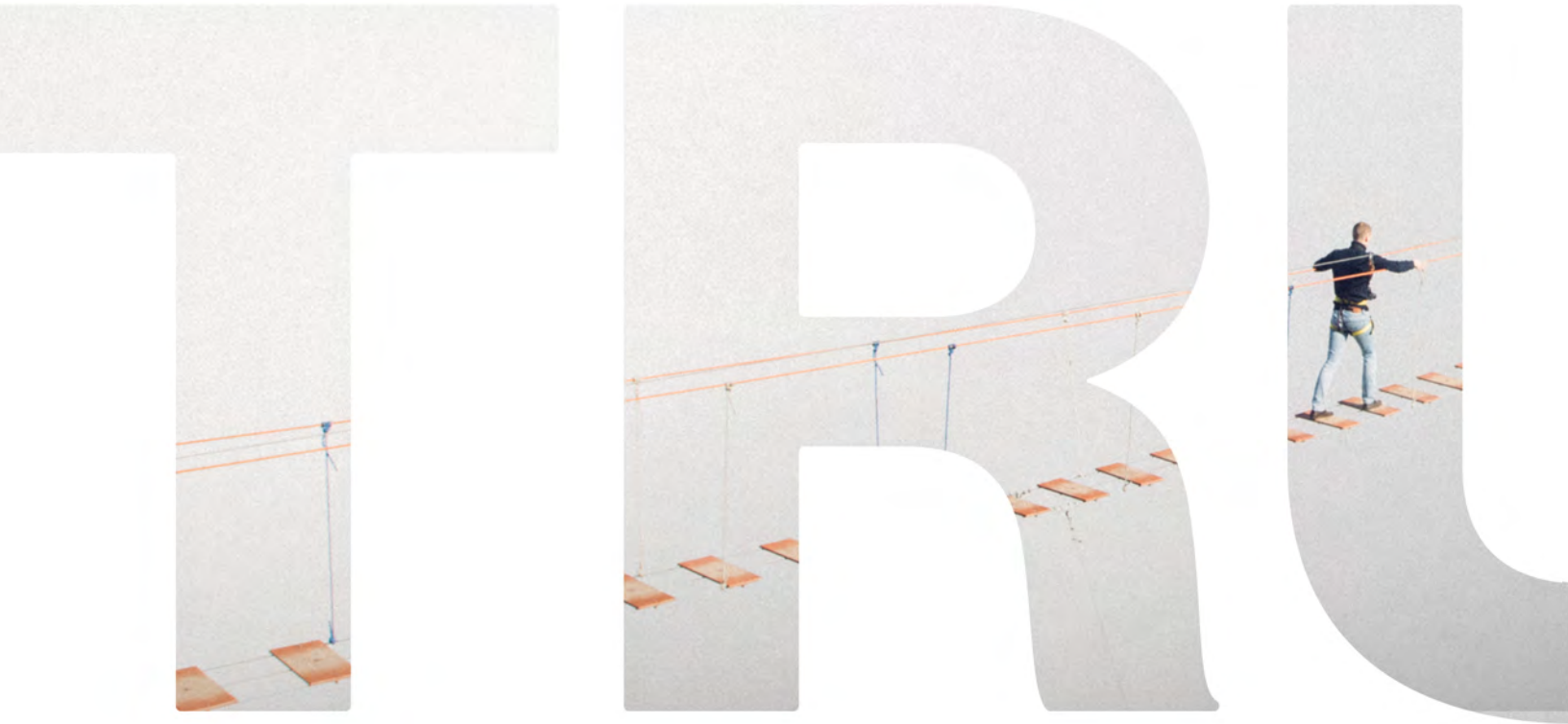


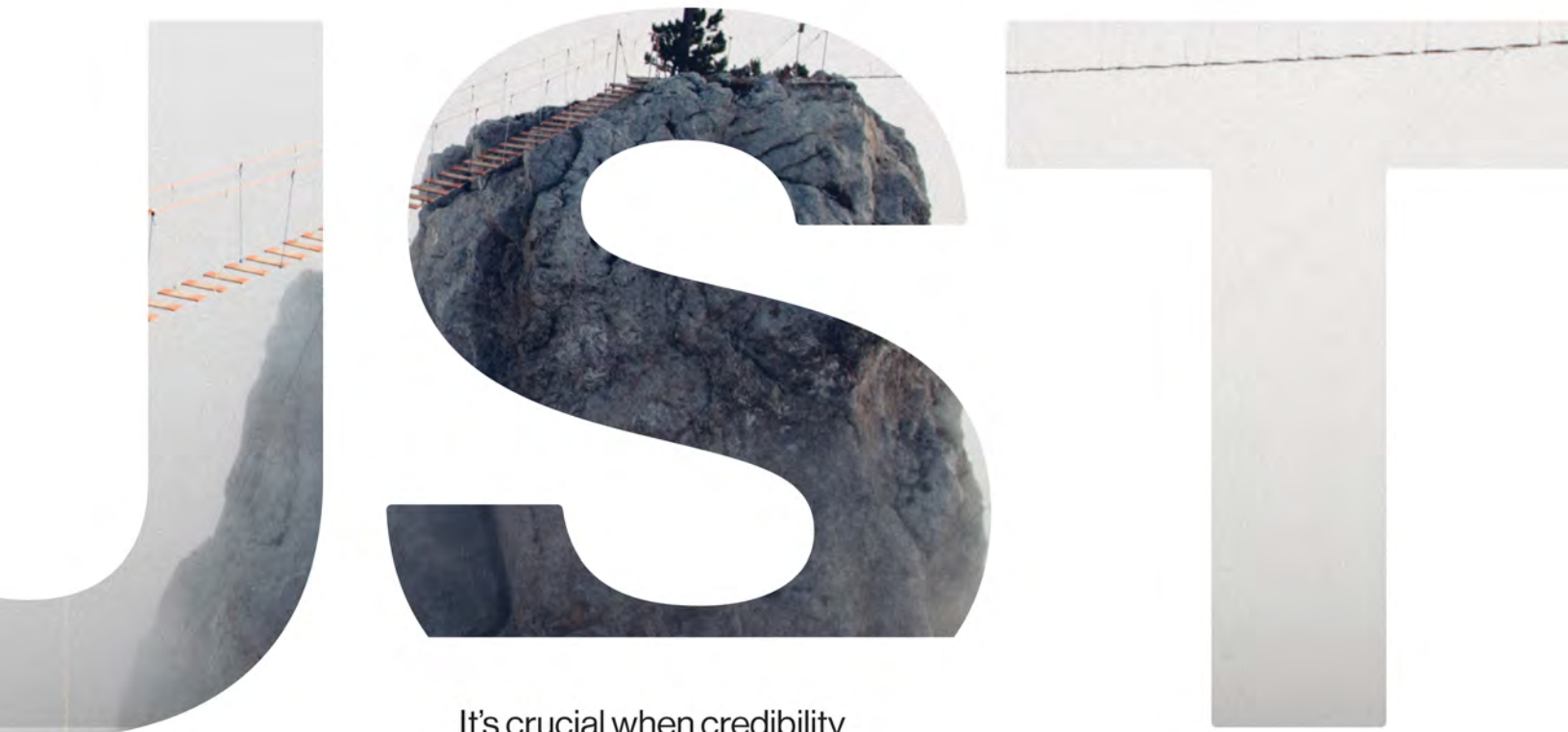
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# Tips for forecasting beyond crypto winter

What's coming next for the crypto industry after the SBF crash.

By Rebecca Schmidt

The name Sam Bankman-Fried and the acronym that follows might just be burned into my memory. The perpetual press coverage of the happenings at FTX has even the least interested crypto person aware of what went on. But of course, Sam wasn't new to the press, featured as one of Forbes' 400 Richest Americans just over a year ago and routinely showcased as the crypto world's wunderkind across all tech publications. Now the only thing that piece and Sam's coverage of late have in common are the biting remarks about his outfit choices.

The collapse, though hardly the first time a new area of finance has suffered a huge blow, does tell an interesting story about the obscure CEO narrative and how Sam often took the wrong approach.

Touted as a philanthropist and someone who was truly trying to bring good to a (sometimes) not-so-good industry, we all felt the whiplash when FTX went awry. Starting from Sam openly admitting via Twitter DM that all the stuff he said about regulations was "pretty much just PR, f\*ck regulators," and that all the "ethics stuff" was "mostly a front." Again, most certainly not the first time a CEO said something he didn't mean to get friendly with the press, but with a collapse like this, his persona switch just gives the public a million more reasons to be angry and makes the industry's reputational recovery that much harder.

Now that the FTX "collapse" headlines are starting to slow and regulators are doubling down on efforts to increase their oversight, it's time for crypto companies to really think about what comes next from a public perspective. Prices are beginning to climb and new rules are coming about every week, and it's pretty obvious this spectacle has somehow (ironically) created a chance for the industry to redefine itself. But does that mean that all crypto companies have to agree with this path forward? How can CEOs ensure they are sticking to the ethos they portrayed prior to this scandal, without making themselves a black sheep? Let's first start with what's being said about this path forward.

Where is the industry headed? Here's what we think:

- While increased regulation is necessary for the industry to continue to thrive and ensure accountability, this doesn't mean

that risk will be removed in its entirety and companies should still take proper precautions and prepare investors for multiple potential scenarios. Washington moves slowly these days, so a legislative cure-all is unlikely to emerge anytime soon.

- Crypto winter isn't over, and layoffs will continue. However, these moves are evidence that companies are getting themselves together to properly react to new guidance and future downturns. We're seeing layoffs far beyond crypto due to the general market disruption at the moment, as Spotify, Meta, and Amazon are just a few that recently took action. We'll likely see companies promoting the narrative of business protection/planning for what's to come as these layoffs continue.

- Blockchain and NFTs could reap the benefits of uncertainty and are expected to be the first industries to recover as brands continue to follow Starbucks and Disney in Web3 marketplaces. As subsets of a larger narrative, it would be smart of brands tied to blockchain and NFTs to position these tools as far away from the crypto crash portrayal as possible, and continue to come up with innovative, but realistic, ways to be utilized in the meantime.

Now, as a brand in the space, here's what to think about as you become part of the rebuild:

- Don't push the regulation narrative just for the sake of uniformity. If complete and utter regulation means bad business/halting the innovation at your company, then it's wise to take a moment to think about your intentions for the longterm before promoting something you don't actually agree with. The last thing people want to see is companies saying one thing today and another tomorrow. Align your messaging! There is, however, a way to push for and be on the side of regulation that will protect investors and ensure nothing like FTX can happen again.

- It's okay if you're unsure what's coming next. Start by working on messaging for the current market and build from there. Quarterly predictions and other short-term analyses could work well. You don't have to be spot-on but it's good to try and participate in conversations you're comfortable with, while the rest works itself out. A little humility in the wake of a crisis can often go a long way, so CEOs—and their communications team—should take this to heart.

- Stick to what you know. There are plenty of ways to join the blockchain, Web3, NFT, etc. public conversations without getting tied up in FTX drama. For example, how do you feel about the Metaverse? Are there areas that your company can comment on and advise about the future of this unknown space? And more on those NFT marketplaces that are being built up by Starbucks and Nike: Where does your company see this heading? Is it good or bad for consumers? Ask your PR team to do some digging on areas that are "safe" from the FTX-related narrative but are still important trends to discuss and relate back to your business.



Rebecca Schmidt

In all, no matter where we land with FTX, this is a lesson to leaders: knowing—and then standing with—your company ethos should always be high on the list of priorities. Once you understand that, work with your PR team and others to help tell that story to the public. This is more important now than ever, as consumers are looking for authenticity. Your audience will be incredibly quick to dismiss your company if they feel you aren't—especially if something major goes wrong.

A reconstruction for the industry is well on its way, but while that naturally evolves, revisit your brand narrative and communications approach and have honest conversations with your team. After all, the world has made too many technological advancements to let one crypto winter and press superstorm control our forward-thinking futures.

*Rebecca Schmidt is Head of Fintech and Digital Assets at Water and Wall. ○*

## PR brief

### Joele Frank handles Travel Centers deal

Joele Frank handles Travel Centers of America as the nation's biggest truck stop/convenience store chain gets acquired by British energy giant BP in a deal pegged at \$1.3 billion.

BP is shelling out \$86 cash per share for TA, which represents a whopping 84 percent premium over its 30-day average trading priced ended Feb. 15.

Westlake, OH-based TA posted a 54.7 percent revenue boost to \$8.2 billion during the nine-month period ended Sept. 30. Net income soared 158.4 percent to \$117.2 million.

TA, which operates 281 truck stops in 44 states, had received unsolicited takeover bids from companies other than BP.

## Celeb PR pro Howard Bragman dies at 66

**H**oward Bragman, a top Los Angeles celebrity rep and crisis counselor, died on Feb. 11 from acute monocytic leukemia. He was 66.

A longtime LGBTQ+ activist, Bragman handled the “coming out” of basketball’s Sheryl Swoopes, actress Meredith Baxter and NFL’s Michael Sam, according to a report in *Deadline*.

“Howard Bragman was an industry leader who masterfully used the power of the press to create positive change and visibility for LGBTQ people,” said a statement from GLAAD’s President/CEO Sarah Kate Ellis. “Throughout his long career, he worked with many LGBTQ notables to ensure their coming out stories were treated with dignity and created impact for the entire community.”

Bragman co-founded Bragman Nyman Cafarelli in 1989. It was acquired by Interpublic in 2001.

He went on to set up Fifteen Minutes and La Brea Media.

Bragman, who also represented Stevie Wonder, Monica Lewinsky and Sharon Osbourne, is the author of “Where’s My Fifteen Minutes?: Get Your Company, Your Cause, or Yourself the Recognition You Deserve.” ○

## Revive names Bevolo CEO

**R**evive, part of The Weber Shandwick Collective, names Chris Bevolo CEO. Bevolo has been with Revive since 2014, most recently serving as Chief Growth and Brand Officer. He was previously the owner and lead strategist of Interval, a Minneapolis-based healthcare marketing firm he founded in 1995.

As Revive’s CEO, Bevolo will be responsible for leading the agency of nearly 100 employees, which is based in Nashville and has employees across the country. He will report to Weber Shandwick CEO, North America Jim O’Leary. ○



Howard Bragman



Chris Bevolo

## Dentons bolsters sustainability capability

**D**entons Global Advisors has named Olalla Michelena a Partner in its European Union PA unit.

Based in Brussels, she will advise clients as the EU implements regulations regarding the “European Green Deal” and funding issues.

Most recently, Michelena ran Octagono Partners, which dealt with EU digital and sustainability matters.

She also served as director of the EU delegation of Make Mothers Matter, an advocacy group focused on work-life balance, and did an eight-year run at Burson-Marsteller, handling pan-European environmental and social issues campaigns.

Dentons EMEA PA head and Brussels chief Gregoire Poisson said decarbonization, digital transition and strategic autonomy will shape the EU business and regulatory environment for years to come. ○



Olalla Michelena

## Edelman calls Freedman Canada CEO

**E**delman promotes Bianca Freedman to CEO of the firm’s Canadian region.

Freedman, who has been interim CEO since October 2022, was previously Chief Operating Officer, Canada. Before joining Edelman, she held several executive marketing and communications positions at Walmart.

Freedman now oversees Edelman’s five offices across Canada, reporting to Global President and Chief Operating Officer Matthew Harrington. ○



Bianca Freedman

## ABA’s Lugar checks in at Hilton

**K**atherine Lugar, who is CEO of the American Beverage Assn., will check in at Hilton as Executive VP of Corporate Affairs in April.

She will handle PR, government affairs

and ESG matters and report to Hilton CEO Christopher Nassetta.

Prior to the ABA, Lugar worked at the Retail Industry Leaders Assn. as EVP, handled government relations at Travelers Insurance and was VP of Legislative and Political Affairs at the National Retail Federation. ○



Katherine Lugar

## Antenna Group hires Edelman’s Loban

**A**ntenna Group hires Jacob Loban as EVP and head of digital and performance marketing.

Loban joins the agency from Edelman, where he was EVP, head of performance intelligence, North America and launched the firm’s performance intelligence group, a division of Edelman Data & Intelligence.

Prior to Edelman, he was head of US performance media at Omnicom Group’s PHD. At Antenna, Loban will lead the digital and performance marketing group and work to identify new digital channels and build innovative service offerings. ○



Jacob Loban

## Former 9/11 Museum spokesperson joins SKDK

**M**ichael Frazier, who spent more than 11 years as a communicator at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, has joined SKDK’s PA practice in New York as an Executive VP. He will support corporate, crisis and advocacy clients.

Frazier, who exited the 9/11 Museum as Executive VP and Deputy Director of External Affairs, also was an EVP at the Food Allergy Research and Education group, a spokesperson for Mike Bloomberg’s presidential campaign and a reporter for *Newsday* and the Associated Press. ○



Michael Frazier





**Celebrity Chef Tom Colicchio at a press event for 360PR+ client, Do Good Chicken, which fights food waste and combats climate change by upcycling surplus grocery food into nutritious chicken feed—serving up delicious chicken to tables everywhere.**

## 360PR+

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At 360PR+, you could say that food and beverage is our bread & butter, given our extensive experience working with brands spanning every aisle of the grocery store, not to mention restaurant menus, delivery apps, kitchen appliances and more. With a passion for helping consumers eat and live better, we've helped tackle not just what's for dinner or what to pack for lunch, but also bigger-picture challenges such as nutrition and sustainable living.

Our Food & Beverage team members are in constant contact with the tastemakers—top chefs, registered dietitians, cookbook authors, social influencers and of course media. With a winning com-

bination of break-through ideas and always-on storytelling, we build and sustain brand relevance, helping our clients own a myriad of food occasions—and create new ones to get media, buyers and consumers to stand up and take notice.

It's why some of the most loved brands and innovators have chosen 360PR+ as their partner: America's Test Kitchen, Buitoni, Do Good Chicken, Giant Food, Juicy Juice, Little Leaf Farms, Nasoya, One Degree Organics, Pete & Gerry's Organic Eggs, Primo Hoagies, Silver Hills Sprouted Bakery, Sunny D, UNFI (United Natural Foods, Inc.) and Yogurtland, to name a few.

360PR+ is a certified women-owned business and a PROI Worldwide partner, offering clients reach and expertise in 100+ cities across the U.S. and internationally.

## 5WPR

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**Dara Busch**, Co-CEO  
**Leigh Ann Ambrosi**, Executive Vice President, CPG

sues, and ideas. With more than 300 professionals serving clients in B2C (Beauty & Fashion, Consumer Brands, Entertainment, Food & Beverage, Health & Wellness, Travel & Hospitality, Technology, Nonprofit), B2B (Corporate Communications and Reputation Management), Public Affairs, Crisis Communications and Digital Marketing (Social Media, Influencer, Paid Media, SEO), 5W was named to *Inc.* Magazine's Best Workplaces 2022 list, awarded 2020 PR Agency of the Year, and brings leading businesses a resourceful, bold and results-driven approach to communication.

## 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



**Sam Adams Founder Jim Koch at Brewing the American Dreams' Crafting Dreams Beer Bash event in September 2022. Sam Adams is a 5W client.**





Getty Images for Wendy's

**The Brand Agency worked with Wendy's to celebrate the launch of its Strawberry Frosty with Brooklyn Beckham and Nicola Peltz at our client's venue, Offsunset. Go to [www.thebrand-agency.com/work/wendys-x-offsunset/](http://www.thebrand-agency.com/work/wendys-x-offsunset/) to view the case study from our website.**

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.

Clients include: Boxed Water is Better, Bushwick Kitchen, Electrolit, Golden West Food Group, Herd & Grace, Mary's Gone Crackers, NadaMoo!, Pickle Juice and Skinny Butcher.

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**Priscila Martinez**, Founder & CEO  
**Katherine Edwards**, VP, East Coast  
**MK Glenning**, VP, West Coast

relations, brand strategy, special events, talent procurements/strategic partnerships, and image and crisis management.

The Brand Agency's robust client list includes *Fortune* 5 companies like Apple and Amazon, startups like non-profit Spend with Ukraine, and everything in between. The firm's executive team includes veterans from various disciplines like food & beverage, hospitality, lifestyle, fashion & beauty, entertainment, technology, B-2-B, and corp comm. The firm cherry-picks experts to create highly customized teams that serve a client's unique needs.

The Brand Agency is responsible for turning venues like Doheny Room, MELROSEPLACE, offsunset, Boucherie, and Olio e Più into celebrity playgrounds and hotspots. The firm's team is the driving force behind several of the most iconic brands, personalities, and trends in the food and beverage space. The Brand Agency proudly serves iconic names like Hennessy X.O, LVMH's Tequila Volcan de mi Tierra, Moët & Chandon, Liquid IV, Dream Pops, K'UL Chocolate, and Liev Schreiber's Slainte Whiskey, to name a few.

## 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 26 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 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

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**VIP guests, including media and influencers, strike a pose at the Jove Summer Refresh campaign launch event in Miami. Jove is a CIIC client.**



## CIIC PR

Continued from page 25

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).

## CHAMPION

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Team Champion at your service!

**Ladd Biro**, Founder & Principal  
**Eric Spiritas**, Principal  
**Russell Ford**, Sr. VP, Marketing  
**Courtney Mazzella**, Sr. Director, Client Services

Restaurant brands looking to ignite their stories, dominate the headlines, captivate through con-

tent, amp up franchise sales and drive traffic—both on-premise and online—partner with Champion.

Established in 2002 and among the nation's fastest-growing restaurant-focused agencies, Champion provides best-in-class public relations, local restaurant marketing, franchise development, social and digital media, influencer/NIL marketing and crisis communications support to a blue-chip roster of brands from our centrally located offices in Dallas. (By the way, we love New York and California, but our calls, texts and emails get to producers and editors there just as quickly as the high-priced agencies based on the East and West Coasts.)

We win plenty of awards for our work, but Champion's true measure of success is the long-term partnerships we've forged with extraordinary brands like Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers, Walk-On's Sports Bistreaux, Fazoli's, Dickey's Barbecue Pit, Taco John's, Twin Peaks, Dog Haus, FreeRange Concepts, SPB Hospitality and JINYA Ramen Bar—to name only a few.

Don't know Champion? Ask around the industry. Our stellar and scrappy team has built a reputation for excellence marked by principal-level attention to every client, an outstanding network of national and local media across the country, innovative social media content, traffic-driving digital advertising and high-quality lead generation for our franchised brands.

Find out why We Are the Champions, my friend ...

## COYNE PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**Thomas F. Coyne**, CEO  
**Rich Lukis**, President  
**Tim Schramm**, Executive Vice President  
**Stacy Bataille**, Senior Vice President  
**Jackie Peskin**, Vice President

The food and nutrition space has been a cornerstone of Coyne PR since the agency's inception more than thirty years ago. We are makers and strategists obsessed with creativity, leading with imagination and enthusiasm, and refining with the discipline of predictive outcomes. Our team of 200+ culturally-diverse minds includes developers, producers, writers, designers, animators, social specialists, and communication experts who utilize best-in-class research, measurement, and AI tools to perfect each element.

We convert consumers from brand loyalists to evangelists through culture tapping, newsjacking, and creating meaningful connections through purpose-driven and inspirational programming. We capture audience attention with powerful earned storytelling and socially informed strategies. We recognize that it is no longer



Coyne's support of PEEPS® during the Easter season includes working with many of the biggest brands in the world for strategic partnerships.



enough to communicate through single-channel approaches. In today's multi-screen society, we reach your target precisely where they find information and discover inspiration.

Our depth of knowledge in the industry and forward-looking strategies successfully positions brands in the food and beverage space.

## EDELMAN

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Edelman is a global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations. Our 6,000 people in more than 60 offices deliver communications strategies that give our clients the confidence to lead and act with certainty, earning the trust of their stakeholders. Our honors include the Cannes Lions Grand Prix for PR; *Advertising Age's* 2019 A-List; the *Holmes Report's* 2018 Global Digital Agency of the Year; and, five times, Glassdoor's Best Places to Work. Since our founding in 1952, we have remained an independent, family-run business. Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle).

## ELEV8 NEW MEDIA

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**Jessica Starman**, CEO  
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The food & beverage industry faces an ever-evolving landscape of consumer goods with a supply chain that entails processing, packaging and distribution. At Elev8 New Media, we provide a strategic integrated marketing communications mix of essential public relations and social media marketing to promote client food and beverage products successfully. Elev8 New Media provides immense value to the food & beverage industry by helping companies build and maintain their brand image, reach new customers, and create loyalty among existing customers. Through effective public relations strategies, companies can ensure that their products, services, and

messages are reaching the right people and being perceived in a favorable light.

We've had the pleasure of representing private and public companies with category innovation brands, helping amplify visibility and brand awareness through close working relationships with key F&B journalists, bloggers and influencers—from trade to mainstream media. We also gain media coverage and create buzz around new products and promotions, resulting in increased sales and brand recognition. Elev8 has worked with some of the leading companies in this space, with brands in the alcoholic and non-alcoholic, CBD and wellness, fitness and health spaces, and beyond.

## EVINS COMMUNICATIONS LTD.

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**Mathew Evins**, Chairman  
**Louise Evins**, CEO  
**Jacqueline Long**, COO, COO  
**David Harrison**, EVP

For more than three decades, the world's finest culinary, wine and spirits professionals have taught us that exceptional and inspired hospitality creates memorable and transcendent experiences. The Evins Communications Food, Wine & Spirits (FWS) practice has embraced this ethos to craft programs that catalyze trial, drive conversation, engage community and deliver results. Our programs enlighten and inspire audiences with evocative, purposeful content and compelling media that engender experiences to be savored and shared. As the driving force behind a number of the most iconic brands, personalities and trends in the food and beverage industry, Evins skillfully creates PR campaigns, experiential events, and promotions supported by captivating and inspiring media coverage and user-generated content.

Evins recently acquired Teuwen Communications, named a Top 10 Wine and Spirits PR Agency in the US by Meininger's Wine Business International. The move brings added specialist capabilities, expertise and knowledge that complement the Agency's Food, Wine & Spirits practice. Together, Evins and Teuwen share a commitment to enduring client partnerships with

several in excess of three decades and an average client tenure of more than eight years, nearly three times the industry average. Learn more about what we can do for you by visiting us at [www.evins.com](http://www.evins.com).

## FOODMINDS

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FoodMinds is a leading global food and nutrition affairs agency, providing innovative science, policy, influencer, and communications programs that achieve clients' business goals while also doing good for public health, people and the planet.

We put passion into practice across key solution areas including science communications, food and nutrition affairs, stakeholder engagement, food as medicine/precision nutrition and healthy, sustainable food systems, to affect change and impact behaviors. FoodMinds is a destination where talented professionals who are passionate about food and nutrition have come together to leverage strategic insights, consumer values and multidimensional communications to produce meaningful results. FoodMinds employs policy wonks, trend watchers and storytellers—and is the only agency with 20+ registered dietitians on staff, as well as a Global ExpertBench™ of nutrition science, policy, and communication professionals—to help our clients embody 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 reimagining why, what and how the world eats and drinks—to help build a stronger, flourishing future for all.

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

## FOX GREENBERG PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**Michelle Fox**, Founder  
**Lauren Vultee**, President

FGPR is a leading boutique public relations and influencer marketing firm that focuses on the strategic development of brands. We work with you one-on-one to formulate innovative and effective campaigns that offer access to diverse media and influencers, creating a direct connection between your brand and your audience. FGPR specializes in building hospitality brand on a national scale as well as restaurants in local markets with a focus on NYC.

## FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN

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**Rick French**, Chairman & CEO  
**David Gwyn**, President / Principal  
**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. 14 on the list of the nation's largest PR firms overall (2022 *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

— Continued on page 28



## FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN

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Loves, ConAgra (Slim Jim, Pemmican Beef Jerky), Nabisco Foods, Brinker International (Maggiano's Little Italy restaurants), Elevation Burger, House-Autry, Atlantic Natural Foods, Lidl, Whole Foods Market, Smithfield Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q, the N.C. Pork Council and North Carolina SweetPotato Commission. Our past and present client roster in the beer, wine and spirits category includes Proximo (Pendleton Whisky), Brown-Forman (Jack Daniel's), Diageo North America (Bulleit Bourbon), Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits (Josh Cellars, Yellow Tail, 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.

Headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., and founded in April 1997, FWV has received 25 National Agency of the Year honors over the past quarter century, along with more than 1,500 PR, advertising and digital marketing awards on behalf of its global roster of blue-chip clients. The agency employs more than 130 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts among its Raleigh (headquarters), New York City, Los Angeles, Greater Boston, Tampa and Greater Detroit offices.

## G&S BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

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**Steve Halsey**, Chief Growth Officer  
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Growing food isn't rocket science. It's much more difficult. Not many agencies can say that they have more than 50 years of experience in food and beverage. G&S can. We understand the business of growing, the critical role of technology in improving processes and the need for traceability throughout the entire supply chain.

We also help leading beverage and spirits brands find new and innovative ways to stand out from the crowd, on the shelf, at the game,

and in the bar. And when it comes to the coatings, paper, and packaging that protect it all, we have that wrapped up as well.

If it's grown in a field, a pot or a coop, milked, fed or hatched, brewed, fermented or purified, we've probably worked with it. From farm to table and in between, we understand the B2B2C value chain and how to craft stories that resonate at every stage.

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

## HAGER SHARP

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**Jennifer Wayman**, MHS, President & CEO

At Hager Sharp, we have dedicated the last 50 years to creating strategic communications and social marketing initiatives for organizations that are committed to fighting for equity in education, improving the health of people and communities, and empowering vulnerable populations. We are a full-service, integrated marketing and communications firm with expertise in public health, disease prevention, health promotion, and behavior change strategies. As an employee-owned small business, Hager Sharp has provided communications leadership across a wide range of health issues, including food safety and nutrition, food insecurity, nutrition security, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, biotechnology, and more. Hager Sharp's strategists, researchers, creative specialists, media experts, and public health professionals bring award-winning, research-driven, behavior-changing health communications services and social marketing campaigns to life. Our focus is, and always will be, working with mission-driven institutions, businesses, foundations, and non-profits to create and execute ideas that make a difference.

## HEMSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS

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**Lacey Outten**, Associate VP, Food/Wine/Spirits

**Kayla Atwater**, Associate VP, Travel/Hospitality

Hemsworth is a top-ranked public relations and communications firm with locations in Atlanta, Charleston, Chicago, Fort Lauderdale, New York City and Tampa, as well as a network of top freelancers in various other top media markets. The agency specializes in branding, corporate communications and strategic promotion within the travel/tourism and food/wine/spirits sectors, as well as crafting global B2B and B2C PR programs for both emerging and renowned franchise systems. A boutique-sized firm with an impressive background, Hemsworth combines unprecedented passion, insight and connections to surpass client expectations, offering personal service and powerful results.

Clients include: AmaWaterways, ATL Airport District, Banana Bay Resort, B Ocean Fort Lauderdale Resort, B Orlando, Resort & Spa, Black Swan, City of Dunwoody, Corendon Hotels & Resorts, Cruise Barbados, Discover Dunwoody, Explore Gwinnett, Gateway Center Arena, Georgia International Convention Center, Holiday Inn & Suites Universal, HomeToGo, Kenefick Ranch Winery, Massanutten Resort, Media Culture, Performance Hospitality Management, PuroClean, Rental Escapes, South Fulton Convention & Visitors Bureau, Visit Sandy Springs, Your CBD Store, Waters Edge Wineries, WaterWalk Hospitality, among others.

## HUNTER

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

**Grace Leong**, CEO

**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 with the second largest food and beverage practice in the US. Our creative approach and focus on client service has led to some of the most enduring relationships in the business including TABASCO® Brand Pepper Sauce, HUN-

TER's first partner 34 years ago, and still a client today. Others include some of America's most iconic and beloved companies and brands including Smithfield, DIAGEO, 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 250-person firm is perhaps best known for executing strategic, creative, equity building campaigns that drive conversation and insert brands firmly into the lifestyles of their target consumers. From the traditional days of "tasting is believing" to the modern world of #instagood #foodporn, food and beverage is in our DNA. 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 the cultural conversation 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 food + beverage 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 today.

## ICR

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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



Twitter at @ICRPR and LinkedIn.

Clients: Albertsons Companies, B&G Foods, Bellring Brands, Beyond Meat, Black Rifle Coffee Company, Boot Barn, Checkers & Rally's, Darden Restaurants, Dutch Bros Coffee, First Watch, Fogo de Chao, Hain Celestial, Herbalife Ltd., Hostess, Jack in the Box, Killer Burger, Limoneira, lululemon athletica, Macaroni Grill, Nomad Foods, Olo, Portillo's, Ruth's Chris, Shake Shack, Sullivan's Steakhouse, Texas Roadhouse, The Duckhorn Portfolio, The National Restaurant Association, The One Group, Tilray Brands, Williams-Sonoma, Inc. and 7 Brew.

## MAGRINO AGENCY

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**Susan Magrino**, Chairman & CEO  
**Allyn Magrino**, President & CRO  
**Jee Park**, EVP, Hospitality, Food & Beverage

Magrino looks beyond the silos of traditional PR and individual social channels via the use of integrated strategies that strive to not only reach but move your audience.

We know the drivers for Food & Beverage far surpass the need for a few good media hits on your latest launch. With expertise in brand development, social media strategy, content creation, creator relations, experiential design & events, and of course, over 30 years in media relations, Magrino serves as the ultimate connector across the entire communications economy to keep your story trending and ultimately driving consumer preference for your brand.

Named as one of the *Observer's* "25 Best PR Firms in America" for the last 9 years in a row, Magrino continues to be run by its Chairman & CEO Susan Magrino and President and Chief Revenue Officer Allyn Magrino, along with a diverse team of communications experts focused on staying ahead of the ever-evolving media eco-

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)



**The Marino team regularly spearheads media and influencer trips overseas for clients from its F&B group. Last October, Marino EVP, Robert Barletta, led a trip to Sicily, attended by media and influencers, to showcase the annual olive harvest in the Val di Mazara region, home to Bono, an agency client and one of the largest producers of extra virgin olive oil in Italy. Attendees experienced every aspect of the harvesting process, from picking olives to the bottling of the award-winning olive oil. Photo: Barletta (left) and Jim Pescatore (right), Bono USA's VP of Sales, at the ancient ruins of Segesta in Sicily.**

system. With life-long clients, industry connections, and unrivaled expertise, Magrino grants you access to the buzz you've been waiting for.

Visit us at [www.magrinopr.com](http://www.magrinopr.com).

## MARINO

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**Frank Marino**, CEO  
**John Marino**, President  
**Robert Barletta**, Executive VP, F&B  
**Daniella Alkobi**, SVP  
**Patrice Rajacic**, SVP  
**Andrew Zimmer**, SVP, Digital & Integrated Strategy

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2023, Marino is a full-service, national strategic communica-

tions agency with offices in New York City, Los Angeles and Miami. The award-winning firm has become the go-to agency for U.S. and international food and beverage brands seeking to expand nationwide or enter the U.S. market. Marino's F&B team keenly understands the balance of driving sales and visibility, all within the complex distribution system, and has created a proprietary strategic communications program specifically designed for specialty foods and beverages.

Brands like McDonald's, Fratelli Beretta, Bono Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Castellani Wines, De Nigris Balsamic Vinegar, Chelsea Market in NYC, Rosé All Day/Biagio Cru Wine & Spirits, Beak and Skiff, Pasta Toscano, Volvic, Urbanspace, Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, Olivieri 1882, Lee Lee's Bakery and the NYC Hospitality Alliance, have all turned to Marino for their communications needs.

Marino is rapidly emerging as

one of America's first independently owned, mid-sized public relations firms to offer a truly holistic suite of strategic services such as media relations, design and creative campaign development, advertising, influencers, social media and events. The team includes experienced industry publicists and digital strategists, former food and retail reporters, recipe developers and food designers, F&B venue makers, trend analysts, foodies and oenophiles.

## PADILLA

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**Kristen Ingraham**, Senior Vice President

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 and Joe Smith. 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](http://PadillaCo.com).



## POLLOCK COMMUNICATIONS

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**Louise Pollock**, President & CEO

Pollock Communications is an independent PR and marketing communications agency that offers cutting-edge expertise in media relations, social media strategy and content creation, targeted influencer engagement, virtual and live events, foodservice, school foodservice, retail support, crisis management, third-party alliance building and science activations for food, beverage, health, wellness and lifestyle brands and commodities.

Our annual What's Trending in Nutrition survey, conducted in partnership with *Today's Dietitian*, enables us to utilize the latest health and wellness trends on behalf of our clients. We leverage insights from this comprehensive collection of data from nutrition experts, to develop and execute impactful and successful communications campaigns.

In addition to PR practitioners and marketers, our staff includes media-savvy registered dietitians who are frequently quoted by top consumer media. Pollock Communications has built a broad network of impactful spokespeople, including media registered dietitians, celebrity chefs, social media influencers, medical doctors and scientists who are available and ready to deliver key messages for a variety of our clients in broadcast, online, print, and social media.

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

A Sampling of Clients Include: American Dairy Assn. Northeast, American Pulse Assn., Brightseed, Cranberry Institute, Danone North America, Dash, L-Nutra, National Watermelon Promotion Board, Orgain, PepsiCo, Inc., Quaker, Tea Assn. of the USA, Tea Council of the USA, USA Dry Pea & Lentil

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



**Crown Royal**, the official whisky sponsor of the NFL, released its first-ever Super Bowl spot in 2023 and looked to Taylor to cement its role on game day. Taylor created excitement and intrigue for the commercial, keeping Crown Royal at the forefront of the Super Bowl conversation with a steady drumbeat of coverage in top-tier outlets like "TODAY," *Forbes*, and *Ad Age*. Extending the generosity platform captured in the ad, Taylor and the brand continued to drive attention for the spot in Phoenix through Generosity Food Trucks, an event honoring military veterans, and Radio Row interviews with partners delivering a slew of regional and national press. The campaign garnered more than 7.6B media impressions and 1.2K placements.

Council, USA Rice Federation and Vitapod.

## RFIBINDER

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**Amy Binder**, Founder and CEO  
**Rebecca Binder**, President  
**Atalanta Rafferty**, Co-Founder & Head of Food, Drinks & Nutrition Practice  
**Craig Blakaitis**, Senior Managing Director, Food, Drinks & Nutrition Practice

From being the #1 trending topic on Twitter for the day to winning "best new food" product awards to driving the best sales growth initiative, RF|Binder is focused on driving impact and business results for food and beverage companies. Our creative work has made food and beverage brands not only pantry staples but also cultural icons. Our influencer programming drives engagement and business results, always tapping into new social communities and cultural conversations.

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. 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 have built reputations 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.

## SPM COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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**Suzanne Parsonage Miller**, President and Founder

For nearly 25 years, SPM has worked with national, regional and local food, beverage and restaurant brands, integrating earned media relations, influencer partnerships, events, executive positioning and social media strategy to create

campaigns that make a business impact for our clients. Clients come to us to help them drive traffic and sales, franchise development, new market entry or company acquisition for their brands.

In addition to building food and restaurant brands, we help protect brands through our robust crisis communications practice. We've managed thousands of client crises and our media protocol is currently deployed in restaurant locations nationwide.

Our culture-driven agency was founded on our "No Jerks" policy, which fosters strong agency-client relationships with mutual trust, respect and true partnership that allows our team to function as an extension of our clients' marketing departments.

Current food, beverage and restaurant brand clients include Bonchon, Chuck E. Cheese, Karbach Brewing Co., la Madeleine, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Miller's Ale House, Modern Market, Peter Piper Pizza, Pollo Campero, Shipley Do-Nuts, Utz Brands and Wildway.

## TAYLOR

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**Tony Signore**, CEO & Mng. Partner  
**Mike Costabile**, Mng. Partner  
**Maeve Hagen**, Mng. Partner  
**Christina Merritt**, Chief Strategy Officer  
**Brad Mancuso**, EVP, Creative  
**Garlanda Freeze**, EVP, Account

As “Shapers of Possibility,” Taylor helps the world’s leading brands lean into the edge of their purpose to unlock opportunities for growth. Named “Consumer Agency of the Decade” by *The Holmes Report*, Taylor is headquartered in New York. The agency provides a full array of services including: brand planning; creative; digital strategy and social media; strategic media relations; consumer insights; measurement and evaluation; event creative and production; and talent procurement and media training.

For more than 35 years, Taylor has developed and executed marketing communications programs for category leading food and beverage brands including Diageo, a global leader in beverage alcohol. Via social campaigns, content production and strategic media relations, Taylor has successfully launched new products, reinvigorated iconic brands and sustained momentum in the marketplace for Diageo adult beverage favorites such as Crown Royal, Guinness, Captain Morgan and Smirnoff, among others.

The agency also partners with leading consumer packaged goods brands like P&G and Red Bull for a wide range of services, including new product launches and sponsorships activations.

## TEUWEN, AN EVINS COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

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**Stephanie Teuwen**, President  
**Beth Cotenoff**, SVP  
**Marisa Jetter**, VP

Teuwen, an Evins Communications Company, is an award-winning food, wine and spirits public relations and marketing agency with unrivaled expertise and influence. A collaborative and creative team, authentic industry connections, and personalized approach to each client produce strategic, integrated programs across multiple touchpoints, with powerful results. Our carefully planned and expertly executed results-driven campaigns utilize bold, creative storytelling that brings brands to life.

With specialty expertise in what drives brand visibility, engagement and growth in the food and beverage industries, Teuwen was acquired by Evins Communications, a New York-based public relations agency with four decades of experience and success marketing iconic brands, in 2023 and continues to operate independently under the leadership of Stephanie Teuwen. Named a Top 10 Wine and Spirits PR Agency in the U.S.

by Meininger’s Wine Business International, the Teuwen team has unparalleled capabilities, expertise and knowledge that will benefit from the enhanced reach, resources and capabilities of Evins. Together, Evins and Teuwen share a commitment to enduring client partnerships that go far beyond the industry average. Learn more about what Teuwen can do for you by visiting [www.teuwen.com](http://www.teuwen.com).

## TREVELINO/KELLER

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

Trevelino/Keller continues to be a one-shop solution for its food and beverage clients, leveraging all three service pillars—public relations, growth marketing and creative services—to serve some of the most iconic and recognizable brands in the industry. Leading the way is the company’s franchise area of expertise which includes brands like Nathan’s Famous, Roy Rogers and Frisch’s. The agency is often sought after because of its ability to support both b2b [franchise sales in the case of franchise brands] as well as consumer engagement.

In 2023, Trevelino/Keller ac-

knowledges HubSpot research around the rapid growth of influencer marketing and calls out its relationship with Tagger Media as a differentiator in helping food and beverage brands realize the potential of this growing platform. The firm believes that creator and brand insights and analytics from Tagger can be a game changer for those brands struggling with how best to maximize the growing influencer marketplace.

Seasoned with launching concepts and companies, Trevelino/Keller recently launched the Original Hot Chicken, a Nashville-style hot chicken concept from Experiential Brands. The firm’s historical work includes Johnny Rockets, Smashburger, Corner Bakery Café, Paris Baguette, Moe’s Southwest Grill, Shane’s Rib Shack as well as international food company Century Pacific.

## WILKS COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

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

Wilks Communications Group is an award-winning PR and integrated marketing communications agency with a proven track record built over 25+ years of helping food, beverage and spirits clients strengthen their brand awareness, enhance consumer engagement and drive sales.

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



**Trevelino/Keller Announces the Launch of the First Original Hot Chicken Concept Featuring Special Guest, Joey Chestnut, the World’s Greatest Competitive Eater.**



# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

## FOOD AND BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2021)	Firm	Net Fees (2021)
1. <b>Edelman</b> , New York, NY	\$126,061,000	28. <b>Wordhampton PR, Inc.</b> , East Hampton, NY	\$543,848
2. <b>Hunter</b> , New York, NY	19,700,000	29. <b>Trevelino/Keller</b> , Atlanta, GA	500,000
3. <b>Zeno Group</b> , New York, NY	16,113,700	30. <b>imre, LLC</b> , Baltimore, MD	334,800
4. <b>Padilla</b> , Minneapolis, MN	14,319,438	31. <b>Buchanan Public Relations</b> , Bryn Mawr, PA	315,712
5. <b>APCO Worldwide</b> , Washington, DC	12,012,600	32. <b>BizCom Associates</b> , Plano, TX	255,050
6. <b>MikeWorldWide</b> , New York, NY	10,170,275	33. <b>O'Malley Hansen Communications</b> , Chicago, IL	226,861
7. <b>Ruder Finn Inc.</b> , New York, NY	7,520,000	34. <b>L.C. Williams &amp; Associates</b> , Chicago, IL	213,800
8. <b>Taylor</b> , New York, NY	7,200,000	35. <b>Franco</b> , Detroit, MI	131,500
9. <b>Jackson Spalding</b> , Atlanta, GA	6,591,676	36. <b>Zapwater Communications, Inc.</b> , Chicago, IL	130,953
10. <b>Coyne PR</b> , Parsippany, NJ	6,300,000	37. <b>Kivvit</b> , Chicago, IL	120,469
11. <b>5W Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	5,000,000	38. <b>Lawlor Media Group</b> , New York, NY	109,250
12. <b>Champion Management Group</b> , Dallas, TX	4,077,189	39. <b>Racepoint Global</b> , Boston, MA	105,000
13. <b>Finn Partners</b> , New York, NY	4,000,000	40. <b>Ehrhardt Group, The</b> , New Orleans, LA	91,550
14. <b>French   West   Vaughan</b> , Raleigh, NC	3,822,175	41. <b>Rasky Partners, Inc.</b> , Boston, MA	83,706
15. <b>360PR+</b> , Boston, MA	3,167,286	42. <b>Hemsworth Communications</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	75,788
16. <b>Lambert</b> , Grand Rapids, MI	2,866,000	43. <b>Otter PR</b> , St. Petersburg, FL	70,930
17. <b>SPM Communications</b> , Dallas, TX	2,372,846	44. <b>Slide Nine Agency</b> , Columbus, OH	65,525
18. <b>Fish Consulting</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,867,000	45. <b>Inkhouse</b> , Waltham, MA	64,897
19. <b>Berk Communications</b> , New York, NY	1,535,237	46. <b>Novitas Communications</b> , Denver, CO	64,500
20. <b>Zimmerman Agency</b> , Tallahassee, FL	1,200,000	47. <b>Brownstein Group</b> , Philadelphia, PA	53,190
21. <b>Peppercomm</b> , New York, NY	1,178,402	48. <b>TruePoint Communications</b> , Dallas, TX	50,562
22. <b>rbb Communications</b> , Miami, FL	1,122,868	49. <b>Marketing Maven Public Relations</b> , Camarillo, CA	38,804
23. <b>IW Group, Inc.</b> , West Hollywood, CA	1,080,567	50. <b>Singer Associates PR, Inc.</b> , San Francisco, CA	29,458
24. <b>Tunheim</b> , Minneapolis, MN	924,581	51. <b>Judge Public Relations</b> , Tampa, FL	28,083
25. <b>MP&amp;F Strategic Communications</b> , Nashville, TN	824,629	52. <b>Beehive Strategic Communication</b> , St. Paul, MN	15,000
26. <b>Stuntman PR</b> , New York, NY	807,161	53. <b>Rosica Communications</b> , Fair Lawn, NJ	3,750
27. <b>LaunchSquad</b> , San Francisco, CA	667,000		



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

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*"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

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CIMSearch

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—Henry P. Feintuch, Feintuch Communications



# Rescuing Biden's press secretary

By Fraser Seitel

**T**he most powerful—and difficult—media relations job in the world is the Press Secretary to the President of the United States. Every day, the White House



**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*.

Press Secretary must go out and confront a menacing White House press corps, eager to unleash red-meat controversy throughout the land. A Press Secretary's every word, therefore, must be measured and purposeful. The job is neither for the squeamish nor the inexperienced.

Over time, a small number of Press Secretaries—Robert Gibbs

under President Obama, Tony Snow and Ari Fleischer under President Bush, Mike McCurry under President Clinton, Sarah Sanders under President Trump and even Jen Psaki under President Biden—were all outstanding. A smaller number—Scot McClellan under Bush, Jay Carney under Obama and Sean Spicer under Trump—were dreadful.

Biden's current Press Secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre is, by all accounts, a lovely woman. But so far at least, she's a miserable press secretary. Admittedly, that's harsh but also true. What Ms. Jean-Pierre, alas, lacks—and her more able predecessors possessed—were certain characteristics that made them invaluable to both their boss and the media through which they conveyed their administration's positions, philosophies and programs.

Indeed, a competent media relations counselor at any level and in any organization must abide by at least three inviolate principles:

## It's not about you

First, you're speaking as a proxy on behalf of your chief and the administration. Your primary job is accurately to reflect the positions of the enterprise. Who you are and what you think are of little consequence. You're merely an intermediary, a messenger, a conduit to communicate the thinking of the CEO.

In Jean-Pierre's case, her unique background has complicated keeping the story on Biden and not herself. She devoted a large part of her very first White House

press briefing in May to noting, "I am a Black, gay, immigrant woman, the first of all three of those to hold this position."

Her pride was justifiable and well worth mentioning. But she didn't let it go there. Over the subsequent 10 months on the job, she's continued to write, lecture and bring attention to her own personal story. No question, hers is an inspirational tale, but her job is to focus attention on the President's successes, not her own.

## Gain a seat at the table

One way to ensure that the focus stays on the chief is by earning a seat at the policy table to participate in the discussions and understand the decisions that become administration policy.

"Access is power" goes the public relations truism, and that's certainly the case if one is the organization's lead spokesperson. The closer you are to—and more comfortable you are with—the individual running the show, the more confidence you'll display and speak with when representing that individual in public.

Jean-Pierre, on the other hand, is a relative newcomer not only to the Biden administration but also to the practice of public relations. Her background is as a political operative, having served in various organizational roles in Democrat campaigns. Her public relations "experience" began two years ago as Psaki's deputy. The point is if Jean-Pierre does have a voice and seat at the Biden management table, it's likely a faint one at the distant far end.

This unfamiliarity with the boss wouldn't pose as much of a problem if Jean-Pierre demonstrated an ability to.

## Know the policy cold

A capable media relations professional must also know everything about everything of relevance that's going on both within and outside the organization. He or she must be the eyes and ears of a preoccupied chief, both to provide the leader with instant knowledge and counsel on pressing issues and to put those issues in an understandable context for the public.

This requires doing your own constant due diligence on matters that not only are front-and-center on the national stage but also those lurking behind-the-scenes ready to explode. Too many "I'll have to get back to you on that" or "You'll have to ask others about that," and your credibility as a reliable source begins to wane.

For the White House Press Secretary, with a multitude of hot-button topics looming at all times, it's this responsibility—to be equipped and ready with correct answers—that transcends all others. And it's here, on a daily basis, that Jean-Pierre's policy uncer-

tainty and fear of failure expose themselves.

Watch today's Daily White House Press Briefing and the object that stands out most prominently is the voluminous briefing book, to which Jean-Pierre's hands appear to be perpetually connected. The Press Secretary rarely answers a question without first turning—sometimes furiously, other times furtively—to the section in the briefing book coded to the subject in question.

Nothing improper, of course, about making sure your answers reflect written policy. Psaki would occasionally, infrequently turn to the briefing book to ensure accuracy in a particularly prickly area of inquiry. But she, like all good press secretaries, handled most questions with an extemporaneous confidence and clarity. Jean-Pierre, by contrast, is so wedded to the briefing book for virtually every answer, her reliance on it has become a source of criticism and even ridicule by administration critics, who question not only the press secretary's confidence but her competence.

For example, when Psaki faced recurring hostile questions about the disastrous policy of moving migrants from the southern border, she'd respond specifically, aggressively and extemporaneously, as she did at a January 2022 briefing:

"What I can tell you, in terms of what our policy is and how we're approaching the border, is that we continue to be under Title 42. Migrants who cannot be expelled under Title 42 are placed into immigration proceedings. And one of those avenues could be placement in an alternative detention program in the interior of the United States ... where they wait for next steps in the immigration process ... We have stringent protocols and processes that we implement here."

A year later, when confronted with similar hostility about the Biden administration's southern border inaction, Jean-Pierre's answers were characteristically vague, defensive and studiously scripted:

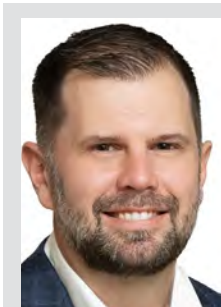
"The President inherited a mess ... Secretary (Alejandro) Mayorkas has worked against immeasurable odds to lead the Department of Homeland Security out of the depths of the prior administration's chaos, cruelty and dysfunction to deliver real, lasting and meaningful reform."

In fairness, the job of White House Press Secretary is a 24/7 pressure cooker, where self-important reporters mainly fling gotcha questions to win themselves air time. Karine Jean-Pierre has been in the saddle for only less than a year. With time may come increased confidence and greater mastery of the subject matter. But Ms. Jean-Pierre is off to a rocky start. If she's to reverse disastrous first impressions, she'll need to master these three media relations principles ASAP. ●

# Tax planning considerations for 2023

By Dominic Rovano

As the tax season approaches, we've compiled a list of tax updates and reminders for 2023 that may affect your business. The information below includes highlights that can help inform your tax strategy for the year ahead.



**Dominic Rovano**, CPA, is a Co-Partner in Charge of Janover LLC's New York City office and leads the Professional Services group.

## Reporting requirements

### Payroll reporting requirements.

Each state has its own annual reporting process. New York, for example, proceeds as follows: Employers must complete Part C of the NYS-45 (Employee Wage and Withholding Information), along with columns D and E

for each quarter.

**Foreign reporting.** FBARs (Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts, Form 114) are required for those that have a financial interest in, and/or signing authority of, a foreign financial account that exceeds an aggregate value of \$10,000 at any time during the year. Failure to file can result in significant penalties, beginning at a minimum of \$10,000. FBARs are due on or before April 17. Automatic extensions are granted for six months.

### Other recent changes

**Personal and business use of automobiles.** Employers are required to report and provide information on their tax returns for vehicles provided to their employees for business and personal use. This information is used to report employee taxable fringe benefits on the employee's Form W-2. The IRS requires that the personal use of the vehicle must be included in the employee's compensation if the employee doesn't reimburse the employer for vehicle usage. The company must compute the daily personal usage of commutation to be included in the employee's Form W-2.

Methods for calculating employer-provided vehicles include:

- Lease rule value. This rule applies to leased vehicles.
- Cents-per-mile rule (limitations apply). To qualify for this rule, vehicles must be driven more than 10,000 miles per year and must be valued at less than \$56,100. As of July 1, 2022, the business use standard mileage rate has increased from 58.5 to 62.5 cents per mile.

- Commuting rule. To qualify for this rule, the company must have a written policy in place indicating that the vehicle is used solely for business use. This method can't be used for one percent or more owners, directors and officers with compensation of \$120,000 or more or an individual with compensation of \$245,000 or more.

- General valuation rule. This rule considers the cost an individual would incur to lease the vehicle under the same terms in the same geographic area based on the vehicle's market value and annual lease value. This applies to vehicles valued up to \$59,999. For vehicles with a market value of more than \$59,999, the annual lease value is 25 percent of the vehicle's fair market value plus \$500.

## CARES Act, Tax Cuts & Jobs Act highlights

**Moving expenses.** Any reimbursements for moving expenses should be included in an employee's wages and are subject to Federal income tax. Employers may deduct the qualified moving expenses only if they are included in an employee's wages.

**Qualified business income.** You may be eligible for a deduction of up to 20 percent of qualified business income.

**Meals.** Meals provided by the employer had increased from 50 percent to 100 percent deductible for meals purchased from a restaurant for the 2021 and 2022 tax years. While entertainment is typically not deductible, there are some exceptions for 100 percent deductibility. For the 2023 tax year, the deductibility of meals will revert back to 50 percent deductibility.

**Net operating losses.** Under the CARES Act, taxpayers can carry back 2018, 2019 and 2020 net operating losses five years. Any unused losses can be carried forward 20 years. For 2021 and 2022, NOLs are required to be carried forward and not allowed to be carried back.

**Change in accounting methods.** Small businesses (taxpayers with average gross receipts in 2022 of \$27 million or less over the prior three years) may use the cash basis method of accounting.

**Suspension of excess business loss.** For 2018 through 2020, business losses are fully deductible. For 2021 through 2029, any business losses in excess of the limitations below are not deducted until the subsequent year.

Business loss limitations for 2023 are as follows:

- Taxpayers married filing jointly: Business losses in excess of \$578,000.
- Taxpayers single and married filing separately: Business losses in excess of \$289,000.

**Annual gift exclusion.** Any transfer from a donor to an individual, either directly or indirectly where money isn't received in return, is considered a gift. Gifts to a spouse, political organization, tuition and medical expenses paid for someone else aren't considered gifts. Annual gift exclusion amounts for 2023 are as follows:

- Annual gift exclusion amount: \$17,000 per donor.
- Annual lifetime gift exclusion amount: \$12.9 million per donor.

**Cryptocurrency.** The use of virtual currency, such as Bitcoin, could result in a taxable event. With the increasing popularity of cryptocurrency being used, the IRS is increasing its oversight and regulations on cryptocurrency transactions.

## Depreciation rules

**Bonus depreciation.** For qualifying assets placed in service by December 31, 2022, 100 percent bonus depreciation deduction is allowed. Bonus depreciation will begin to phaseout for tax years beginning January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2027 as follows:

- Allowable Bonus Depreciation Deduction: 2023: 80 percent; 2024: 60 percent; 2025: 40 percent; 2026: 20 percent; 2027: 0.

**Section 179.** Allows taxpayers to immediately expense the cost of certain tangible property that is eligible for the section 179 deduction. The maximum section 179 deduction that can be deducted increased from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 for the 2022 tax year. Section 179 phase-out has increased from \$2,000,000 to \$2,500,000. Section 179 property includes:

- Machinery and equipment purchased for use in a trade or business.
- Qualified improvement property.
- Roofs, HVAC, fire protection systems, alarm systems and security systems.

## Credits

**Electric vehicles and solar energy.** Electric Vehicles: For new 2022 and 2023 electric vehicle models purchased after August 16, 2022 and assembled in North America, a nonrefundable tax credit may be available to be claimed for qualifying electric vehicles up to \$7,500. For used electric vehicles, the tax credit will be calculated at the lesser of 30 percent of the vehicle's value or \$4,000.

For new vehicles purchased on or after January 1, 2023, the income limits below apply:

- Married filing jointly or surviving spouse: Must not exceed \$300,000.
- Head of household: Must not exceed \$225,000.
- Single: Must not exceed \$50,000.

**Research and development.** A federal tax credit is available for costs related to companies performing activities related to the development, design or improvement of products, processes, formulas or software. ○



## Bedingfield to exit White House post

**K**ate Bedingfield, White House Communications Director, will exit her post at the end of February.

Ben LaBolt, Partner at Bully Pulpit Interactive and longtime Biden advisor, will succeed Bedingfield.

Biden called Bedingfield “a loyal and trusted advisor, through thick and thin.” He said LaBolt “has big shoes to fill.”

Bedingfield, who has led communications for Biden for the past four years and was his Spokesman during his vice presidency, had originally planned to leave the White House last summer but then opted to stay through 2022.

Prior to advising Biden, Bedingfield was VP-Communications at both the Motion Picture Assn. of America and Monumental Sports and Entertainment.

She also handled communications for Sen. Jeanne Shaheen’s successful New Hampshire campaign.

LaBolt headed communications for the Supreme Court nomination of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and advised the Biden-Harris transition on nominations.

The White House announcement notes that LaBolt is making history as its first openly gay Communications Director. ○



Kate Bedingfield



## Dentons adds ex-Rep Denham

**F**ormer California Congressman Jeff Denham, who was a member of the Republican leadership team, has joined Dentons as a Senior Policy Director.

In the House, Denham focused on transportation, infrastructure, agricultural, natural resources and energy issues. He also served as Deputy Whip for the House Republican Conference.

Denham will work alongside ex-New York City Congressman Joe Crowley, who was a member of the Democratic leadership team.

He joined Dentons last year as a Senior Policy Director and is a friend of Denham. ○



Jeff Denham

## Biden aide Goff heads for Cornerstone

**S**huwanza Rebecca Goff, Deputy Assistant to the President and liaison to Congress, will join Cornerstone Government Affairs on March 3.

She has handled outreach to the House of Representatives on issues such as infrastructure, COVID-19, gun violence, semiconductor manufacturing, and the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Prior to joining the White House, Goff was Director of Legislative Operations in the office of Majority Leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland and became the first Black woman to serve as Floor Director for the House of Representatives.

Cornerstone has more than 140 professionals in 14 offices across the U.S. ○



Shuwanza  
Rebecca Goff

## Former Harris aide joins Giffords

**G**iffords, the gun violence prevention organization founded by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, hires Chris Harris as VP of Communications.

Harris served as Communications Director on Kamala Harris’s Senate team during her runs for president and Vice President. Before that, he was Communications Director for Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) and led communications for Sen. Mark Udall’s (D-CO) 2014 campaign.

He was most recently a VP at Weber Shandwick and its public affairs unit, Powell Tate. ○



Chris Harris

## Hope Hicks Rides to Dolan’s Rescue

**E**mbattled Madison Square Garden Entertainment Group chief James Dolan is using former Trump PR guru Hope Hicks to deflect criticism for his use of facial recognition technology to ban legal foes from attending events at the “world’s most famous arena.”

The facial recognition software identifies ticketholders who work for firms that are pressing lawsuits against MSG. Security people then boot them out.

New York State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal wrote a Jan. letter to National Basketball Assn. Commissioner Adam Silver and National Hockey League head Gary Bettman asking them to sanction Dolan.

“I am writing to urge that you sanction MSG Entertainment (“MSG”) and its CEO James Dolan unless they immediately cease their outrageous use of facial recognition technology to identify and ban members of the public from Madison Square Garden because they have been deemed hostile to the legal and financial interests of MSG,” wrote the Manhattan politico.

Hicks, who was Spokesperson for the Trump Organization and then for Trump’s presidential campaign, moved into the White House Comms. Director slot, replacing Anthony Scaramucci. She left Team Trump for the Chief Communications job at Fox Corp. ○



Hope Hicks

## Ex-Senator seeks to highlight Russian war crimes

**N**orm Coleman, who was a Republican Senator for Minnesota, is repping the London-based Victor Pinchuk Foundation as it works to stage an exhibit in the U.S. Capitol on Russian war crimes against Ukraine.

Pinchuk is a Ukrainian oligarch and founder of both EastOne Group investment firm based in London, and Interpipe Group, steel and pipe company in Ukraine.

He also owns media properties in Ukraine, served in its parliament and married the daughter of ex-Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma.

Coleman represents the Foundation through his connection at Hogan Lovells law firm, where he is Senior Counsel.

Hogan Lovells is to engage with members of Congress to help arrange for the exhibit. Hogan Lovells is working on the exhibit project on a pro bono basis. ○

## Edelman expands work for Saudi Arabia's Neom

**E**delman has inked a three-year deal to enhance the social media presence of executives at Neom Tech and Digital Co.

The effort kicked off this month and includes strategic counsel, social media copy and content development. It's worth \$40,000 a month.

NT&D has launched Tonomus, a cognitive technology enterprise, as its first subsidiary. Joseph Bradley, a 15-year veteran of Cisco and an expert in artificial intelligence, robotics, blockchain and the internet-of-things, heads Tonomus.

### 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).

**Alexander Beckles, LLC**, Fort Washington, Md., **registered Jan. 23, 2023 for Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)**, Washington, D.C., through LB International Solutions, concerning providing government relations and public relations services in Washington, D.C. and New York City.

**BGR Government Affairs, LLC**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 3, 2023 for Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan**, Washington, D.C., regarding providing government affairs services by engaging and facilitating communications with relevant officials and decision-makers in the U.S.

**MMGY Global, LLC**, Overland Park, Kan., **registered Feb. 16, 2023 for Business Iceland (Promote Iceland)**, Reykjavik, Iceland, regarding providing media relations and public relations services to promote tourism to Iceland to U.S. visitors.

### 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).

**Government Relations Group, LLC**, Miami, Fla., **registered Feb. 6, 2023 for Island Sales & Development Group, LLC**, Miami, Fla., regarding procurement opportunities.

**Jones Walker, LLP**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 3, 2023 for Bluetec Industries Offshore Wind Services, LLC**, Houston, Texas, regarding support of offshore wind initiatives.

**OnMessage Public Strategies**, Alexandria, Va., **registered Feb. 15, 2023 for National Association of Broadcasters**, Washington, D.C., regarding issues related to broadcast media, including the Local Radio Freedom Act, H.Con.Res. 13.

**S-3 Group**, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 7, 2023 for Wildcat Discovery Technologies, Inc.**, San Diego, Calif., regarding EV battery research and development issues.

He's spearheading the development of the digital infrastructure that will be the operating system of Saudi Arabia's \$500 billion Neom mega-city project.

Edelman began working for Neom in 2020. ○

## GOPers want to yank Al Jazeera's press credentials

**T**hree Republican Congressmen are calling for the immediate suspension of press credentials of reporters for the Al Jazeera Media News Network until it complies with the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Michael Waltz (FL), Jack Bergman (MI) and Alex Mooney (WV) view Al Jazeera as the propaganda arm of Qatar, which funds the satellite TV network. They cite various media reports about Qatar's widespread spying on Members of Congress and its effort to influence U.S. policy by leaking damaging information, including hacked contents, to the media.

In their Feb. letter to House leadership, the Congressmen note that credentialed members of the House and Senate galleries enjoy unparalleled access to the U.S. Capitol.

"While this access is necessary for the media to provide accurate reporting to the American public, it is also the kind of access coveted by foreign powers seeking sensitive information from inside Congress," they wrote.

Al Jazeera's various units have 136 credentialed staffers. That towers over the 82 *New York Times* staffers with credentials.

Waltz, Bergman and Mooney say they have no reason to doubt that most of Al Jazeera's are legit, but that is not their case.

They wrote: "A media company with a substantial presence on Capitol Hill is the perfect front for inserting just a handful of intelligence operatives among the credentialed journalists." ○



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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  
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### Clients Include:

Adare Manor - Co. Limerick, Ireland  
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