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THE FOOD ISSUE

WILL GROCERY PRICES COME DOWN IN 2024?

PR STRATEGIES FOR CPG CHALLENGER BRANDS

RECIPES FOR INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS

EMBRACING THE "FOOD IS MEDICINE" MOVEMENT

FOOD COMMUNICATIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

DINNERTIME LESSONS FOR PR PLANNING

SOBER CURIOUS GOES MAINSTREAM



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EDITORIAL

Could food prices determine the 2024 election?

SUSTAINABILITY KEY WHEN MESSAGING GEN Z

Gen Z's concern for environmental issues is a reflection of living in a world fraught with uncertainty.

ARTICLE READERSHIP PEAKS IN THREE DAYS

The majority of news articles are read within the first three days of publication, according to a recent report.

CSR ISSUES MUST IMPACT BOTTOM LINE

Consumers want companies' CSR efforts to focus on issues related to their core business.

X TRAILS FACEBOOK, INSTA FOR ENGAGEMENT

Audiences interacted with brand content far more often on Facebook and Instagram than they did via X.

INFLUENCER PARTNER RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

Best practices for developing influencer marketing programs for food and beverage brands.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

Communicating with consumers about the current climate crossroads.

THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Understanding the interconnected web of influence that contributes to a brand's success.

SOBER CURIOUS GOES MAINSTREAM

The growing sober-curious movement presents a challenge and opportunity for marketers.

DINNERTIME LESSONS FOR PR PLANNING

What dinner can teach us about creating effective nutrition communications campaigns.

USE OF GEN AI IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

The emergence of Gen AI technology has the potential to and erode voter trust.

A PLAYBOOK FOR CPG CHALLENGER BRANDS

Tips to help refine and amplify your CPG brand strategy to win in 2024 and beyond.

ADDING VALUE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY SPACE

How brands can create an experience that's compatible with consumers' values.

EMBRACING FOOD AS MEDICINE

Strategic communications strategies for success in the growing "food is medicine" movement.

PEOPLE IN PR

PROFILES OF FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

RANKINGS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

WASHINGTON REPORT

COLUMNS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Fraser Seitel

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
Dominic Rovano

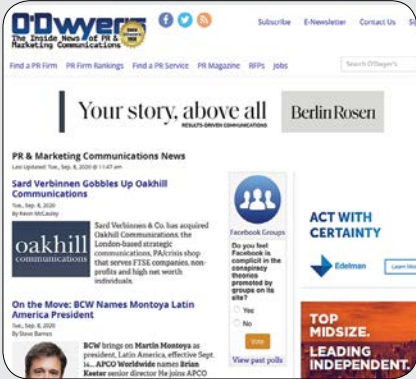
15

33



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EDITORIAL CALENDAR 2024

January/February: Crisis Comms. & Buyer's Guide

March/April: Food & Beverage

May/June: PR Firm Rankings

July/August: Travel & Tourism

August/September: Financial, I.R. & Prof. Services

October/November: Healthcare & Medical

November/December: Technology & Social Media

ADVERTISERS

Coyne Public Relations.....	5	Hager Sharp.....	3
Edelman.....	20 & 21	Hemsworth.....	13
FoodMinds.....	7	ICR.....	Inside cover
G&S Business Communications.....	Back cover	Padilla.....	11



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Could food prices determine the 2024 election?

Stop me if you've heard this one before. For several years now, I've found myself wandering my neighborhood grocery store aisles, rubbing my eyes while staring incredulously at the prices, wondering when I'll wake up.

From what I've heard, I'm not alone in experiencing this kind of sticker shock. Unless you've been living under a rock these past four years, you probably noticed that grocery prices have been ridiculously high. The reasons for this, we're told, are manifold: inflation, supply-chain issues, weather events, higher wages, foreign wars, a bird flu outbreak and, last but not least, some good-old-fashioned price-gouging from food corporations that have resorted to the grifty practice of using pandemic-induced inflation as an excuse to overcharge customers.

That last one isn't a conspiracy theory. As reported in February by the *New York Times*, a White House Council of Economic Advisers analysis discovered that profit margins at grocery stores are now two percentage points higher than they were before the pandemic, effectively accounting for the highest profit margins in 20 years.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index, which tracks the average prices U.S. consumers pay for goods and services, food prices increased by 2.6 percent in January 2024 from the same period a year prior. The price for food at home—that is, groceries—rose 1.2 percent in the last year, while food away from home—or restaurants—rose 5.1 percent. And that's the *good* news: The rising prices that characterize the latest CPI report represent a marked improvement if you consider that food-at-home prices jumped 11.4 percent in 2022 and 5 percent in 2023. Those numbers were so high they even outpaced the rate of inflation, which is saying something, considering we haven't seen inflation like this since the 1970s.

People are angry. The average American might not follow CPI data, but they *do* know how much they spend at the grocery store every week and how these sky-high prices have forced them to modify their budgets and shopping behaviors, be it buying less, switching to value brands or hunting for deals. Suffice it to say, these cost-saving adaptations influence their feelings regarding the state of the country. According to a December 2023 Morning Consult survey, food prices remain Americans' top economic concern. A recent Yahoo Finance/Ipsos poll found that two-thirds of voters said food prices are where inflation has hit them hardest. It isn't a stretch to assume the prices people are paying at the supermarket may play a role in how they vote in November. Food prices have become a top political issue, perhaps more so than any other time in recent memory.

This hasn't translated into good news for President Biden. Biden enters a reelection year with abysmal approval ratings and inflation as one of his biggest hurdles—and it just so happens the grocery aisle is where most Americans are feeling the economic strain. That's a shame, because all economic indicators suggest we're on the rebound. Unemployment sits at a historically low 3.7 percent. Job growth has continually outpaced expectations. The stock market hit record highs in February. Consumer confidence is improving. And not only is overall inflation cooling, but for the first time since early 2022, the rising cost of food has now fallen below it. Even better, as the CPI data suggests, some grocery store items are now cheaper: The most recent USDA food price outlook predicts that food-at-home prices are expected to decline .4 percent in 2024. Indeed, the price of avocados, eggs, tomatoes and lettuce have all moderated in the last year. Sounds pretty good, right? But are consumers getting the message?

"News of food-price deceleration is widespread," said Heddy DeMaria, Chief Insights and Strategy Officer at Hunter, an agency that specializes in food and nutrition. "Consumers are getting the message and appear to be cautiously optimistic that prices will stabilize and, in some cases, decline. However, at the end of the day, they mostly believe what they personally see on the grocery store shelf and how much money they will need to lay out weekly for their food expenses. Until they notice a difference, we can expect them to continue to employ their cost-savings behaviors they have recently adopted."

DeMaria told me that while she thinks grocery prices will be part of the election conversation this year, she doesn't believe it will play a significant role in who Americans ultimately vote for at the ballot box. First, we're not in a recession. Second, both leading candidates have aligned themselves with the everyman who's been disproportionately impacted by unreasonable food prices and is looking to the government for solutions (one candidate has done it through an "America-First" message, the other by discussing equity and inclusion). Instead, DeMaria believes it's the typical polarizing issues fueled by deep-seated ideological commitments that will remain at the forefront and drive voter choice in 2024.

"People are deciding how—or if—to vote based on which candidates they feel best reflect their own personal values, and are most aligned on the standards they believe will be in the best interest of the country," DeMaria said.

So, in other words, business as usual. Maybe grocery prices are the least of our worries? ○

— Jon Gingerich

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Sustainability messages key when aiming at Gen Z

Gen Z's concern for environmental issues is a reflection of living in a world fraught with uncertainty, underscoring the importance for brands to craft messages that align with this generation's values.

By Jon Gingerich

A global pandemic, ongoing political polarization, wars, financial crises, gun violence, climate change and decades-high inflation. Generation Z is often characterized for its pessimism—and perhaps for good reason.

Perhaps it's also no surprise why this generation places such uniquely high value on social and environmental issues, and why these issues affect what brands Gen Z members are loyal to.

According to a new study by Milwaukee-based advertising agency Hoffman York, understanding these habits underscores the need for brands to craft marketing strategies that align with the values of this cohort born between 1997 and 2012, which now accounts for the second-largest generation and commands \$360 billion in buying power.

The study, which surveyed Gen Z members in an attempt to gather their insights on everything from brands to social media use to attitudes surrounding travel, employment and work, found that 75 percent of Gen Zers said they'd pay a premium for environmentally friendly products, and 71 percent said they'd do the same for prod-

ucts that used recycled materials. More than two-thirds (68 percent) said they'd pay more for organic food. Gen Zers are also more likely to follow sustainability practices (24 percent) and support brands that donate to causes they care about (21 percent). Finally, they're most likely to work for a company that invests in DEI initiatives (30 percent).

So, why does this generation place such a premium on supporting products and services that align with their values? The study suggests that it's a reflection of living in a world fraught with ever-present challenges. The survey discovered that less than a third (31 percent) of Gen Z respondents reported being happy, and only about the same number (32 percent) said they're optimistic about the future. Only 16 percent said they're optimistic about the future of the country.

Of course, Gen Z's views are informed by a heavy, daily diet of social media, and almost half (42 percent) of these digital natives cited social media platforms as their primary source for news, underscoring its significance for marketers as a channel by which this cohort engages with content and brands. An overwhelming majority of Gen

Zers reported using YouTube (88 percent), Instagram (81 percent), TikTok (80 percent) and Snapchat (78 percent). As such, social media makes a pronounced impact on what brands they'll buy. Gen Z members are also far more likely to say that they'll buy a product if an influencer or celebrity uses it (23 percent) or if it was designed by an influencer or celebrity (19 percent). More than a quarter (26 percent) said they like it when brands and retailers provide personal recommendations.

Gen Z members are also more likely to admit that social media negatively impacts their mental health (29 percent). Nearly a third (32 percent) even consider themselves addicted to it. Oddly, the same number (32 percent) also said they view social media as something that's generally positive.

Perhaps the most novel finding of this study, however, was the discovery that, unlike their Millennial elders, Gen Z appears to enjoy being in the office. Only a third (33 percent) of respondents reported working remotely, and only 41 percent said they would rather work from home. Gen Z also appears to prefer keeping coworkers and friends separate, as only 36 percent said it's important to be friends with their colleagues.

Hoffman York's study surveyed more than 1,300 Gen Z U.S. residents in July 2023. Research was conducted by Cint. ○

Article readership peaks within three days

The majority of news articles are read within the first three days of publication, according to a recent report.

By Jon Gingerich

News cycles move fast. And in an age where attention is a scarce resource, they travel at lightning-fast speed.

According to a report published by PR analytics and insights platform Memo, the vast majority of an article's readership typically occurs on the day of publication or the day after before quickly dropping off after day three.

The annual report, which uncovers news cycle trends by asking Americans about their news consumption trends, found that most news articles are read within the first couple of days after publication.

According to the report, which relied on a random sample of 1,110 news articles, more than three-quarters (76 percent) of articles' readership occurs, on average, within the first three days of their publication. Readership typically peaks on the day the article is published (almost 40 percent), with reader-

ship already dropping off steadily (less than 30 percent) by day two. After day three, an average article's readership clocks in at less than 10 percent.

For topical news, readership was even more concentrated within the first three days (86 percent). Virtually all (95 percent) of a topical news article's readership takes place within the first week.

The survey also discovered that, generally, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are the days where readers typically consume the most news.

Not surprisingly, conflict and chaos drove the headlines last year. Case in point: Donald Trump consistently remained the top news item in 2023 and drew more readers last year than any other topic for three out of 2023's four quarters. Other items that drew the most readership included the Israel-Hamas War, which came in second, fol-

lowed by stories involving climate change and the Russia-Ukraine War. Filling out the fifth most popular news story of the year was the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other major news items for the year included the budding romance between singer/songwriter Taylor Swift and NFL Tight End Travis Kelce, which dominated the news cycle toward the end of the year. In fact, more people read about Swift and Kelce during the last three months of 2023 than climate change, according to the report. Rihanna's Super Bowl LVII Halftime Show, which was the most-watched halftime show performance of all time and later fueled speculation that she was pregnant, was another of the biggest news items of the year. According to the Memo report, nearly twice as many people read about Rihanna's pregnancy reveal than King Charles' coronation.

Memo's "2024 State of Media & Readership Report" analyzed more than a half-million articles from national, local, business, lifestyle and trade outlets in 2023. ○

CSR issues must impact bottom line

Consumers want companies to give back to their communities but also want CSR efforts to focus on issues related to their core business, according to a recent study.

By Steve Barnes

Consumers continue to place a premium on corporate responsibility, but they increasingly want to see that responsibility directed toward issues that affect the bottom line, according to a new study from Mission North.

The agency's 2024 Brand Expectations Index, which asked 1,000 adults in the U.S. to weigh in on what factors add to a brand's value and which detract from it, found that when companies focus on issues that are tied to their core business, they are seen more positively by consumers.

The top thing that consumers expect from a brand: security. More than seven in 10 of those surveyed (71 percent) said they want brands to put an emphasis on customer security. Coming right behind was making customer privacy a priority (70 percent). Product innovation was also high on the list, at 66 percent.

When it comes to social responsibility, consumers expect brands to keep things close to home, with 61 percent saying they

want companies to give back to their communities. Almost as many (59 percent) expect companies to improve their diversity and pay equity policies.

Responsibility initiatives that look beyond the brand's core business and its employees are not nearly so well regarded for the most part. Only 39 percent of respondents expect a company to take public stances on larger social issues, with slightly fewer (38 percent) thinking that taking bold actions on such issues is to be expected.

The one exception—six out of 10 respondents (60 percent) said they expect brands to “take strides to become more sustainable and environmentally friendly.”

Also, while respondents may not be gung-ho about a brand taking a stance on broader social issues, about two-thirds (66 percent) are in favor of supporting employees who do so.

The study also looks at what consumers expect from brands as regards the use of

AI. Almost half (47 percent) think that AI will create “a more dangerous future,” with only 32 saying it will result in “a better future.” A considerable majority (62 percent) say companies should not “dramatically change their staffing levels” in response to AI, with only 22 percent agreeing that those who heavily invest in AI can stay relevant “even if that means a reduction in staff or layoffs at their company as a result.”

AI ranks rather low in the overall list of actions that made respondents say they would be more likely to trust a brand. Only 34 percent said that “companies that use AI to automate their internal process or operations” or “companies that use AI to improve how customers think about them” would seem more trustworthy.

That compares rather unfavorably with “companies that cut through corporate red tape” (48 percent), “companies that are future-focused” (67 percent) and “companies that own up to their mistakes. (74 percent).” ○

X trails Facebook, Instagram for brand engagement

Audiences interacted with brand content far more often on Facebook and Instagram in 2023 than they did via X (formerly Twitter), according to a report that tracked engagement trends across different social networks.

By Jon Gingerich

People follow brands on social media to stay informed about new products and services, gain access to special deals or promotions or simply to be entertained. However, increased social media use and a growing number of social platforms leave audiences today saturated with content, causing them to become more discerning in regards to what they engage with and where they spend their time.

New research from social media analytics company Sprout Social uncovered what types of branded content audiences engaged with most in 2023—and where they chose to do it—providing insights regarding what channels might be best suited for brands as companies allocate their marketing budgets going forward.

The report found that when it comes to audience engagement, not all networks are created equal. Specifically, when analyzing engagement trends across different social

networks, audiences in 2023 engaged with branded content far more often on Facebook and Instagram than they did via X (formerly Twitter).

Brands received an average of 22 messages per day on Facebook and Instagram, according to the report, compared to 13 on X (formerly Twitter). Instagram engagement was particularly high for leisure, sports and recreation (152 messages received per day), media (128 messages per day) and consumer product manufacturing (98 messages per day). Facebook engagement is highest for media (497 messages received per day), leisure, sports and recreation (238 messages per day) and telecommunications (46 messages per day). X saw the highest engagement with leisure, sports and recreation (152 messages received per day), media (128 messages per day) and travel and hospitality (22 messages per day).

The report also discovered that brands

in 2023 published an average of 10 social posts per day across social networks, virtually unchanged from 2022. However, average inbound engagements on content per day declined 12.5 percent, to 70 last year from 80 in 2022. Average outbound engagements, on the other hand, remained virtually the same as last year, at two.

According to the report, consumers also said that video is a preferred medium by which they'd prefer to be engaged with brands. However, it doesn't appear that many brands are focused on this format. For example, video posts comprised only about a quarter of the content brands published via Instagram in 2023, which was less than half the number of single-image posts that year (52.5 percent).

Sprout's “2024 Content Benchmarks Report” analyzed more than one million public social profiles that were active between January 1 and December 31, 2023. ○

An influencer marketing recipe for success

Best practices for developing influencer marketing programs for chefs, restaurants and food and wine brands.

By Lacey Outten

In an era when social media often dictates culinary trends and consumer dining choices, influencer marketing has emerged as a key strategy for building awareness and driving sales for restaurants and food and beverage brands. According to a recent report on Barclays.com, consumers are willing, if not eager, to spend more to visit “Instagrammable” establishments, underscoring the profound impact of visual storytelling on dining preferences. In an increasingly competitive industry, brands must work with influencers to not only stay relevant but to also stand out, showcasing their unique selling points: from visually stunning interior décor to crave-worthy menu specials. However, it’s important for brands to carefully consider and vet which influencers they work with, establishing clear objectives when creating an influencer partnership, in order to build a mutually beneficial partnership that factors in the right deliverables and metrics to drive success. Mastering the art of effective influencer partnerships has become a crucial component in restaurant marketing, and carefully focusing on a few important factors and best practices can elevate any influencer marketing approach.

Understanding your audience

The first step in building an effective influencer marketing campaign is to understand your target audience. Consider the demographics of your core customer base by taking a look at average age ranges, gender, race, location and even lifestyle choices. Are you looking to expand your reach within this demographic or do you want to attract a new segmented demographic to your brand? Strategically identifying the target audience will help to inform which influencers to consider as partners moving forward.

Setting clear objectives

Once your target audience is defined, the next step is to outline clear goals and objectives for the influencer marketing campaign. Examples include growing your brand’s social media reach and following, building awareness for a new product or offering or driving reservations. Influencer collaborations can also be impactful in promoting special events and other activations. Consider how you will measure the success of the campaign with key performance indicators. This may include not only quantitative metrics such as views, impressions and follower growth but also qualitative mea-

sures like sentiment analysis and audience feedback. A comprehensive approach to goal-setting and measurement is most important when evaluating the campaign and enhancing your broader marketing strategy.

Researching and vetting target prospects

Just because someone says they’re an “influencer” doesn’t mean they are, in fact, an influencer, nor does a cold proposal landing in your inbox mean they’re the right influencer for your brand. With your target audience and KPIs in mind, take a proactive approach, building out a list of relevant influencers to potentially collaborate with, who fit your target demographic. If you don’t have an agency partner to handle this for you, keep in mind that the research and vetting process should include taking a thoughtful review of an influencer’s social media pages, blogs and other platforms. Request media kits and an overview of their page’s demographics for consideration. Evaluate important factors such as the influencer’s authenticity and credibility when reviewing their content. If the influencer has worked with similar brands in the past, case studies or reports from previous partnerships will be beneficial in understanding what type of results you can expect. Take the same approach to proposals you receive from influencers directly, checking their tone of voice, past content and numbers before making a commitment.

Building mutually beneficial partnerships

Once the influencers who align best with your brand have been identified, the next step is outreach to secure interest. In the invitation to collaborate, it’s important to clearly outline your campaign’s intention, the requested deliverables and the influencer’s benefits. Be prepared to negotiate terms and fees, keeping in mind the ask, their popularity and other factors. If you’re particularly interested in capturing high-quality video content and selected the target influencer based on their expertise in this area, be sure to convey this in your guidelines. Creating a simple contract at the onset of the partnership is a helpful tool for making all expectations clear.

Enhancing with creative elements

To make the partnership more compelling to both the target influencer and your audience, get creative with your overall approach. Host the influencer for a private one-on-one cooking lesson with the chef to give followers an exclusive behind-the-scenes look of your establishment. Feature

a special or limited-time menu item that is tied to the influencer and theme of the campaign. Consider incorporating interactive polls, contests and discount codes to increase participation by their fans and followers. By encouraging interaction, you not only deepen the engagement with the influencer but also enhance the overall experience for your audience. Remember, the more imaginative and innovative your strategy, the more likely your influencer program will capture attention and help you stand out in a crowded digital landscape.



Lacey Outten

Measuring success

As an agency that’s deeply focused on results—understanding what is working for our clients, and where there are areas of opportunity—we’re passionate about measurement. If you don’t have an agency partner on board to help you navigate this process, make sure you’re thinking about measurement on the front end, during the campaign and afterward. When evaluating an influencer marketing campaign, and looking at whether or not it was effective, several key points should be considered. Examine the engagement levels on the influencer’s content, such as likes, comments, shares and overall interaction. Measure the return on investment by tracking conversions, follows or other predefined KPIs. Using unique tracking links or promotional codes can help you better understand the direct results of the influencer campaign on the back end—so be sure to speak with your influencer partner(s) and find out if this is possible. It’s also critical to ensure the influencer completed all of the deliverables outlined in the original plan, and if they didn’t, push for additional content after the fact.

A recent study published in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* claims the influencer marketing business has grown from \$8 billion to \$15 billion in just three years. This, combined with the fact that social media continues to dominate as a leading driver in decision-making for F&B brands, emphasizes the importance of building effective influencer campaigns into your overall marketing strategy. When properly executed, these collaborations can help you reach your goals and enhance overall brand visibility. They can also be an excellent complement to your other PR, event marketing and social media efforts.

Lacey Outten is an Associate VP at Hemsworth. ○



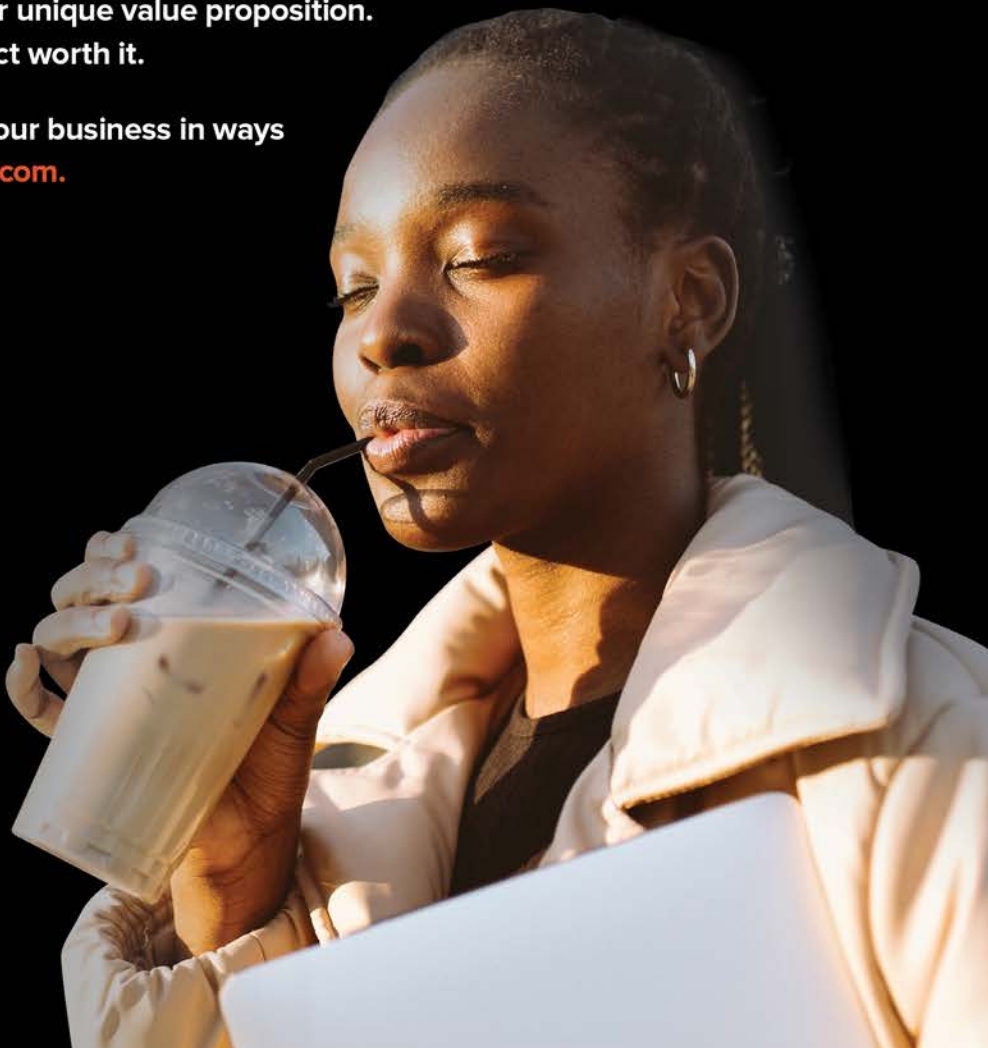
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The future of food

Communicating the effects that climate change and a growing world population have on our food system—and why change is needed.

By Jennifer Becker

Michael Pollan, author of “The Omnivore’s Dilemma,” said: “Our food system depends on consumers not knowing much about it beyond the price disclosed by the checkout scanner. Cheapness and ignorance are mutually reinforcing.”

Why is ignorance about the food system acceptable? To learn more, G&S conducted a Snap Poll on February 3, 2024, of 313 U.S. adults who are the decision makers regarding grocery purchases. It revealed that 69 percent of respondents want to have more knowledge about how their food gets to market.

People need to eat, and the planet needs to remain viable to grow food. Since consumers desire more information, it’s time to help them see the crossroads before us.

The crossroads

The effects of climate change are apparent. According to the 2023 Global Climate Report, 2023 was the hottest year on record and it’s been 47 years since Earth experienced a colder-than-average temperature. This trend means seasonal and regional temperature extremes affect habitats and intensify rainfall. If temperatures continue to spike around the world, it could affect the ability to grow food.

Aside from shifts in climate, there are more mouths to feed. The United Nations predicts the world’s population will increase to 9.7 billion people in 2050 with a peak at nearly 10.4 billion in the mid-2080s.

With more people needing food and climate change affecting the land on which to grow it, consumers need to understand it’s critical to pivot to a sustainable food system. In comforting news for communicators, 35 percent of respondents to the G&S Snap Poll said they have a basic understanding of what a sustainable food system is and desire to learn more.

What is a sustainable food system?

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics defines a sustainable food system as providing nutrition and food security without compromising the planet or people, now and in the future. The food system spans the entire cycle—from growing the food through processing and disposal.

Sustainable food systems address three criteria: Economic, Environmental and Social.

- **Economic.** Everyone involved needs to benefit financially. This includes employees, the government, the businesses involved throughout the food system and consumers through having access to affordable food.

- **Social.** It needs to be fair for all involved. This means training about hygiene and proper food-handling techniques and providing a safe work environment.

- **Environmental.** There must be a neutral or positive effect on the environment. This includes maintaining biodiversity, minimizing water consumption, lowering food waste and reducing carbon emissions.

Currently, many see the food system as a drain on natural resources and a contributor to greenhouse gases that harm the environment. This means the government, farmers, food processors, distributors and consumers all have a role to play in achieving a sustainable food system.

This is where communicators can help educate consumers. In the G&S Snap Poll, 41 percent of respondents believed the farmer was responsible for a sustainable food system and only 13 percent believed consumers had a role.

Communication is essential

Communicators can help consumers better understand the food system. Food brands can raise awareness of the issues and provide education through their marketing and communications efforts. If brands are reducing their carbon footprint, consumers should know. If food brands know the farmers who grow their food, and their ability to maintain natural resources, those brands should communicate this to consumers.

As brands are delving into recyclable and biodegradable food packaging, they should share with consumers why this is important. The goal is to reinforce the story of the brand’s commitment to its values and feeding the growing population. This effort can help earn consumer trust and continued purchases. In fact, 63 percent of respondents in the G&S Snap Poll said they would be more likely to purchase brands that disclose these efforts.

As for raising awareness of the part consumers play in the food system, it will take a concerted effort. Education campaigns can explain where food is grown and processed, and how it’s done so sustainability. Meal planning tips could be shared to help

consumers plan what they need at the store to help minimize food waste.

We’ve been conditioned to buy in bulk, but having more is not always best nor needed, especially if it will end up as trash. In fact, the EPA says more food reaches landfills than any other material, equaling 24 percent of municipal solid waste. The EPA also estimates 58 percent of methane emissions from these landfills are from discarded food.

While 60 percent of G&S Snap Poll respondents recognize landfill food leads to greenhouse gas emissions, only 33 percent are moderately concerned about this problem. This is an area to help boost consumer awareness and needed action to lead to a sustainable food system.

Communication efforts that put a face to each part of the food life cycle will help consumers be more engaged. If they can relate to the processes and people who help bring food to their tables, there’s a good chance they will focus on more than the cost of their food. Communicating about a complex system—in a compelling and interactive manner—will help consumers better understand the food system.

Measure and learn

Landing pages, social listening, focus groups and market research can help communicators determine if their efforts are getting traction.

In conclusion, 71 percent of respondents in the G&S Snap Poll indicated they are concerned climate change and population growth could impact their access to food. Consumers should understand the effort of growing food, producing it and transporting it to the store for their purchase. They should also understand their part in the food system and their role in sustainability.

To ensure food for all, each person throughout the life cycle can work to create a sustainable food system. The key will be how well communication efforts explain the crossroads before us, and the steps we each take, because the future of food may depend on the actions we take today.

Jennifer Becker is Vice President at G&S Business Communications. ●



Jennifer Becker



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The sphere of influence

Understanding the interconnected web of personalities, experts, organizations, executives and employees that add value to a brand and contribute to its success.

By Tim Schramm

The term “influencer” has become ubiquitous in marketing, with the most common association being someone who posts on TikTok or Instagram. It’s certainly justified. According to research from Mintel, roughly four in five people today follow an online influencer or content creator.

Typically, when the term influencer is used, there’s an emphasis on social media influencers. But there are many other stakeholders wielding influence to consider, all playing a role in engaging, informing and inspiring audiences, contributing to a brand’s success.

This article explores the nuances of this sphere of influence, highlighting the roles they play and the benefits for brands navigating this complex terrain.

Earned media—the original influencer

Despite ongoing consolidation and industry disruption, “traditional” media are still enormously influential. Earned media is the original influencer.

For example, let’s look at it strictly from a trend perspective. It’s well-established that online influencers drive trends—think #GirlDinner and #CheesePickle—and that the media will report and amplify them. But the reverse is certainly true as well. Media have always been trendspotters; after all, “new” is a fundamental element of the word “news.” But there are other roles the media play here. Reporters have a platform for developing longer-form content to contextualize trends. We also know that “media leads to other media.” Think of how many times a story starts online and then gets picked up and reported on by broadcast media, or how a national story inspires a local outlet to add their localized take on it. All this amplification ultimately creates a feedback loop that often brings the trend back to social, further expanding its reach or extending its lifecycle.

So, while “what’s trending on social” certainly matters, brands should not overlook the importance of how an earned media strategy can and should contribute to this process.

The unexpected influencer

According to Mintel, 72 percent of people on social media either create content or would like to create content for others’ entertainment; however, only 10 percent describe themselves as influencers. While

the majority of people don’t consider themselves influencers, the desire for posting content and the nature of algorithms has given rise to the “connected consumer”—individuals who may not seek fame but can suddenly find themselves at the center of viral moments.

These unexpected influencers can have a profound impact on brands, offering authentic and relatable content that strikes a chord with a broad audience. Brands that adopt a “surprise and delight” strategy can effectively engage with these influencers, leveraging their organic reach and credibility to enhance their brand’s story. This approach requires a team that follows news and trends closely, acts quickly and knows how to differentiate between a storytelling opportunity and a potentially brand-damaging misfire.

The influencer-in-chief

The role of a company’s CEO today extends far beyond operational leadership. Due to a confluence of factors, CEOs are playing more of a lead role in communicating not just to shareholders but also to the general public, employees, customers and business partners. In an era where authenticity and transparency are highly valued, the CEO’s ability to communicate and connect with different audiences can significantly impact a brand’s reputation. Of course, there is a delicate balance of when, where and in what capacity a CEO should be involved in your communications, but we’ve found that their involvement in the right capacity can impart an added degree of importance, excitement and company commitment that others cannot replicate.

The invisible influencer

Perhaps the most underestimated yet potent influencers are a company’s employees. And that influencer is not always the person in the executive suite. The Institute for Corporate Productivity, a research firm focused on human capital, has written about the importance of the “invisible influencer,” employees throughout different levels of the organization who may not have a hefty title but do a lot of heavy lifting in advancing a brand’s narrative. We advise our clients to ensure their employees are at the very least informed but ideally included in or celebrated for their role in any campaign, initiative or tentpole moment for the company or a brand.

The subject matter expert

Particularly for food and nutrition brands, third-party experts such as nutritionists, registered dietitians and fitness experts play an increasingly important role in today’s health-conscious society. These professionals can break down complex information and make it more accessible and actionable for the general public, an increasingly important trait in a sea of information that can confuse or mislead. Their influence extends well beyond informing individual consumer decisions, contributing to broader conversations about wellness, nutrition and public health. This collective is not just an ongoing resource for reporters; many are social media influencers in their own right. Our agency has a long history of successfully identifying and cultivating relationships with this group of influencers, ensuring an alignment of brand values, expertise, audience and authenticity.



Tim Schramm

The business partner

Collaborations with business partners are a powerful form of influence. These symbiotic relationships enable businesses to tap into new audiences, leveraging the trust and rapport established by their partners to gain an implicit endorsement. Paramount to this approach is ensuring there is alignment on purpose, values and missions between the organizations, clearly defining the goals and outcomes of the collaboration and maintaining ongoing communication throughout the relationship. Many a partnership have gone astray over unclear objectives, misunderstood intentions or a midstream change in execution or expectations. “No surprises” should be your mantra here.

From the traditional power of earned media to the significant impact of every employee within a company, the influencer landscape is, without a doubt, vast, varied and vital. PR professionals are uniquely suited for navigating the totality of this influencer universe. Earned media relations, CEO communications and employee engagement are foundational elements of our profession, and our skills in understanding the nuances of how to engage different audiences provide intrinsic value for communicating with social media influencers. Because so many of these influencers intersect with our industry, it’s up to PR professionals to make sure our voices are heard during the strategy and planning phase to ensure that brands are getting the most value from what they consider “influencer marketing.”

Tim Schramm is Executive Vice President at Coyne Public Relations. ○

Sober curious goes mainstream

More Americans are abstaining from alcohol, according to research on the growing sober-curious movement, presenting a challenge—and an opportunity—for beverage marketers in 2024.

By Jon Gingerich

Alcohol consumption trends have evolved dramatically in recent years, forcing marketers who represent brands in the beer, wine and spirits world to stay apprised of the constant ebbs and flows in recreational drinking culture.

While drinking culture is always changing in America, a fact remains: America is a boozy country. Alcohol consumption has increased steadily in the United States in the past several decades, according to data published by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, an agency within the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Per capita ethanol consumption for the NIAA's most recent survey year was 2.51 gallons, representing a 2.9 percent increase in alcohol consumption from the year prior and a 5.5 percent increase from the year before that, accounting for the largest two-year increase since 1969, an uptick undoubtedly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

But this trend doesn't tell the entire story. A growing number of Americans are also choosing to drink less, while others have grown more flexible in their definition of what it means to abstain. The "California sober" trend, a term popularized by pop star Demi Lovato to mean abstinence from drugs and alcohol with the allowance of various exceptions—typically marijuana—has gained popularity in recent years, as detailed in a February 4 *New York Times* report on how the definition of sobriety is now evolving to include cannabis, ketamine and psychedelics (much to the consternation of some medical professionals).

Interestingly, an increasing portion of Americans are now also choosing to abstain entirely from alcohol—and research suggests that younger Americans in the Gen Z and Millennial generations are mostly responsible for driving this trend.

A recent survey by New York-based ad tech company NCSolutions shows just how much this sober cohort has grown in recent years. The survey, which asked Americans about their drinking habits and preferences, found that while more than two-thirds of Americans ages 21 and older (67 percent) identify themselves as social drinkers—and a majority (84 percent) still believe that drinking remains a major part of the national culture—Americans are now consuming, on average, three drinks per week, down from four per week last year.

In fact, nearly half (41 percent) of Americans said they plan to drink less in 2024,

up from the 34 percent who'd similarly said they'd wanted to cut back on alcohol during a similar survey conducted last year. More than a quarter (28 percent) of U.S. adults said they didn't drink any alcohol at all last year.

Additionally, more than a third (34 percent) of those surveyed identified themselves as "mindful" drinkers, or those who moderate their alcohol consumption, be it how many drinks they have in a week or a single night. And nearly a quarter (22 percent) of Americans reported participating in last year's alcohol-free challenge known as Dry January, up 10 percentage points from 2022.

So, why the change? The main reasons Americans are putting down in the bottle include desiring improved physical health (58 percent), wanting to save money (50 percent) and drinking less as part of a larger lifestyle change (47 percent).



Seedlip, the world's first non-alcoholic spirit, was introduced in 2015. New York-based agency Hanna Lee Communications helped launch the beverage in the U.S. market.

These sober-curious and mindful drinkers largely belong to the Generation Z and Millennial cohorts. Nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of Gen Z respondents reported that they plan to drink less in 2024, accounting for a gain of more than 50 percent from the 40 percent who said the same last year.

Millennials aren't far behind. 49 percent of this cohort said they plan to drink less in 2024, a 26 percent change from the year prior. On average, Millennials have gone from consuming five alcoholic drinks per week in 2023 to three in 2024.

Either way, this evolving recreational drinking culture suggests that nonalcoholic alternatives such as mocktails will continue to be a major trend in 2024. It also suggests

that marketers in the beverage world may need to update their game when engaging with consumers in 2024 and beyond.

"The sober curious movement reflects a significant shift in lifestyle choices driven notably by younger generations," NCSolutions CEO Alan Miles told *O'Dwyer's*. "It presents a unique opportunity for CPG marketers to engage with this younger demographic and foster lasting brand loyalty. We see many of our beverage clients are already adapting and innovating with non-alcoholic beverage options to meet this evolving consumer demand."

Hanna Lee, President and Founder of Hanna Lee Communications, a PR agency specializing in hospitality and travel, told *O'Dwyer's* that not only have hospitality brands embraced alcohol-free alternatives—it's the bar community that's leading that sober-curious movement.

In 2015, Lee's agency helped launch Seedlip, the world's first non-alcoholic spirit in the U.S. Since then, according to Lee, many more companies have followed suit with an array of flavorful, non-alcoholic ingredients for bartenders to experiment with.

"Non-alcoholic cocktails have really developed over the last several years," Lee said. "At the same time, next-generation consumers are moderating their consumption of alcohol. So, it is more than a trend, it is a societal movement, and the sky is the limit."

Lee said that all of her agency's New York-based bar and restaurant clients now offer non-alcoholic cocktails—as do many of its clients elsewhere—and that bartenders today have fully embraced the non-alcoholic drink category and are putting as much creativity and effort into them as they do their full-proof cocktails.

"We see bartenders playing a critical role, since they are educators and tastemakers. Bartenders are at the forefront of pioneering this category and bringing consumers along," Lee said. "Now, whether you consume alcohol or not, you are treated as an equal at the bar and need not feel left out. This exciting movement will continue for many years to come and make socializing more inclusive, whether at a bar, restaurant or home entertaining."

Influencers also appear to be big movers in the sober-curious world. According to the NCSolutions survey, nearly quarter 24 percent of Gen Z said they'd tried a non-alcoholic drink because a celebrity or influencer endorsed it. ●

Dinnertime lessons for PR planning

What the biggest meal of the day can teach us about serving up effective nutrition communications campaigns.

By Megan Mills

When I was growing up, dinnertime was a part of my family's daily routine. It offered a regular opportunity for five busy people to connect and catch up on the news of the day.

Dinnertime was a flexible concept that transformed as our family's needs, finances and priorities changed. Sometimes it was home-made spaghetti and meatballs eaten around the kitchen table, and other times it was pre-made sandwiches eaten in the car on the way to rehearsal. But whatever the menu or where the meal was served, this important evening meal always provided the nutritional and emotional sustenance we needed.

Dinnertime was a core component of my childhood and remains a key component of my family life today, so it's no surprise that it also provides me with valuable lessons for communications planning. From developing nutrition education campaigns to tapping into stakeholder-led social media initiatives about food safety, here are four ways family meal planning can help communicators shape campaigns to meet the diverse needs—and preferences—of consumers.

Don't guess who's coming to dinner. Understanding who's at the table is the first step in creating a successful meal. It determines not just what to cook, but how much to cook, and sometimes even how to prepare it. You don't want to be the person who serves PB&J to someone with a peanut allergy, and if you prepare a family feast for just two, you'll be eating leftovers for days. In the context of communications, understanding who you're trying to reach and how they prefer to receive this information is crucial to creating an effective campaign.

For example, we know that lower levels of nutrition label numeracy are associated with older age, Black and Hispanic race/ethnicity, unemployment, lower English proficiency, lower education achievement and lower income. Additionally, we know these same audiences are at greater risk for nutrition-related chronic diseases. But just because these different audiences need educational resources to address that risk, doesn't mean we can reach them in the same way.

Each of these groups can have vastly different attitudinal, behavioral and socioeconomic factors, demographics, barriers and motivators, health statuses and media

consumption habits, and a one-size-fits-all approach could mean you end up with a "feast" of resources that no one is consuming.

As a parent, I'm innately familiar with my family's needs, but to understand more about who we're trying to reach with a communications campaign we need to do some research. When you're planning a communications campaign, think about conducting focus groups, in-depth interviews or social-listening exercises. These kinds of activities will help you understand lifestyle and attitudinal factors, existing behaviors, challenges and barriers to desired behaviors, messaging strategies, preferred media channels and other creative considerations to consider when creating resources or outreach activities that help consumers make informed decisions about food.

Plan ahead. Meal planning is the key to success in my house. It's my roadmap for the week. It helps inform my grocery list, saves time and money, helps us reduce food waste and often leads to healthier food choices for all five of us. Most importantly though, it means I've always got an answer when someone inevitably asks that age-old question: "What's for dinner?"

Similarly, developing a communications plan is an essential component of every communications campaign. Like a meal plan, a strategic communications plan serves as a roadmap for the team to navigate and optimize communication efforts. Your plan should outline goals, key messages and the action you'll take to effectively convey important nutrition information. This is especially important when messages need to be relevant and exciting as well as simple, accurate and scientific.

Understand what you want to accomplish with the meal. Dinnertime looks different for everyone. Now that we're adults, my siblings and I have diverse dinner styles because our meals have very different purposes beyond basic nourishment. For example, my older sister wants her last meal of the day to help her relax and unwind, so she'll make something small that won't keep her up late at night. On the other hand, my active family of five needs a large meal that will fuel growing kids during long sports practices and late-night study sessions.

Understanding what you need to accomplish with each meal helps inform the menu, manage expectations and assess how

each meal is meeting the needs of the diners. Communications campaigns aren't any different. Nutrition campaigns can have a wide range of goals and objectives from promoting healthy behaviors to educating individuals and communities about the science of nutrition to increasing awareness of food security issues.

Clearly defining the goals and objectives of your campaign sets expectations, helps everyone understand the rationale behind your recommendations and provides a measure against which to track progress. Consider incorporating well-defined, measurable objectives that are innovative, actionable, cost-effective and reflective of your formative research.



Megan Mills

Be nimble in your planning. Sometimes dinner doesn't look like you imagined. It's good to have a plan, but it's also important to understand how and when to adjust. If tryouts are canceled because of bad weather or if someone had an unexpectedly long day at the office, I assess our new needs and revise my plan for the meal. This might mean doing something as simple as incorporating a few pre-prepared items, or it could mean taking a whole new approach and stopping for a fast-food meal on the way home.

When executing a nutrition education campaign, this might look like including a unique evaluation strategy in your campaign plan. This gives you the chance to consistently gather the information you need to improve your campaign. For example, if you include a process evaluation that assesses how well stakeholder outreach tactics or specific paid media channels are performing, your findings will allow for course corrections as necessary throughout the campaign, ensuring progress on various levels of engagement, from awareness and knowledge to interest, support and action.

Creating an effective communications campaign that encourages healthy behaviors doesn't have to be complicated. By approaching communications like we approach preparing dinner for family or friends, we can create innovative nutrition communications campaigns that resonate with communities and individuals.

Megan Mills is a Senior Account Supervisor at Hager Sharp. ●

Use of Gen AI in political campaigns

The emergence of Gen AI technology has the potential to disrupt and erode voter trust in the media and governmental leadership.

By Michael Lasky and Samantha Rothaus

Election season is fully underway and, as in most presidential election years, publications, airwaves and social media feeds are increasingly becoming crowded with campaign messaging. The emergence of generative artificial intelligence technology is a curveball that has the potential to disrupt and erode voter trust in the media and governmental leadership. The adoption of new laws, rules, policies and norms around how Gen AI technologies can and can't be used in political communications—and around how the use of Gen AI is disclosed to voters—is of utmost importance in the coming months.

Corporations and consumers alike have come to rely on artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies over the last several years to streamline tasks and create efficiencies, such as predictive text when drafting emails or conducting online searches, to using digital assistants like Siri and Alexa. However, it wasn't until the explosive public launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 that the world experienced the “generative” capabilities of machine learning technologies on a massive scale. Now, in 2024, Gen AI platforms have become a popular way for individuals and companies to create music, artwork, text and videos.

How's Gen AI used in political campaigns?

Political advertisers have quickly caught on. Campaigns are routinely using Gen AI tools to create photos, videos and audio clips that align with their political message. However, more sinister use cases have emerged, as these tools have become more ubiquitous and more powerful.

The rise of deepfakes and other forms of synthetic media isn't a new phenomenon. However, the increasing availability and ease of use of powerful Gen AI technologies make these dangers ever more present. Just last month, during the New Hampshire presidential primary election, thousands of voters reported receiving robocalls that used a convincing clone of President Biden's voice to encourage voters not to go to the polls. An investigation revealed that the operation was spearheaded by an individual who owns a telemarketing company.

Without regulation, the increasing use of Gen AI to create deepfakes and sow disinformation as part of a political campaign strategy will make it increasingly difficult for voters to tell truth from fiction.

Efforts toward regulation

Private companies and government au-

thorities have launched to require a label or disclosure to be presented on content that was created using Gen AI. As of November 2023, Google now requires that any political advertisements on its platforms—including Google Search and YouTube—featuring synthetic content that “inauthentically represents real or realistic-looking people or events” must include a clear and conspicuous label disclosing to viewers that the content contains AI-generated material. This policy applies to still images, video footage and audio content.

Google's policy specifies that any ad with synthetic content that “makes it appear as if a person is saying or doing something they didn't say or do” or that “alters footage of a real event or generates a realistic portrayal of an event to depict scenes that did not actually take place” would need a disclosure. Google also clarified that political ads would not need such a disclosure if Gen AI was used in an immaterial or inconsequential way, such as image re-sizing or color correction.

Shortly after Google's policy was announced, Meta announced that it would restrict political advertisers from using its Gen AI advertising products, in an effort to reduce election-related disinformation. TikTok and Snapchat respectively announced that they would simply be banning political advertising from their platforms. Meta also began including a built-in “Imagined with AI” label on photorealistic images created using its proprietary Gen AI tool, Meta AI. Meta also announced plans to introduce a labeling standard for all AI-generated content appearing on its platforms, regardless of where the content originated. While the technology is being finalized, Meta has also added built-in disclosure and label tools on its platforms, which allow users to identify whether realistic-seeming material they post was created using Gen AI.

Lawmakers and regulators weigh in

The Federal Election Commission also signaled its openness to regulating AI-generated political advertisements. The FEC opened public comment following a petition for rulemaking that was filed last summer, proposing that the Commission amend current regulations that prohibit political candidates from “fraudulently misrepresenting other candidates or political parties” to make clear that this prohibition would apply to deliberately deceptive AI-generated campaign ads. While this move suggests

that the FEC is taking the issue seriously, the Commission hasn't yet indicated whether it will actually make changes to its current regulations, despite the thousands of comments that were submitted through the fall.

The Federal Communications Commission has also weighed in, issuing an order in February announcing that automated robocalls using AI-generated voices will be considered “artificial” calls and are therefore restricted under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act unless the caller has received the prior express consent of the consumer being called. The FCC has been contemplating the impact of Gen AI on telemarketing practices for several months, but in light of the events taking place during the New Hampshire primary, its recent order has new urgency in the context of political campaigning.

Rep. Yvette Clark introduced the REAL Political Ads Act, which would require a disclaimer on any political ads that use images or video generated by AI, no matter the medium or platform on which those ads appear. Similar legislation was also introduced in the Senate by Senators Amy Klobuchar, Cory Booker and Michael Bennett. The future of these legislative initiatives is unclear given partisan gridlock in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

Gen AI has the benefit of offering marketers and communicators new tools to create and disperse content. This new technology has also made it easier for political groups and campaigns to create convincing but fictitious attack ads targeting political rivals. As we progress through 2024's election cycle, communicators working in the political space should prioritize transparency when using these new technologies to produce content. Those working with political campaigns and operatives to create and distribute political advertising should familiarize themselves with existing rules and requirements and closely watch the rapidly changing developments as the 2024 election approaches.

Michael Lasky is Founder and Chair of the Davis+Gilbert's Public Relations Law Practice. Samantha Rothaus is a Partner in the Davis+Gilbert's Advertising + Marketing Practice. ○



Michael Lasky



Samantha Rothaus

The shelf life: a playbook for CPG challenger brands

Tips to refine and amplify your CPG brand strategy to win in 2024 and beyond.

By Rachel Kay

It's been a doozy of a time for Consumer Packaged Goods challenger brands over the last few years. If the pandemic didn't disrupt consumer shopping behaviors enough to shake up your retail strategy, supply chain woes and pricing wars may have thrown a wrench into growth plans. Or maybe it was the significant reduction in funding by VCs and the investment community. Or maybe it was just sheer competition in crowded categories. We've seen an influx of fantastic brands shutter doors as the industry faces insurmountable headwinds, and it's going to be a slow build before we start seeing a sense of normalcy.

The good news is that overall interest in better-for-you and niche CPG brands continues to build as consumer interest in food as medicine, health-boosting whole foods and brands that support planetary health isn't going anywhere. It's not just tough-as-nails emerging brands leading the way. The biggest food manufacturers in the world are investing heavily in healthier options as a growing part of their brand portfolios. Kraft Heinz modernized its iconic portfolio with plant-based options last year. PepsiCo Frito Lay has acquired several better-for-you snack brands over the past several years. Mondelez's SnackVentures seeks to support early-stage CPG brands. Many former start-ups have been acquired by big names: Alexia Foods by ConAgra, Annie's Homegrown by General Mills, Earthbound Farm by WhiteWave, Justin's Nut Butter by Hormel, Kashi by Kellogg Company. The list goes on.

So, what's the secret ingredient to a long and prosperous shelf life? Below are some tips to help you thrive as a challenger brand.

Articulating your point of difference

We often speak with brands who claim to be creating a new category, but let's be real, that's rarely the case. Proof of concept is what breeds innovation, so the real opportunity is to one-up the competition with a fresh point of view. What do you bring that's new and better? Is it a nutritional benefit? Is it a modern spin on an old favorite? Clearly articulate your differentiators and repeat consistently—on packaging, through marketing, and on your social profiles and website. Bare Snacks, a former client of ours, is a great example. It entered the snackable produce space, which was full of decent choices mixed in with a healthy dose of fried poofs, pillows and other Fran-

kenfoods boasting little more than an obliterated carrot in every serving. Bare helped establish snackable produce as a real snacking category, claiming real estate on store shelves. We aggressively focused on the cooking methods and the clean, minimal ingredients to win over consumers through nutrition and help secure an acquisition from PepsiCo's Frito-Lay.

Another brand that brings this thinking to life for me is The Good Crisp Company. Starting with a riff on Pringles and innovating with a twist on other snacking favorites, the brand is successfully building off iconic favorites by adding heightened nutritional benefits to modernize a successful concept. From my perspective, it's working!

Too broad, or too vague

We often see two types of clients: those who want to appeal to a mainstream audience and those who target a niche so refined it alienates consumers who might be open to trying new products. We recommend defining a target audience that's both clearly articulated but also inclusive. In other words, somewhere in between.

A great example is the Keto trend that became hot several years ago. A number of brands hoping to capture this passionate audience included the word Keto in their names and branding. A great move if you want to attract a Keto-only audience, but not realistic for longevity when we know that dietary trends tend to peak and fizzle out over time. Consumers seeking to discover lower sugar options but aren't interested in following a restrictive keto diet may take a hard pass at such distinct branding. We're seeing those brands now pivoting to more inclusive language—lower sugar, higher protein—to capture a wider audience.

That said, we also take pause when a brand positions itself as a solution for everyone, because it makes it challenging to develop messaging that isolates a key point of difference. Figure out who you want to attract and develop core messaging that engages and drives trial by saying "we made this with you in mind!"

One and done, or a slow drip

An interesting trend we've seen when talking to prospective clients this year is a pivot from long-term growth marketing to short-term stunts and spurts to drive growth. This stems from a desire to ensure efficient spending, which sounds great but

can lack strategy, particularly for emerging brands. While ROI and maximizing returns are important, campaigns and stunts can be short-sighted as they are here and gone in a flash and you miss the opportunity for ongoing, day-in and day-out awareness and brand building. Stunts and large campaign partnerships are also incredibly expensive and should be activated at a certain point in a brand's lifecycle. Being weary of investing all your eggs in one basket early on hoping for a silver bullet. There's no silver bullet.



Rachel Kay

Case in point: Solo Stove's campaign with Snoop Dog. What brand again? The campaign got a lot of fun publicity for Snoop but didn't do a thing for sales of the firepit. And now, it's over with a thud.

When it comes to your marketing and PR strategies, we recommend you think like a money manager. Good money managers talk about long-game strategies with conservative portfolios and investment in tried-and-true players to create wealth, so when you retire you can spend your remaining years on the golf course or cruising the high sea. They don't recommend trying to hand-pick a hot stock in the hopes of winning big. The same is true with marketing. It's critical to create household recognition for your brand with a consistent and sustained strategy rather than trying to garner consumer interest with a one-and-done news stunt that is designed to get people talking, but not necessarily *buying*. You'll get a better bang for your buck if you ignite an integrated marketing strategy designed to drive exposure online via product coverage, larger storytelling around your brand, influencer endorsement, shopper marketing and a robust social strategy.

Embrace, don't alienate

Always lead with a positive message with your marketing, even if you're solving for a negative issue. Food, at its core, is about keeping us alive. But it's so much more! It's a social occasion. It drives culinary exploration. It goes great with Netflix. It breaks up a busy workday. It creates euphoria. So, the last thing your marketing strategy

— Continued on next page

Adding value to the rapidly evolving sustainability space

How brands can authentically communicate sustainability issues and create a brand experience that's compatible with consumers' values.

By Julie LePere

Gen Z believes what they eat is who they are. Today's consumers express their values and aspirations through food and beverage choices. And it's not just about taste, price, convenience and nutrition. Sustainability matters too, and it's integral to the next evolution of how we talk about and engage with food.

In 2023, Padilla ran a Climate & Convenience survey to explore how the interest in addressing climate change may be impacting consumers' food and beverage choices. We found that 50 percent of respondents believe purchasing products that use sustainable packaging—as it relates to food—can help address climate change. Gen X is more likely to eat more plant-based foods to help tackle climate change, while Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to use an app to help reduce food waste by purchasing foods near their “best by” date.

Every generation has sustainability on their minds and on their plates. To navigate and thrive in this complex and dynamic environment, brands must authentically connect their brand experience—and the impactful things they're doing for people, planet and communities—with people's values.

Authenticity is the key word here. Brands cannot just talk about sustainability without

business practices and commitments that deliver on it. Smoke-and-mirror tactics will only lead to a breach of consumer trust.

From environmental pressures to social issues to politics, consumers are demanding more from the brands they consume, but they're also more critical than ever before. A brand may be celebrated for its plastic reduction efforts and yet criticized for using palm oil as an ingredient. Here are three steps to help your brand or organization develop a unique positioning, carve out a role in the broader food systems transformation and build trust and authentic connections.

Three steps to finding your brand's voice in the sustainability narrative

Unique positioning. For brands or organizations with sustainable practices and commitments in place but who are new to talking about it, it's essential to undergo an analysis of your sustainability commitments, priorities and business practices alongside those of your competitors. Also, to look at the recommendations and guidance provided by credible authoritative organizations and to consider partnerships and relationships that may be in place or in development. With this information in hand, you can analyze and identify key differences and craft a unique positioning, as well as identify additional areas to evaluate

for partnership or collaboration to accomplish your sustainability goals.

Intentional ripple effect. Sustainable business practices and commitments have an impact on food choices and the food system. It's important to map potential impacts out, and communicate about them responsibly. As leaders and learners, determining where the brand or organization can contribute to food systems change—and the dialogue about it—is also important.

Authentic connection.

To resonate with your consumers, you must connect your unique positioning and brand experience with what they value. Through meaningful storytelling and consistent actions, you build genuine trust and credibility among your consumers, while inspiring and motivating them to prioritize sustainability—and your brand—today and for years to come.

Not sure where your brand or organization fits into the sustainability conversation? Padilla's Food + Beverage Practice provides global expertise and leadership in the planet's evolving food ecosystem. Together, we can reimagine why, what and how consumers eat and drink—to build a flourishing future for all.

Julie LePere is Senior Director at Padilla Food + Beverage. ○



Julie LePere

THE SHELF LIFE

— Continued from page 18

should do is shame your target consumer. It should empower. Telling consumers that they're taking jobs away from farmers if they don't brew this fair-trade coffee isn't going to scare people into switching brands. Food is a joyful experience, so make your message one that gets consumers excited and inspired. And plain and simple, focus on the experience of the food or beverage—because at the end of the day, that's what your consumer wants.

The sober-curious movement has done a fantastic job of attracting Gen Zers with this strategy. Rather than gain acceptance by scaring people, supporters have made the effort inclusive via varying levels of participation rather than an all-or-nothing approach. They celebrate stories of how much better life can be by going alco-

hol-free, or simply just drinking less. It's an aspirational message that anyone can get on board with.

Make marketing pay nice

Every component of your business strategy—from sales to public relations, to social media, to marketing—needs to play together cohesively in the same sandbox. Often, these tactics are disconnected from each other, leading to a fractured effort. For example, PR is interested in driving big media hits while your social team wants to see lots of engagement. Building programs that align with each of these initiatives can amplify a program's success. Stanley's recent wins are a perfect example: Rabid fans wear the water bottle as a badge of honor on social media, while an aggressive PR strategy leverages the craze in traditional media and an aggressive paid marketing campaign ensures consumers don't get lost on the hunt for their favorite hydration vessel. Finally, collaborations with likeminded

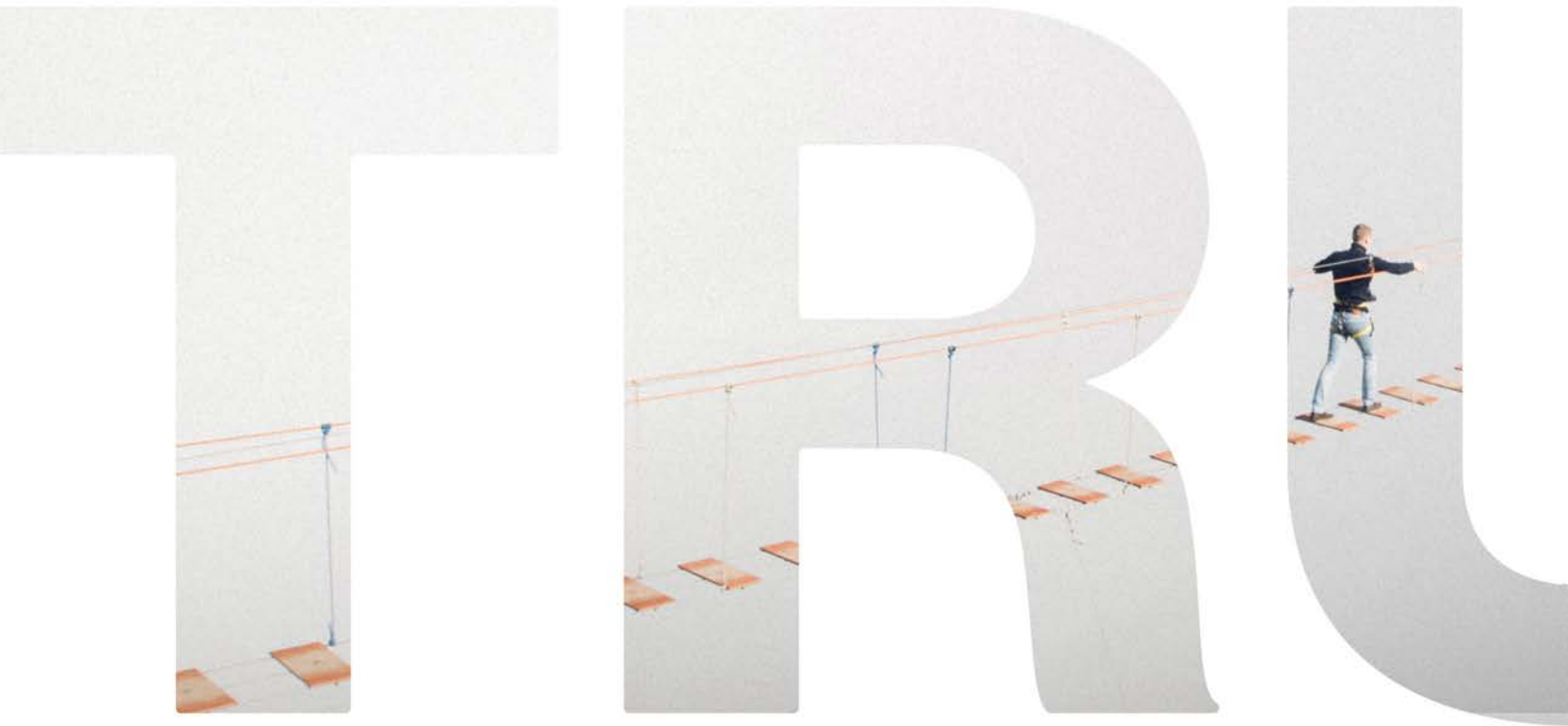
brands create new news and a new reason to Buy. Just. One. More.

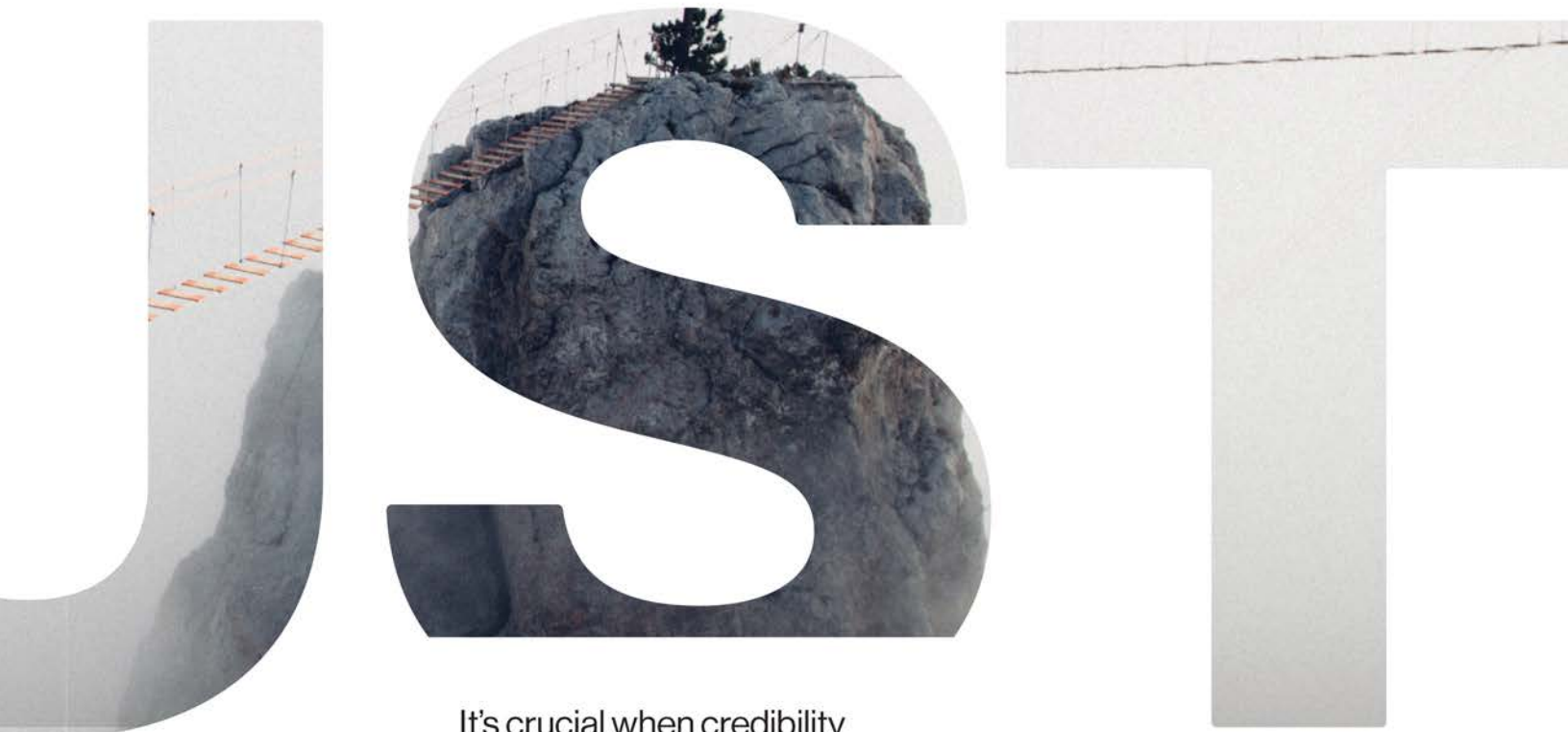
Don't lead with impact, follow with impact

Many brands seek to differentiate by elevating their sustainability and impact initiatives, which is fantastic in a world where consumers want to create impact through their purchasing decisions. But when you're talking about food and beverage, that message needs to be secondary to taste and experience. Most consumers won't substitute their favorite products for a lesser alternative because it boasts an environmental impact. Brands need to validate a consumer's decision to eat delicious food with a support message of the impact that decision has on planetary wellness.

The future is ripe for disruption and the CPG industry plays a key societal role. After all, everyone needs to eat to survive. Our job is to make sure we eat to thrive!

Rachel Kay is Managing Partner at FINN Partners. ○





It's crucial when credibility
is questioned.

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competitive disruption and
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earn every day.

Embracing 'food is medicine'

Strategic communications strategies for success in the growing "food is medicine" movement.

By Maya Maroto

The concept of "food is medicine" is gaining traction, underscoring the power of dietary choices in enhancing health and preventing illness. This movement, rooted in the synergy between nutrition and healthcare, has yet to be fully leveraged within the U.S. healthcare landscape. By integrating produce prescription programs, medically tailored meals and culturally sensitive nutrition education into healthcare delivery, we stand on the cusp of a transformative approach to health and wellness.

The Biden-Harris administration has spotlighted the "food is medicine" concept within its National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health, aiming to align our healthcare system with the nutritional needs of the populace. Research from the Tufts Food is Medicine Institute highlights the staggering potential of this approach: National implementation of food is medicine could reduce hospitalizations by 1.6 million and save approximately \$13.6 billion in healthcare costs annually. With 23 states exploring or using Medicaid waivers for nutrition programs and the Veterans Administration piloting initiatives, the federal embrace of this concept is expanding.

The convergence of health payors, academia, nonprofits and government on nutrition as a pillar of health management opens an unparalleled opportunity for PR and Communications professionals. We must forge the narratives, build awareness and facilitate partnerships that will shape the future of food is medicine.

Below are several strategies for public relations success in the growing food is medicine movement.

Cultivate the narrative

According to the American Medical Association, on average, U.S. medical schools offer only about 19 hours of nutrition education across four years of medical education, corresponding to less than one percent of the estimated total lecture hours. The food is medicine movement calls on physicians, physician's assistants and nurse practitioners to become more involved in educating their clients on nutrition. Enter the field of "culinary medicine." Culinary medicine aims to train medical professionals to blend nutrition science and culinary skills with the practice of medicine. More than 50 medical schools are including culinary medicine in their training and re-

search shows that culinary medicine boosts medical professionals' knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence in patient nutrition education.

PR and communications professionals—notably at specialized agencies with registered dietitians and public health experts on staff—should provide clients with insights on creating impactful, evidence-based messages for culinary nutrition training. PR professionals with nutrition expertise can help work with the food industry and scientists to navigate the best ways to engage in the dialogue at culinary medicine conferences and contribute to curriculum development to ensure the inclusion of balanced, science-backed dietary advice.

Broaden the lens

A 2021 article published in *Advances in Nutrition* that examined the available evidence on the impact of healthy food prescription programs on dietary behavior and cardiovascular health concluded: "The focus of most healthy food prescriptions so far has been on fruit and vegetables. Other dietary components, including nuts, beans, whole grains and fish are recognized as important for cardiometabolic health and the impact of including these dietary components remains to be evaluated." There's tremendous white space to broaden the food is medicine evidence base and guidance beyond only the provision of fruits and vegetables and to include other nutrient-dense foods such as protein foods, dairy and whole-grains, as well as research-based dietary patterns such as low-carbohydrate, Mediterranean or other non-Eurocentric eating patterns that are known to promote health. PR and communications professionals credentialed in nutrition and public health can play a pivotal role in amplifying the need for inclusive food is medicine research and recommendations that accommodate a variety of foods, thus embracing a holistic, evidence-based approach.

Champion equity and personalized nutrition perspectives

Addressing nutritional needs across different life stages and socioeconomic backgrounds is crucial for the inclusivity of food is medicine programs. For instance, research shows that iron deficiency is common among young children, women of reproductive age and pregnant women in the U.S. and is even worse for individuals of lower socioeconomic status. This deficien-

cy begs for programming that evaluates the impact of food is medicine programs emphasizing iron-rich foods such as fortified breakfast cereals, seafood and beef in populations that could benefit from additional sources of iron. PR and communications professionals with nutrition training and expertise can work with clients to examine the culture and nutritional needs of populations, particularly those at the highest risk of nutrition-related chronic disease and develop and test food is medicine solutions to meet the personalized needs of key communities.



Maya Maroto

The American Heart Association, Rockefeller Foundation and Tufts Food is Medicine Institute are investing heavily in food is medicine research and programming. Groups that wish to explore a more comprehensive food is medicine "food basket" must begin executing programs and collecting solid data to make their case—and broaden the narrative to advance a more inclusive future of what foods should be prioritized as medicine.

As we navigate the evolving landscape of food is medicine, the role of strategic communications leveraging the expertise of credentialed health and nutrition experts becomes increasingly vital. By shaping compelling narratives, advocating for comprehensive research and recommendations, and championing equity, PR professionals can help advance a movement that promises a healthier future for all.

Maya Maroto, EdD, MPH, RD, is a Vice President at FoodMinds, a division of Padilla, based in the Washington, D.C. office. She leads the agency's Food is Medicine and Precision Nutrition team. ○

PR brief

Zeno Group lands Alibaba unit

Zeno Group has signed a one-year contract to provide PR strategy and counsel to the Singapore e-commerce platform of China's Alibaba Group, the multinational retail, internet and technology behemoth.

The pact, which went into effect on Jan. 15, is worth \$10,000 a month.

Zeno's agreement calls for PR that is "private and nonpolitical in nature, and intended exclusively to further the bona fide trade or commerce purposes of Alibaba."

Zeno's Alibaba team includes Managing Director Todd Irwin; Senior VP Brittany Frank; VPs Eden May and Wan Zhaoji; and Senior Account Supervisor Torri Santander.

Horowitz dies at 93

Alfred Horowitz, who was a PR counselor, educator, businessman and philanthropist, died February 14 of natural causes. He was 93.

He founded Pragma, a financial PR agency that handled major aerospace, pharmaceutical, and retail food chains, and helped develop the first nationally offered PR professional education seminars. Sessions were held in New York, Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco, and other cities.

The seminars helped to build the management skills of hundreds of senior PR executives in corporations, government agencies, trade associations, consulting firms, health and hospital institutions, and social service providers.

More recently, in cooperation with their union and a leading global career counseling firm, Horowitz organized a national development program to help Major League Baseball players adjust to the challenges of life off the field after they retire from the sport but are still young.

As a philanthropist, Horowitz helped found and served as president of the American Museum of Immigration. He was also a founder, VP and president of the New York University Club at Town Hall.

Horowitz leaves his wife of 58 years, Helen "Sandy" Herman Horowitz, daughter Jennifer Horowitz, son Jeremy Horowitz and wife Tami Bezborodko, and grandchildren Coby, Duvi, and Dafna Horowitz. ○

HPL president Birkhahn moves to Vested

Vested has hired Hot Paper Lantern President Ted Birkhahn as a Managing Director, based in New York.

Birkhahn was President and Partner at Peppercomm before it spun off HPL in 2018. As Managing Director at Vested, Birkhahn takes on a newly created role, overseeing the development of a tech-enabled platform focused on transforming client engagement and service delivery for middle-market financial services companies. ○



Alfred Horowitz



Ted Birkhahn

H&K's global PA chair shifts to Teneo

Phillippe Maze-Sencier, who is Global Public Affairs Chair at Hill & Knowlton, will join Teneo in France as President on April 2.

Based in Brussels, Maze-Sencier has counseled H&K clients across Europe, Asia and North America, and launched its geopolitical advisory.

He exits H&K ahead of its merger with BCW to create Burson.

Prior to H&K, Maze-Sencier was Managing Director with McLarty Associates in Washington and Brussels, focused on EU and transatlantic affairs. He also was Executive Director for Government Relations at APCO Worldwide.

At Teneo, Maze-Sencier succeeds Olivier Jay, who will remain Honorary Chair and Senior Managing Director. ○



Phillippe Maze-Sencier

MWW recruits Lewis

MikeWorldWide has announced that Luke Lewis, a nine-year veteran of FleishmanHillard, recently joined the firm as Executive VP and Managing Director of its New York corporate communications practice. It's a newly created post.

Lewis worked for the Omnicom unit in San Francisco and New York, where he was market lead for its corporate reputation practice and head of the Cisco account.

He also did stints at Hill & Knowlton, FTI Consulting and Burson-Marsteller during his nearly 20-year PR run.

Lewis has handled the Ford Motor, Genentech, Clorox, Levi Strauss and General Motors accounts in areas such as crisis/issues management, brand positioning and thought leadership. ○



Luke Lewis

Howard U hires comms. chief Sermons

Howard University has named Lydia Sermons as VP and Chief Communications Officer. Sermons was most

recently VP for Public Relations and Communications at Spelman College in Atlanta. She previously served as Vice President of Strategic Positioning and Alignment at PAI, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that advocates for the rights of women and girls abroad. She has also served as Chief Communications Strategist for former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms.

At Howard, Sermons will oversee the Office of University Communications, which includes marketing, strategic communications, web design strategy and editorial storytelling, including Howard Magazine and The Dig. ○



Lydia Sermons

NI's Allison takes Gagen MacDonald post

Jennifer Allison, who most recently was head of global communications at National Instruments has joined APCO Worldwide's Gagen MacDonald unit as Managing Director.

Prior to NI, Allison spent 16 years at Dell Technologies before exiting as VP for Executive and Internal Communications. Earlier, she did an eight-year stint at Publicis Dialog, counseling global consumer packaged goods, retail and fashion clients. ○



Jennifer Allison

FTI Consulting adds Joele Frank's Temple

FTI Consulting has named Rose Temple a Managing Director in the strategic communications unit's restructuring team. She is based in Boston.

Temple was a Managing Director at Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher, where she handled bankruptcies and restructurings. She worked on restructuring assignments for Avianca Holdings, Cyxtera Technologies, K&N Engineering and Rivberd Technologies. ○



Rose Temple



5W partnered with H&H Bagels, an iconic New York City brand since 1972, to celebrate 50 years of serving New York-style bagels and schmears. H&H Bagels is a 5W client.

5WPR

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Leigh Ann Ambrosi, Executive
Vice President, CPG
Dara A. Busch, Co-CEO, 5WPR

5WPR is a full-service PR agency in NYC and Miami known for cutting-edge programs that engage with businesses, issues, 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 2023 PR Agency of the Year, and brings leading businesses a resourceful, bold and results-driven approach to communication.

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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 shaping the food industry—top chefs, registered dietitians, cookbook authors, social influencers and of course media. With a winning combination of break-through ideas and always-on storytelling, we build and sustain brand relevance, helping our clients own 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 food brands and innovators have chosen 360PR+ as their partner: Little Leaf Farms, Nasoya tofu, Pete & Gerry's Organic Eggs, Ver-

mont Creamery, Krusteaz, SunnyD, Juicy Juice, Primo Hoagies, Salad and Go 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.



For over a decade, 360PR+ has helped Nasoya forge a leadership path in the plant-based industry. Here, our team enlisted James Beard-nominated chef Dale Talde to host a press event launching a new line of Plantspired steak.

ARTISAN PRODUCTION HOUSE

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Erin Lahey Schwitter, Producer/
Partner, erin@artisanproductionhouse.com
Kara Leibowitz, Producer/Partner,
kara@artisanproductionhouse.com

Artisan Production House is a full-service production house specializing in food & lifestyle publicity. We create brand content that resonates with your audience and keeps them engaged. Our innate understanding of story relevance and personal relationships with TV producers and media influencers throughout the country gets your story heard. We'll help you deliver your messages seamlessly and with style.

Artisan's in-studio & on location satellite junkets include quality bookings that are actually seen, spot-on custom craft services and a fresh, modern design aesthetic ...



CIIC PR & the BGPL USA team celebrate a successful launch at the Grand Tasting at South Beach Wine & Food Festival (SOBEWFF) in Miami.

because taste matters. Additional services include stunning branded content food videos, original book promotional videos and select matchmaking between celebrity talent and brands.

Our clients include Food Network, Penguin Random House, The Wonderful Company, and commodity boards ranging from the National Onion Association to Grapes from California.

BLAZE PR

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Matt Kovacs, President

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

Recent Awards: *PR Week*, Best Places to Work; *LA Business Journal*, Best Places to Work; *Inc.* Best Places to Work

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

CAROLYN IZZO INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS (CIIC PR)

NY + Miami

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Carolyn Izzo-Feldman, Founder & CEO
Amy Sedeño, Vice President & Partner

PR & Social Media for the food & beverage, travel & tourism, hospitality, 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. For over 27 years, our agency has been dedicated to servicing some of the top food & beverage brands with dynamic 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, our agency has represented many leading F&B brands, including Jovē Water, Stadacone Gin, Barton & Guestier Wines of France, Sovány Beverage Company, Florida Wine Academy, 305 Wines, The Original Soupman, Opal Apples, 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 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 x11 or email connect@ciicpr.com. Learn more about us at www.ciicpr.com.

CHAMPION

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Ladd Biro, Founder & Principal
Eric Spiritas, Principal
Courtney Mazzella, Vice President, Client Services
Alexis Diehl, Vice President of Strategy
Carrie Layne, Vice President, Digital Marketing

Restaurant brands looking to ignite their stories, dominate the headlines, captivate through content, amp up franchise sales and

— Continued on page 26



Raising Cane's Founder & CEO Todd Graves cuts the ribbon with Post Malone at the grand opening of the Cane's/Post/Dallas Cowboys restaurant collab.

CHAMPION

— Continued from page 25

drive traffic—both on-premise and online—partner with Champion.

Established in 2002 and proud to be the second-largest PR agency in the restaurant space in 2023 (watch your back, No. 1!), Champion is a fully integrated marketing firm providing 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, Twin Peaks, Bar Louie, Golden Corral, Dog Haus, FreeRange Concepts, SPB Hospitality and JINYA Ramen Bar—to name only a few.

Don't know Champion? Ask around. 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 relationships spanning 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 ...

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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 mak-



The PEEPS® Sweet Suite offered fans a chance to book a stay in a PEEPS®-inspired hotel room and take part in exclusive activities in and around the one and only PEEPS® headquarters in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Mark Strehle/AP Images for Just Born Quality Confections

ers and strategists obsessed with creativity, leading with imagination and enthusiasm, and refining with the discipline of predictive outcomes. Our team of 170+ 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 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.

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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 peo-

ple 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 *PRWeek's* Global Agency of the Year (2023); *PROvoke's* Global Agency of the Year (2022); Cannes Lions Grand Prix awards for PR (2016) and the Entertainment Lions for Sport (2021); a Gold Lion in the Brand Experience & Activation category (2023); a Gold Lion in the Sustainable Development Goals category (2022); Cannes Lions Independent Agency of the Year for the Entertainment Track (2021); Cannes Lions Co-Independent Agency of the Year for the Good Track (2022); and *Advertising Age's* 2019 A-List. Since our founding in 1952, we have remained an independent, family-run business. Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Data x Intelligence (research, data), Edelman Smithfield (financial communications), Edelman Global Advisory (advisory), and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle).

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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.

In 2023, Evins acquired Teuwen Communications, named a Top 10 Wine and Spirits PR Agency in the U.S. 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.

FINN PARTNERS

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Peter Finn, CEO & Founding Partner
Kyle Farnham, Global Consumer Practice Leader, Managing Partner
Rachel Kay, Managing Partner

Today's modern food and beverage brands face stiff competition to position themselves as leaders—not only through taste, but as sustainability warriors, nutrition renegades and culinary explorers. As a focus area within FINN Partner's Global Consumer Practice, our team specializes in building integrated communications campaigns for emerging and established CPG brands. Anchored in our ability to drive earned media coverage, we support a diverse portfolio of clients with a full suite of public relations and digital marketing services.

Our team has experience working with diverse a list of brands, including Oatly, PepsiCo, Post Consumer Brands, Simple Mills, Country Archer, Kodiak Cakes, NotCo, Chosen Foods, Elmhurst, PopCorners, Applegate, Bare Snacks, Filippo Berio, Wild Planet, SkinnyDipped, Tofurky, Steaz, Catalina Crunch, and Koe Kombucha, among many others.

From touting the lesser-known health benefits of specific ingredients to leveraging influencers to drive trial around a big product launch, our work spans made-for-media experiences, brand partnerships, celebrity ambassador programs, experiential activations, industry event support, CSR initiatives, and more.

Whether you're looking to partner with a chef, seeking to engage with registered dietitians or simply searching for fresh ways to serve up your story, FINN Partners offers the ingredients brands need to build breakthrough communications programs.

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

FOODMINDS

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FoodMinds is a leading global food and nutrition 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 food, nutrition, public health and sustainability experts come together to leverage strategic insights, consumer values and multi-dimensional communications to produce meaningful results. FoodMinds employs policy wonks, trend watchers and storytellers—and is the only agency with 20+ registered dietitians 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 to get started!

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) is the Southeast's leading public

relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, a distinction it has held since 2001. Headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., and founded in April 1997, FWV has received 30 National Agency of the Year honors over the past 27 years. Its food & beverage practice area is ranked among the 15 largest in the country.

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, The Coca-Cola Company (NESTEA, Gold Peak, Minute Maid, DASANI, Simply Orange), 3 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.

FWV is the parent company of fashion and lifestyle PR firm AMP3 (New York City); mobility and transportation-focused agency The Millerschin Group (Greater Detroit); pet and animal health practice FWV Fetching and feature film development imprint Prix Pro-

ductions. FWV employs more than 140 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C., headquarters and offices around the country.

G&S BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

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Steve Halsey, Chief Growth Officer

G&S Business Communications helps innovative companies change the world. Our mission is to inspire people to take action, resulting in business growth for our clients. Our vision is to fuel transformation in the six key industries we serve: Advanced Manufacturing & Energy; Agribusiness; Financial & Professional Services; Healthcare; Home & Building; and Landscaping & Outdoor Living.

Our strategists, storytellers, analysts and engagement experts meet each client at the intersection of business and communications. Our strategies help B2B clients meet their business goals, and our work produces meaningful results that move markets. Our commitment to measurement ensures that we are constantly learning and improving to make your program better.

We have a global staff of 140+ people, who operate primarily from four offices, New York, Raleigh, Chicago and Basel, but we offer our clients a global network of support through PROI Worldwide partners.

HAGER SHARP

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HAGERSHARP.COM

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

— Continued on page 28

HAGER SHARP

Continued from page 27

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

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Lacey Outten, Associate Vice President, Food/Wine/Spirits
Kayla Atwater, Associate Vice President, Travel/Hospitality

Celebrating a decade of innovation and distinction in 2024,

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 other top-tier media markets globally. The agency specializes in crafting tailored communications programs for clients within the food, wine and spirits sector—as well as travel/tourism and franchising—including brand strategy, media relations, social media, influencer marketing, event programming, thought leadership, crisis communications and strategic alliances. 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.

HUNTER

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

Grace Leong, CEO
Gigi Garcia Russo, Chief Innovation and Growth Officer
Julie Sternberg, Managing Director, CPG Food + Beverage

Contact: smormar@hunterpr.com
Samara Farber Mormar, CMO

HUNTER is an award-winning consumer marketing communications firm ranked as a "Best Place to Work" and "Consumer Agency of the Year," with offices in New York, Los Angeles, and London, and partnerships that extend our reach globally.

As a leading Food + Beverage agency, our purpose is to create, place, share, and amplify the narratives of the world's leading brands,



HUNTER and Chicken of the Sea answered the age-old question: Is it Tuna or Chicken? The brand partnered with Jessica Simpson to revisit her famous reality TV moment in the new "It's the One for Me" campaign. To help make a splash at launch, HUNTER secured a PEOPLE exclusive, drumming up excitement amongst media and consumers, while on TikTok, the hero video garnered over two million views in less than 24 hours.

including Danone, Smithfield, Post Consumer Brands, Pompeian, and TABASCO Brand Pepper Sauce—HUNTER's first partner 35 years ago and still a client today. Our 270+ person firm employs a powerful blend of marketing solutions, including strategic planning, media relations, social and digital media, talent and influencer engagement, experiential marketing, multicultural outreach, and content creation and distribution across all platforms and channels.

From the traditional days of "tasting is believing" to the modern world of #instagood #foodporn, Food + Beverage is in our DNA.

For today's consumer, food and drink are one of the primary pathways in their pursuit of health and happiness. Eating, drinking, cooking, and dining are critical parts of family connection, entertainment, and self-care rituals. 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 become part of these rituals by inserting them into the right moments in time through the right mediums and right mouthpieces.

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



Curbside Groceries, bringing fresh, affordable food to communities where traditional grocery stores may be hard to reach. Branding and design by Hager Sharp.

ly-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). 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. 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.

MARINO.

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Additional offices in Los Angeles and Miami
Marinopr.com

Frank Marino, CEO
John Marino, President
Lee Silberstein, Partner
Cara Marino Gentile, Executive VP
Robert Barletta, Executive VP
Elizabeth Latino, Executive VP

Marino is a full-service, national strategic communications 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.

Brands like McDonald's, Fratelli Beretta, Bono olive oil, Castellani Wines, De Nigris vinegar, Smeraldina Water, Chelsea Market, Fab-bri, Rosé All Day, Pasta Toscana, Faneuil Hall, Pier 57's Market 57, Urbanspace, Olivieri 1882, Beak and Skiff/1911, Ayrloom, The Flower Chef, Japan Village, Economy Candy 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 including media relations, social media, design/creative campaign development, advertising, influencer engagement and events. The team is led by Robert Barletta, Marino EVP, and made up of foodies and oenophiles who are also experienced publicists and digital strategists, former food and retail reporters, recipe developers and food designers.

MARKETING MAVEN

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Lindsey Carnett, CEO & President

Named to the 2017 and 2018 *Inc.* 5000 List of Fastest Growing Companies in America and *Entrepreneur* magazine's 2016 Entrepreneur 360 List as one of the Most Entrepreneurial Companies in

America, Marketing Maven's sophisticated share of voice and sentiment analysis tools help to shape campaign strategy for food and beverage clients. Aligning with influencers and utilizing grassroots social media tactics, paired with traditional media relations, generates significant impact for clients.

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

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

PADILLA

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Last October, Marino's Digital Team planned and executed an influencer event for client Fratelli Beretta to showcase their sponsorship of the New York City Wine and Food Festival & Instagram's convention, FoodieCon, through a kickoff pre-party for the show, and throughout the weekend's activities. Additionally, Marino deployed influencers to attend Fratelli Beretta's activation at the convention, serving as ambassadors and content creators for the Italian food specialties brand.

Robert Campana (left) of @stopitaliansounding, a social media creator dedicated to education about authentic Italian products, and Marino Senior Social Media Manager, David Kushner (right), at NYC's FoodieCon.

PadillaCo.com

Laura Cubillos, Executive 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 impactful solutions.

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

Our award-winning team of credentialed culinary, beverage and nutrition experts, food and lifestyle media specialists, and business pros are skilled in making the consumer's decision easy by leveraging data and insights to capture the rational and emotional "why" that defines your unique value proposition.

Padilla is a leading communications agency that helps brands and organizations transform by inspiring people and driving action. Padilla's deep expertise spans agriculture, food, beverage and nutrition, health, technology, and financial services. Our family of brands, which includes Padilla (strategic and marketing communications), SHIFT (performance communications), FoodMinds (food and nutrition affairs) and Joe Smith (brand strategy), all have one thing in common: we help build, grow and protect our clients' brands and reputations. 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.

With Padilla Food + Beverage in your corner, you can transform your business in ways no other agency can. Together, let's transform with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

PEPPERCOMM

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Steve Cody, CEO and Founder
Ann Barlow, EVP & Chief Engagement Officer
Jacqueline Kolek, EVP & Chief

Continued on page 30

PEPPERCOMM

— Continued from page 29

Innovation Officer
Maggie O'Neill, EVP & Chief Client Officer
Tara Lilien, Chief Talent Officer

Peppercomm, part of the Ruder Finn Group, is an award-winning strategic, integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York City. Core capabilities include media relations, influencer engagement, creative/web design, social media, issues management and crisis communications, branding and positioning, and employee engagement.

With 29 award-winning years of experience, Peppercomm has made a science of communication, combining wit and wisdom with proven public relations discipline and innovative offerings to break through, build deeper connections and ensure our clients' success. Our model is about brand analysis, development of narrative and voice, and connection to the culture, media and influencers who matter. Each tactic should be thoughtful, bring perspective and insight, and—when appropriate—be a little unexpected.

And we know food—from fine dining and fast casual to packaged foods and fresh fruit and veggies. We're a global firm with local expertise that has worked for clients such as Abbot's Butcher, Bolt-house Farms, Bonduelle Farms, Darden Restaurants (The Capital Grille, Eddie V's, Bahama Breeze), Dole Packaged Foods, Edible Arrangements, Pizza Hut, Ready Pac, Roots Southern Table, The Cakerie, TGI Fridays, the American

Beverage Association, Zagat, and Zespri, among others.

Visit www.peppercomm.com or find us at @Peppercomm.

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

From being the #1 trending topic on social to securing headlines in top tier media and supporting sales growth, RF|Binder is focused on driving impact and business results for food and beverage companies. Our creative work has made our clients pantry staples and cultural icons. Our 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 is-



Smirnoff, the world's No. 1 vodka and the official vodka sponsor of the NFL, looked to Taylor to cement its role leading up to the 2024 Big Game in Las Vegas. Taylor built excitement around the brand's newest product launch—Smirnoff SMASH Vodka Soda—during peak Super Bowl conversation with surround sound PR and social media coverage hyping up the brand's unique, on-the-ground event that tapped into the cultural zeitgeist of sports fandom: the Smirnoff SMASH Pickle Bowl, a celebrity pickleball tournament smashing up unexpected guests including NFL legend Vernon Davis, pop icon Lance Bass, NFL commentator Kay Adams, and others. Interviews with talent partners delivered a slew of national lifestyle, entertainment and sports press in top-tier outlets like *USA Today*, *Variety* and *E! News*. The campaign garnered more than 3.6B earned media impressions and 2.3M talent and brand social media impressions.

sues 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

Celebrating 25 years in business this year, SPM was built on a foundation of food, beverage and restaurant brands that continue to inform how we build and protect new and established brands.

SPM was Whataburger's first PR agency of record, helping the legacy brand define and leverage their place in the burger landscape for over a decade. Since then, we've gone on to launch Chipotle

in Texas, took Stubb's Legendary Bar-B-Q and Van's Foods from regional and niche brands to national acquisition and got lines out the doors to 500 bakeries to celebrate Nothing Bundt Cakes' 25th birthday.

We create innovative campaigns integrating media relations, influencer partnerships, executive positioning, franchise development and social media strategy. Through our robust crisis communications practice, we've managed over 5,000 client crises, and our media protocol is currently deployed in restaurant locations nationwide.

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

TAYLOR

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Tony Signore, CEO & Mng. Partner

— Continued on page 32



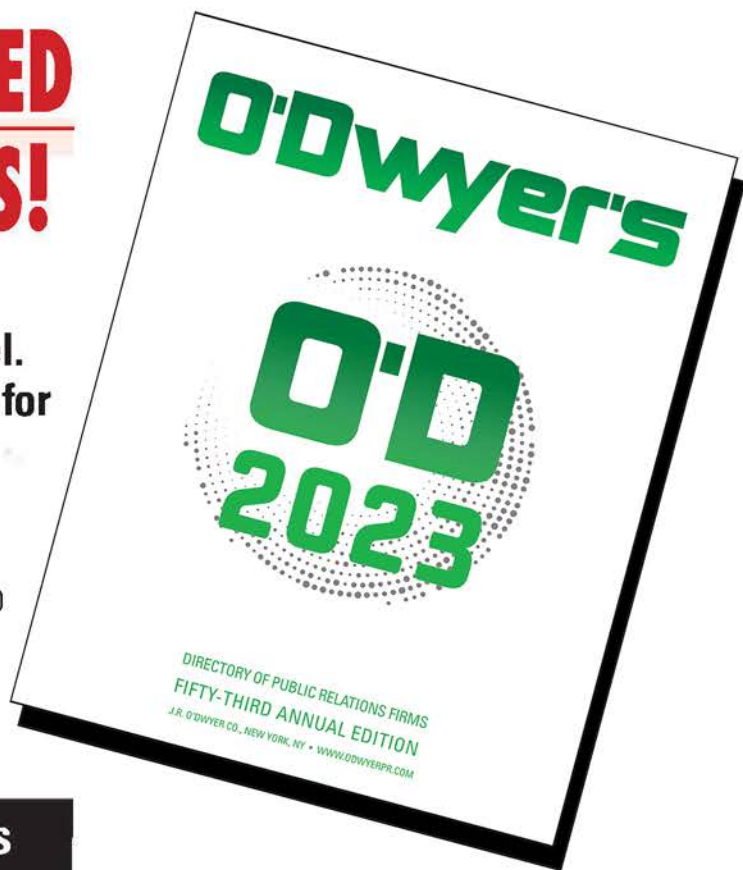
RF|Binder oversees the integrated marketing campaign for Clink Different, a joint program between the German Wine Institute and the Bordeaux Wine Council co-funded by the EU. The program includes consumer events, retail promotions, digital and outdoor advertising, influencer marketing and trips. The campaign invites consumers to "Clink Different" and discover new wines from Bordeaux and Germany in a fun, inviting and engaging way.

Photo credit: Rick Kern

ORDER THE ONLY PRINTED DIRECTORY OF PR FIRMS!

O'Dwyer's is the #1 source for researching public relations firms and outside PR counsel. We've been connecting clients and PR firms for 53 years through our Directory of PR Firms.

You get quick access to large, medium-sized, and small PR firms and even experienced freelancers who work out of their homes. Whether you seek a long-term, worldwide relationship or need extra help on a project, **O'Dwyer's is the place to shop.**



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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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—Robert L. Dilenschneider, The Dilenschneider Group

"A phenomenal job-seeking aid."

—Marie Raperto, CIMSearch

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

—Henry P. Feintuch, Feintuch Communications

TAYLOR

Continued from page 30

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 40 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 under P&G for a wide range of services, including sports sponsorship activations for brands such as Gillette, Head & Shoulders, Old Spice and Tide.

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



Award-winning boutique PR firm WordHampton Public Relations, located in The Hamptons.

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 US 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.

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, Frisch’s, Steak ‘N Shake, Bad Ass Coffee of Hawaii and more. 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 acknowledges 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.

WORDHAMPTON PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Nicole Castillo, President

WordHampton Public Relations is an award-winning boutique PR firm located in the Hamptons servicing the NY metro area. Specializing in signature hospitality, lifestyle, real estate and Hamptons businesses, WordHampton has been building client reputations and revenues for over 30 years. Our team creates a customized approach for every client utilizing strategic and creative thinking, deep media and community relationships and social media expertise.

WordHampton’s robust client roster includes several signature restaurants in the Hamptons including Nick & Toni’s, Rowdy Hall, Almond, Lulu Kitchen, Duryea’s, The Clam Bar, Navy Beach and The Beacon as well as signature restaurants on Long Island including Ben’s Kosher Deli, Mirabelle Restaurant and several Lessing’s Wedding properties. The firm is the driving force behind the award-winning tri-annual event Long Island Restaurant Week coordinating all elements of the event. WordHampton has represented several beverage brands including Origen Holistic Spirits, Bedell Cellars winery and Diplomático Rum among others.

Known as Hamptons Insiders, WordHampton has developed lifelong relationships with the media, government and community offering a deep knowledge of the unique seasonal market. The firm has launched countless businesses, pop-ups, products and more resulting in success. The team is spirited, progressive and determined, the ultimate recipe for success. ○

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

FOOD AND BEVERAGE PR FIRMS



Firm	Net Fees (2022)	Firm	Net Fees (2022)
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$129,019,000	25. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	\$507,374
2. Hunter, New York, NY	23,200,000	26. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	393,338
3. Zeno Group, New York, NY	22,013,269	27. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	375,623
4. Havas Formula, New York, NY	16,680,876	28. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	375,000
5. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	15,753,827	29. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	353,000
6. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	12,380,000	30. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	269,951
7. MikeWorldWide, New York, NY	12,170,275	31. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	248,007
8. APCO Worldwide, Washington, D.C.	11,300,000	32. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	210,200
9. Finn Partners, New York, NY	8,500,000	33. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	207,447
10. Taylor, New York, NY	7,200,000	34. Hemsworth Communications, Fort Lauderdale, FL	178,050
11. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	6,300,000	35. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	160,000
12. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	4,770,999	36. Franco, Detroit, MI	159,365
13. 360PR+, Boston, MA	3,700,000	37. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	147,100
14. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	3,635,906	38. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	128,500
15. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	3,290,632	39. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	111,600
16. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	3,204,400	40. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	86,318
17. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	2,860,000	41. Singer Associates PR, Inc., San Francisco, CA	84,771
18. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	2,365,757	42. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	80,173
19. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	2,130,537	43. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	60,000
20. Berk Communications, New York, NY	1,428,628	44. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	46,668
21. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	1,400,000	45. Tier One Partners, Boston, MA	38,690
22. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	1,170,590	46. Judge Public Relations, Tampa, FL	9,750
23. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	1,092,137	47. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	8,000
24. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	730,000	48. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	1,853

An elderly man's winning presidential PR strategy

By Fraser Seitel

An elderly man's winning presidential PR strategy

The best thing to happen to Joe Biden's 2024 presidential campaign was the hastily-called press conference on the Special Counsel's damning exoneration of the President's handling of classified documents because he was a "well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory."



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*.

Biden's press conference was an unmitigated disaster.

And if his public relations advisors are smart, it will set the boundaries for the President's media relations strategy against Donald Trump in November.

To say that Biden's February 8 White House press conference was "bad" gives "bad" a bad name.

His tone was too defiant and defensive, e.g. "I've been President and I put this country back on its feet. I don't need his recommendation."

His verbal slip-ups were egregious, e.g. "Initially, the President of Mexico, el-Sisi, did not want to open the (Rafah) gate."

And in storming back at the CNN lady for questioning his competence, the President even violated the oldest commandment of media relations: "Never get in a peeing match with someone who buys ink by the barrel."

Bad. Bad. Bad. The kind of cringe-worthy performance that media trainers will dwell on for years. But as horrifying as Biden was, the lessons learned from his media meltdown could form the blueprint for a winning campaign media relations formula.

First, let canned communication do most of the talking.

Whether Democrats like it or not, the fact is that Joe Biden has always been a gaffe machine and dangerous off-the-cuff speaker who's gotten progressively worse as he's grown more, ahem, "elderly."

That's why the vast majority of his campaign communications should be canned—like TV ads that show the President in action, direct mail appeals that underscore achievements and scripted videos for TikTok, Instagram and the rest of social media

that speak directly to younger voters. All on tape, not live.

Biden's greatest assets in the upcoming campaign—in which few Americans want either him or his likely opponent to undertake—are first, he's running against the dreaded Donald Trump and second, the billions of dollars he'll raise to run. His greatest liability is himself and what he might say if left unscripted.

Therefore, the logical use of all those communications dollars should be in promotional communications drafted by professional writers.

Second, get out and mingle with the voters.

Biden may not be an accomplished extemporaneous speaker, but he's a great retail politician. The man can schmooze with Mr. and Mrs. American Voter as well as anyone. And he loves campaigning.

So, the Biden campaign should release him to travel the countryside, engaging in small-group conversations with voters. They should try to ensure these voter groups are as friendly as possible and avoid the candidate taking questions from the dangerous, traveling media corps accompanying him.

Likewise, town halls with Biden should be avoided unless it's a pre-screened—i.e., Biden-friendly voters—crowd. If this sounds "fixed," tough noogies. Biden is great with supporters and terrible with detractors. So, go ahead and keep him on the road, but keep him clear of those who disagree or challenge.

Third, no more press conferences.

Sure, special counsel Robert Hur was a closet Republican who gratuitously ambushed a vulnerable target, but he was also right. Biden is old and feeble and forgetful and potentially embarrassing in a sensitive public setting, despite what his retainers tell you.

Consequently, the worst communications setting for such a shaky octogenarian is a free-for-all press conference with rabid-dog reporters looking to make a name for themselves. So, Biden campaign managers should keep the candidate away from such media scrums from here on.

This suggestion disagrees diametrically with the counsel he's getting from his Democrat base. The *New York Times* Board of Editors, for example, wrote:

"The President has to reassure and build confidence with the public by doing things that he has so far been unwilling to do convincingly ... He could undertake more town hall meetings in communities and on national television. He should hold regular news conferences to demonstrate his com-

mand and direction for leading the country."

If the *New York Times*, which is always wrong, recommends you do "more press conferences," then a smart candidate should do precisely the opposite and do none! Won't that provoke criticism of Biden for ducking the media? Sure.

But ... as Special Counsel Hur also wrote, Biden is also widely considered a "well-intentioned man" who takes his job seriously and works long hours, when most men his age are playing bridge and sleeping.

So, voters will cut him some slack if he chooses to avoid the media jackals, who most people don't much like anyway.

Fourth, do selective, friendly one-on-one interviews.

While Biden should swear off press conferences, he still can't avoid media interviews completely. Trump, of course, is already dominating election news with his words and actions. And he and the Republicans will seize on his opponent's reluctance to meet the press.

To close the media relations gap and present at least an appearance of willingness to be interviewed, the Biden managers should sequence one-on-one interviews with friendly reporters at strategic intervals throughout the campaign.

They should begin with the same *New York Times* editorial board. The *Times*, even though fiercely anti-Trump and pro-Biden, is still regarded as the paper of record that sets the agenda for other media. In this case, it can be counted on to pull punches for the Democrat candidate and present him in a favorable light without exposing many warts.

As to broadcast, one-on-ones with anybody at MSNBC is a must. MSNBC makes no bones about being in the tank for Biden—as Fox is for Trump—and would serve as a willing doormat to focus on the President's strengths. CNN, with new management claiming greater objectivity, is a tougher call. Friendly podcasters also are a must for one-on-ones.

The point is that Biden's handlers must insist he do media interviews throughout the campaign but only with friendly interviewers.

David French, one of the few bearable *Times*' editorial writers, has made the point that Biden's occasional slips and stumbles make it imperative that during the campaign, the President, himself, proves that he isn't in decline by "publicly demonstrating that he is not." Fair enough. But he should do it only in the most controlled of media environments. ○

PR M&A trends and opportunities in 2024

By Dominic Rovano

Following the bustling holiday season, a notable trend is emerging within the mergers and acquisitions landscape of public relations and marketing agencies. This month we'll dive into the latest developments and opportunities for industry players weighing their M&A options in 2024.



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

Shifting tides: an uptick in activity

After a period of decline in transaction volume since 2021, there's a renewed sense of optimism regarding M&A activity in the

PR and marketing agency sector for 2024. Initial concerns among industry advisors suggested 2025 as the year for significant transactions have been replaced by a different outlook. According to Procopio's "Mergers & Acquisitions: Advertising, Marketing & Public Relations Industry M&A Report 2023," "the total number of AM&PR M&A transactions announced in 2023 fell by 15 percent to 216 compared to 254 in 2022. This decline was primarily driven by a decrease in the number of smaller transactions (< US\$50 million), which fell by 23 percent."

However, industry experts like Lori Murphree from Evalla Advisors confirm a shift in sentiment: "I believe 2024 M&A activity is picking up, quite a bit, from 2023. Interestingly, we are seeing more demand than we have in the last couple of years for pure creative agencies that can be overlaid across the various disciplines in more digitally focused agencies. There is still demand for digital with an increased focus on media, analytics and AI-enabled agencies." This positive sentiment is echoed throughout the industry, with attorneys, advisors, agency partners and accountants reporting a surge in initial meetings and valuations, a trend supported by a 20 percent increase in M&A inquiries reported by M&A advisory firm IMAP in Q4 2023.

International expansion: a growing presence

While traditionally, U.S.-based buyers dominated the market, a significant rise in interest from European companies has been observed over the past six months. The an-

nouncement in November of 2023 of Publicis Groupe's intended acquisition of MSL Group underlines this trend. According to a report by PitchBook, European private equity firms invested a record-breaking \$39.2 billion in North American companies in 2023, with a significant portion targeting technology and marketing sectors. This influx of European buyers seeking to expand their U.S. presence through acquisitions of marketing and PR agencies presents a distinct opportunity. Additionally, Evalla Advisors highlights the growing interest amongst buyers in "specific Asian markets including Japan & Singapore," offering significant potential for agencies operating in those regions, supported by the anticipated growth of the Asia Pacific advertising market reaching \$362.3 billion by 2026, according to Statista.

Challenges remain

2024 does hold significant promise for M&A within the PR and marketing agency space. However, it's important to acknowledge the potential challenges that could cloud this optimism:

- **Economic uncertainty.** Global economic headwinds, the U.S. presidential election, inflation and the continued talk of potential recessions could dampen investor appetite for M&A deals.

- **Rising interest rates.** Higher borrowing costs could make financing acquisitions more expensive, impacting valuations and deal structures.

- **Competition for talent.** The tight talent market could make it difficult for agencies to attract and retain top talent, a crucial factor for post-merger success.

- **Regulatory landscape.** Evolving regulations around data privacy, antitrust and taxation could add complexity and potential roadblocks to M&A transactions.

Despite these challenges, well-prepared agencies with a clear vision, diversified client base and strong financial performance can still navigate the M&A landscape effectively. Proactive discussions with experienced advisors and a thorough understanding of the market dynamics will be crucial for success.

Preparing for M&A: strategic optimization

For agencies considering M&A, a key focus should be ensuring a well-structured and organized company with robust account teams. This necessitates a clear vision for growth, meticulous financial statements and a seamless client delivery experience. It's time to address those often-avoided administrative tasks:

- **Develop a data-driven budget and forecast.** Utilizing industry benchmarks

and market research to inform financial projections.

- **Ensure all tax and state filings are current.** Demonstrating responsible financial management to potential buyers.

- **Review payroll and contractor data for proper classification.** Avoiding potential legal and tax liabilities post-acquisition.

- **Establish clear policies for new business pitches.** Streamlining processes and showcasing professionalism.

- **Refine financial statement presentations.** Providing transparent and easily understandable financial information.

- **Seek professional tax advice for both business and personal aspects.** Minimizing tax implications for sellers.

- **Diversify your client base.** Reducing dependence on any single client and mitigating risk.

- **Sharpen your vision and client narratives.** Compellingly articulating your agency's value proposition and differentiation.

- **Identify your key differentiators within the market.** Highlighting unique strengths and capabilities.

- **Define your desired post-acquisition life. (Beyond lounging on a beach with a drink!)** Having a clear exit strategy and post-transaction goals.

- **Don't hesitate to seek expert guidance.** Partnering with experienced M&A advisors to navigate the process effectively.

Conclusion: a year of opportunity, but not without challenges

2024 presents both opportunities and challenges for M&A in the PR and marketing agency space. The M&A landscape is very dynamic and any volatility in the market could upset these positive trends. However, by being aware of the potential hurdles and taking a strategic approach, agencies can maximize their chances of success in this evolving market. ○

PR brief

Joele Frank works Endeavor Energy's \$26B deal

Joele Frank handles Endeavor Energy Resources as the shale oil producer agrees to be acquired by Diamondback Energy in a \$26 billion deal.

The deal makes Diamondback the top independent oil producer in America's No. 1 oil field, the Permian Basin located in Texas and New Mexico.

Diamondback, which will own 65.6 percent of the combined company, edged the much larger ConocoPhillips for Endeavor.

The merged company will be headquartered in Midland, TX. The deal is expected to close by yearend.

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher's Aaron Palash, Andrew Siegel and Lyle Weston represent Endeavor.

Assange gets U.S. representation

Barry Pollack, an attorney at Wall Street's Harris St. Laurent & Wechsler, has registered Julian Assange as a client with the Justice Dept. "out of an abundance of caution."

He believes the Justice Dept. may view some of the ancillary services to the representation of the imprisoned journalist/publisher subject to the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Those services may include briefings about the litigation and participating in public educational events about the case, according to the Justice Dept. filing.

Chambers USA called Pollack a "thorough and deep-thinking lawyer" who "lives, breathes and sleeps trials, and has such a natural way in front of juries."

Assange is jailed in His Majesty's Prison Belmarsh in southeast London.

Amnesty International issued a statement on Feb. 13, saying the extradition of Assange to the US would have a profound, chilling effect on global media freedom.

"The risk to publishers and investigative journalists around the world hangs in the balance. Should Julian Assange be sent to the U.S. and prosecuted there, global media freedoms will be on trial, too," said Julia Hall, AI's expert on counter-terrorism and criminal justice in Europe.

If successfully prosecuted in the U.S. under the Espionage Act of 1917, a measure not intended to target the media, Assange could face up to 175 years in jail. He also faces a maximum of five years in prison on computer fraud charges. ○



Julian Assange



Alberto Torrico, will join PPHC's KP Public Affairs unit in Sacramento.

Michael Burns, Managing Partner of KP, said the addition of Doherty continues his firm's commitment to "provide the highest-level policy and political services to our clients."

He had headed Burson-Marsteller's PA practice in Chicago and southern California.

KP, which was launched in 1996, advises clients in areas such as healthcare, privacy, artificial intelligence, energy, finance, insurance, emergency services, land use and water.

Washington-based PPHC acquired KP in 2022. It was PPHC's first acquisition as a listed company which trades on the London Stock Exchange.

PPHC is the parent company of Crossroads Strategies, Forbes Tate Partners, Seven Letter, O'Neill & Assocs., Alpine Group Partners, MultiState Assocs., and Concordant Advisory. ○

Ex-rep pushes cannabis banking bill

Former Congressman Ed Perlmutter is spearheading the National Cannabis Roundtable's push for passage of the Secure and Fair Enforcement Regulation Act, which would provide state-sanctioned weed purveyors access to financial services.

The Holland and Knight attorney signed on as a policy advisor to NCR on Feb. 5. Perlmutter was a leading advocate for the cannabis banking bill when the Democrat represented Colorado in Congress.

Forty-seven states have legalized some form of medical or recreational cannabis over the past ten years.

Due to the federal classification of cannabis as an illegal drug under the Controlled Substances Act, banks are reluctant to do business with cannabis companies.

Former House Speaker John Boehner and ex-Kansas Governor and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius are honorary co-Chairs of NCR.

The cannabis trade group counts FTI Consulting, American Weed Co., Eminence Capital, Cresco Labs and Precious Canna Co. as members. ○



Ed Perlmutter

KP adds top CA lobbying shop

KP Public Affairs has acquired Doherty Law Group, a top California lobbying shop.

John Doherty, former CEO for the Civil Justice Assn. of California, and Chief of Staff for the state's Assembly Majority Leader

ColdSpark launches Citadel Comms.

ColdSpark, the Pittsburgh-based political communications and strategy company behind SFA Fund, the super PAC for Nikki Haley for President, has launched Citadel Communications, an affiliated entity that will focus on communications and public affairs for the company's clients in the corporate, nonprofit and association sectors.

ColdSpark will continue to serve clients in the political arena. Jeremy Neuhart, who previously held senior communications posts at companies including BASE, Evonik and PPG, leads Citadel as Managing Director, and Mor Greenberg, a leader in the advocacy space oversees strategy and execution, with particular emphasis on public affairs and public relations. ○

Place Public Affairs debuts

Place Public Affairs has been launched by Sam Myers, Jr., who was most recently Managing Director at Rational 360.

Myers has also served as a Presidential Advance Associate for the Biden White House as well as in the Obama and Clinton administrations. On the agency side, Myers previously served as President of BCW Global's Direct Impact unit and Vice President, Partnerships and Development at Huge.

Place Public Affairs' offerings include message development, media landscape assessment, grassroots and grasstops advocacy, third-party advocate engagement, event production and digital public affairs. ○

Iraq taps Valcour for U.S. outreach

The Embassy of Iraq has issued a one-year \$540,000 contract with Washington-based Valcour global public strategy firm for outreach to U.S. and state government officials to improve the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Valcour President Matt Mowers handles the Iraqi work. He advised on issues related to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, North Korea and immigration reform.

The firm reports to Iraq's U.S. ambassador, Nazar Al Khirullah, who took the post last June.

Valcour's contract, which went into effect this month, calls for it to be available for regular in-person meetings with the Embassy, upon request. The firm's \$45,000 monthly retainer is payable by check quarterly in advance. ○

Cogent Strat. files \$300K Iraq pact

Cogent Strategies has filed a one-year \$300,000 to provide PR services to Iraq's U.S. embassy.

The pact, which went into effect Jan. 10, replaces an earlier contract that was pegged at \$200,000 per-annum.

Cogent, which was launched by Podesta Group Chief Kimberley Fritts in November 2017 after that firm imploded, promotes the embassy's priorities in the policy community and conducts outreach to think tanks.

The firm also monitors the U.S. press, handles social media activities and works to boost the profile of Iraq's ambassador Nazar Al Khirullah.

The embassy pitched that event as part of its effort "towards changing the stereotyped image of Iraq, promoting tourism in various regions, and demonstrating the political stability that has been achieved." ○

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.

Becker & Poliakoff, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 1, 2024 for The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas**, Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas, regarding providing government relations services pertaining to the relationship between the Bahamas and the United States.

Cogent Strategies LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 1, 2024 for Delegation of the European Union to the United States** (through IBF International Consulting SA), Brussels, Belgium, concerning providing technical assistance to inform and support the efficacy and impact of the Delegation's social media efforts.

Thomas Capitol Partners, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 10, 2024 for Embassy of the Republic of Korea**, Washington, D.C., regarding providing government relations consulting services.

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.

Alcalde & Fay, Arlington, Va., **registered Feb. 12, 2024 for American Wild Horses Campaign**, Davis, Calif., concerning House and Senate Interior Appropriations Bill and preservation and protection of wild horses and burros on federal lands.

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 14, 2024 for American Hotel & Lodging Association**, Washington, D.C., regarding issues related to the hospitality industry, labor issues and tax policy.

Monument Advocacy, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 14, 2024, for Whole Foods Market, Inc.**, Austin, Texas, concerning issues related to advocacy on food and sustainability issues and the Farm Bill.

Williams and Jensen, PLLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 15, 2024 for American Airlines, Inc.**, Washington, D.C., regarding issues related to commercial airline industry policy, aviation security and infrastructure, aviation taxes, among other issues.

Rational 360 talks with Saudi sovereign fund

Rational 360 is negotiating an agreement to represent Saudi Arabia's \$700 billion sovereign wealth fund.

The agreement is expected to call for Rational 360 to serve as Government Relations and Communications Manager for Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, according to its Justice Dept. filing.

The firm also will engage with the U.S. Congress and executive branch on behalf of the fund, which is chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The PIF already has a \$4.1 million 2024 contract with Teneo for strategic counseling for global target markets; and efforts to enhance its visibility and thought leadership.

Teneo co-Founder Paul Keary testified Feb. 6 before the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in its probe into PIF's investment in professional golf. ○

Kyivstar dials up FTI Gov. Affairs

Kyivstar, Ukraine's largest telecommunications network, has hired FTI Government Affairs for representation in Washington on foreign relations/defense matters, and the potential nationalization of its assets.

The company, which has 24 million mobile subscribers and 1.1 million home Internet customers, fell victim to a massive Russian cyberattack that knocked out service on Dec. 12. It was Russia's largest cyberattack on Ukraine since it invaded the country.

Kyivstar is part of VEON, the NASDAQ-traded Amsterdam-based global digital operator. Mike Pompeo, former U.S. Secretary of State, sits on Kyivstar's board of directors. ○

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Employees: 105. Founded: 2005.

Agency Statement:

A global communications agency with a specialization in public relations, social media, content creation, partnerships, and digital marketing. With 105 employees across four U.S. offices including New York City, San Diego, Los Angeles and Nashville, one international office in London, plus a presence in Toronto, Denver, Arizona, Boston, Chicago, and Florida, J/PR 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, J/PR has consistently risen as a leader in the travel and hospitality spaces. Today, the agency's growing



Jamie Sigler O'Grady & Sarah Evans

portfolio spans many markets outside of travel and hospitality, with clients in lifestyle, culinary, real estate, and wellness. J/PR's global roster includes more than 150+ hotels in the U.S., UK and throughout Europe, Mexico, the Caribbean, Africa and more. J/PR represents destinations such as Panama, North Carolina and Utah as well as flagship hospitality brands including Hilton Luxury Brands, Virgin Limited Edition, Shangri-La, Relais & Châteaux, Vail Hospitality, Pendry Hotels & Resorts, Under Canvas, and Iconic Luxury Hotels. Over the past few years, J/PR has continued to expand its consumer and real estate portfolio, with the addition of Hawaiian Airlines, California Olive Ranch, Palazzo Ricci, and more.

J/PR in the news with O'Dwyer's:

• [News of Firms: J/PR Launches 20Two Studio](#)

Wed., Dec. 1, 2021

... **J/PR** launches 20Two Studio, a creative storytelling affiliate focused on public relations and social media...

• [News of Firms: J/PR Scoops Up Sadler & Co.](#)

Mon., Nov. 8, 2021

... Emma Hartland-Mahon **J/PR** acquires luxury travel, hospitality and design PR agency Sadler & Co. The two agencies plan to...

• [Accounts in Transit: J/PR Checks in at California Olive Ranch](#)

Tue., Oct. 26, 2021

... **J/PR** is named agency of record for public relations and social media strategy

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