

O'DWYER'S

Communications & New Media

May & June 2024 | Vol. 33 No. 3

**SPORTS
PR FIRMS
RANKED,
PG. 42**

**HEALTHCARE PR FIRMS
RANKINGS, PG. 36**

**2024
RANKINGS ISSUE**
**PUBLIC RELATIONS
AGENCIES RANKED
BY NET FEES, REGION,
SPECIALTY & GROWTH**

**MORE THAN 145 FIRMS
RANKED ACROSS 21
INDUSTRY SPECIALTIES**

**FOOD & BEVERAGE
RANKINGS, PG. 45**

**FINANCE FIRMS
RANKED, PG. 30**

**TRAVEL & TOURISM
PR FIRMS RANKINGS, PG. 41**

**TECHNOLOGY PR
RANKINGS, PG. 26**

**PR FIRMS RANKED
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EDITORIAL	6	32	HEALTH FIRMS POSTED PALTRY GROWTH IN '23
FREELANCE MARKETING BECOMES THE NORM	8	36	O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF HEALTHCARE PR FIRMS
SOCIAL MEDIA IS TOP SERVICE CHANNEL	9	38	OVERCOMING AN IMPASSE IN M&A
TECH TRENDS TRANSFORMING MARCOMMS	10	40	O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR SPECIALTIES
HARNESSING THE POWER OF NEW TECH	11	48	PR FIRMS POSTED MERE 1.8% GROWTH IN '23
ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE AND PR	12	52	O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF MAJOR U.S. PR FIRMS
A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO MARKET DISRUPTION	14	54	A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT
A PLAYBOOK FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION	16	56	O'DWYER'S REGIONAL PR FIRMS RANKINGS
WINNING THE AGENCY VS. AI BATTLE	18	58	REMEMBERING THE HUMAN ELEMENT
NAVIGATING THE DATA REVOLUTION	20	60	WHY I LOVE PUBLIC RELATIONS
COMMUNICATING IN A MISINFORMATION ERA	22	62	PROFILES OF RANKED PR FIRMS
A TOUGH YEAR FOR TECH FIRMS	24	77	PEOPLE IN PR
O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF TECH PR FIRMS	26	80	WASHINGTON REPORT
'23 WAS 'MIXED BAG' FOR FINANCE FIRMS	28	COLUMNS	
O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF FINANCIAL PR FIRMS	30	78	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Fraser Seitel
		79	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT Dominic Rovano



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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

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Anchin Block & Anchin.....9	G&S Business Communications...Back Cover	Orchestra.....5
APCO Worldwide.....59	Gould+Partners.....8	Padilla.....23
The Bliss Group.....31	Hemsworth.....39	PAN Communications, Inc.....27
Coyne Public Relations.....3	The Hoffman Agency.....19	Prosek Partners.....21
Crosby.....37	Hotwire Global.....25	Sloane & Company.....6
Edelman.....46 & 47	ICR.....61	Stanton.....Inside Cover
Fahlgren Mortine/Turner.....13	Joele Frank.....65	The Stevens Group.....51
FINN Partners.....15	JPA Health.....33	

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Americans weary of purpose-driven marketing

The prevailing wisdom in recent years has been that Americans support companies that speak up for their values and that the private sector stands in a unique position to address some of the world's most pressing social, environmental and political problems. For business leaders, staying silent on an important social issue may come with the same peril of committing oneself to an unpopular cause.

But all that may be changing, according to the latest Global Communications Report conducted by the USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations.

The annual report, which focuses on trends in the global communications landscape, surveyed PR pros, investors, employees of large companies and the general public on what role purpose plays in companies' reputations. Bucking what has been an overarching trend, this year's report captured a significant pullback in the outsized expectation stakeholders have traditionally had for companies to engage on social issues in our polarized political climate.

According to the report, while most PR professionals, business leaders, employees and consumers today still believe that companies have a responsibility to address our most pressing social issues, the percentage of all of them has decreased markedly since last year, suggesting that a broader cultural shift away from purpose may be underfoot.

For example, 85 percent of PR pros said they think companies have a responsibility to address social issues, compared to 89 percent last year. Similarly, 64 percent of employees believe employees have a responsibility to tackle social issues, a seven percent slip when compared to 71 percent last year. 61 percent of consumers now think believe employees have a responsibility to address social issues, down eight percentage points from 69 percent last year.

In fact, among all parties surveyed, the only group to reveal an uptick in corporate social responsibility interest was investors, 96 percent of whom said they think companies have a responsibility to address social issues, an increase of seven percentage points from 89 percent last year.

The report also discovered that ESG reporting and tracking may be decreasing. Fewer than half of the PR pros surveyed (46 percent) said they would be investing more in ESG in the next five years, which accounts for an astonishing 42 percent drop from last year's survey (when 79 percent said they planned to boot ESG investment). Fewer than a third (29 percent) of PR pros polled similarly reported that they planned to increase their level of investment in tracking and reporting in ESG during the 2024 section cycle.

Aside from an almost universal desire to dial back on ESG initiatives, there appears to be a major disconnect among all parties—business leaders, communicators, investors and consumers—when it comes to what social issues are important and which issues the private sector should speak up about. While business leaders and consumers both agree that “the economy” is the most important issue worth tackling, they appear to be misaligned on just about everything else.

For example, communications pros believe companies should take a lead on climate change and sustainability (72 percent); diversity, equity and inclusion (67 percent); and misinformation and disinformation (65 percent); but should try to avoid engaging on other topics such as immigration, gun violence and union workers' rights. Investors, on the other hand, want companies to speak out on DEI (57 percent), the economy (57 percent) and the usage of generative AI (48 percent). And consumers said they feel companies should play a larger role when speaking up on mental health (64 percent), the economy (53 percent) and race and racism (52 percent).

But that's not how business leaders see it. According to the report, business leaders think the private sector is best equipped to lead on the economy (62 percent), DEI (53 percent) and misinformation (47 percent). Similarly, when asked what topics they believe they're personally most comfortable discussing, business leaders said they'd prefer taking the reins on issues related to the economy (82 percent), mental health (71 percent) and misinformation (70 percent).

Despite these findings, the report still suggests—as countless reports have in recent years—that consumers are motivated to action when companies take a stand on issues that align with their values. According to the report, nearly half (49 percent) of consumers surveyed said they'd recommend a value-aligned company's product or service to a friend, family member or colleague; 44 percent said they'd purchase more from the company; 37 percent said they'd share a positive review; 33 percent said they'd defend the company and 23 percent said they'd engage with the company on social media.

But if the report is any indication, the perils of not engaging with a social issue hardly amount to a death blow to a company's reputation. When consumers were asked what actions they would take if they found themselves disagreeing with a company's position on a certain issue, only 13 percent said they'd boycott the company, only nine percent said they'd leave a negative rating or review and only percent said they'd send a letter to the company expressing their disapproval.

When business leaders were asked what factors would ultimately prevent their company from speaking out on a social issue, alienating customers came out on top (53 percent), followed by alienating employees (43 percent), exposing the company to reputational risk (37 percent), alienating investors (35 percent) and inviting activist attacks (30 percent). ○

— Jon Gingerich



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O'Dwyer's is published seven times a year for \$60.00 (\$7.00 a single issue) by the J.R. O'Dwyer Co., Inc. 271 Madison Ave., #1500 New York, NY 10016. (212) 679-2471 Fax: (212) 683-2750.

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Freelance marketing becomes the norm

Freelance marketers and the companies that hire them are satisfied with the current arrangements they have and anticipate the volume of freelance opportunities to increase in the future, according to new data on the growing freelance marketing economy.

By Jon Gingerich

It's no secret that the freelance economy is growing. More than a third of the current U.S. workforce identifies itself as independent, and a new report by marketing talent platform Wripple illustrates just how much of today's freelance workforce now counts marketing professionals as well.

According to the report, which surveyed marketing/creative freelancers and the companies that hire them regarding the challenges and opportunities that exist in today's freelance marketing space, both freelancers and companies generally hold positive views about their collaborations. According to the report, 90 percent of freelancers and 99 percent of companies that hire them said they're satisfied with the freelance work arrangements they have. More than half (51 percent) of companies that use freelancers said they get a good value for the quality of the work that's delivered, a level of satisfaction that has increased 15 percent since 2022. For freelancers, that satisfaction is also up by virtually

the same amount: 14 percent.

What's more, 82 percent of freelancers said they anticipate the number of opportunities they accept will increase in the next two years. On the other side of things, 92 percent of companies said they similarly expect to increase the volume of the freelance work they hire.

When it comes to the type of work organizations are hiring marketing freelancers to do, marketing creative (87 percent), technology (78 percent), media (75 percent), data and analytics (74 percent), experience design (74 percent), artificial intelligence (71 percent), strategy and planning (63 percent), multimedia content (51 percent) and project management (36 percent) were named as the marketing gigs with the most demand.

However, the freelancer's role within the marketing workplace comes with limitations as well as persistent cultural and operational differences, suggesting companies would be wise to engage with the free-

lance staff they hire and ask them how their relationship might be improved.

For example, while a majority of freelancers (53 percent) think the freelance experience should have stronger standards and professionalism put into place, less than a third of companies (30 percent) believe this is a present issue.

And while nearly half (47 percent) of freelancers think the freelancing world faces persistent operational challenges and has a long way to go before it's managed and viewed as a core part of a company's workforce, only a little more than a third (36 percent) of companies that hire freelancers believe such challenges persist.

Overall, 79 percent of freelancers believe the role of freelancing isn't managed consistently in ways that make it integral to a company's workforce. Similarly, 75 percent of companies that hire freelancers believe freelancing's overall role in its workforce is constrained.

According to freelancers, other ever-present challenges in the freelance world include a lack of professionalism or partnership (42 percent), a lack of clarity regarding the work (38 percent), a poor cultural and/or team fit (31 percent), a lack of expertise (31 percent) and lack of management (30 percent).

The top reasons freelancers say they stop working with a client include operational challenges (63 percent), a lack of professionalism and partnership (49 percent) and a lack of commitment to DEI (36 percent).

On the other side, the top reasons why a business decides not to move forward with a freelancer includes that person not being a good fit (22 percent), the talent asks for too much money (20 percent) or the talent asks for money too low to be taken seriously (18 percent).

According to the report, staffing firms are a popular route for part-time freelancers to find work, but full-time freelancers are more likely to rely on company acquisition teams, their own marketing or talent marketplaces.

Despite recent freelancer growth, the report found that the average full-time freelancer has been in the freelance market for between five and six years.

Wripple's "2024 Team Up Report" surveyed more than 400 marketing/creative freelancers and companies in late 2023. ●

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Social media becomes main customer service channel

Thanks to advances in Artificial Intelligence, social media has now taken a leading role in providing customer support services for brands, with its adoption achieving particular fanfare among Gen Z consumers.

By Jon Gingerich

Consumers have mixed feelings about chatbots and generative AI, but according to a new survey by social media analytics company Sprout Social, artificial intelligence is quickly becoming a welcome addition in the world of customer care—particularly when used on brands' social media channels.

The Sprout survey, which surveyed people living in the U.S. and UK about their attitudes regarding AI and chatbots, their customer-care and brand-trust preferences and how they use social media to keep up with the news and discover new products, discovered that about three-quarters (74 percent) of respondents are now comfortable with the practice of brands using AI to deliver faster customer service via social media.

In fact, the survey found that 80 percent of all consumers said they use social media more for customer service functions now than they did a year ago. For Gen Z consumers, that number is even higher: 89

percent.

A majority of Gen Z respondents (53 percent) now say that social media is their primary channel for customer support, followed by email (52 percent), the phone (47 percent), live chat (45 percent) and online support pages (19 percent). Other generations, meanwhile, aren't nearly as enthusiastic. Millennials rated social media as their third-favorite channel for customer support (behind live chat and email), Gen X rated it fourth (behind the phone, live chat and email) and Baby Boomers rated it dead last.

Not surprisingly, Gen Z consumers ranked Instagram and TikTok as their top two favorite social channels for customer service outreach. All other generations, meanwhile, said that if they had to use social media for customer service purposes, Facebook would be their preferred channel to do it.

Finally, the Sprout survey suggests that while people may be warming up to the

idea of engaging with AI and chatbots for customer service purposes, they remain far more divided when it comes to brands using that technology to post social content. Only 38 percent of consumers said they would be more interested in a brand that posted AI-generated content on social. In fact, more than a quarter (26 percent) said they would be more distrustful of a brand that did so.

And while a majority of consumers (72 percent) said they've dealt with chatbots before to solve a customer service problem, almost half (47 percent) said they found themselves eventually using another channel instead in order to get their problem resolved.

Findings for Sprout's "Q1 2024 Consumer Pulse Survey" were based on a survey of more than 2,000 U.S. and UK respondents who said they had at least one social media account and followed at least five brands via social media. Surveys were conducted online in March 2024. ○

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Technology trends transforming marcomms

Four emerging trends that are currently shaping today's marketing and communications landscape.

By Cortney Stapleton and Sally Slater

Technology is rapidly transforming the way we support clients. The rise of generative AI, powerful tools for advanced measurement and attribution and the newfound prominence of social media platforms like TikTok have pushed companies to rethink and refactor their marketing and communications strategies. Understanding these trends can help CCOs and CMOs stay ahead of the game.

Here are four emerging trends changing the marketing and communications landscape:

From one-size-fits-all to custom analytics

The marcomms industry has historically relied on off-the-shelf analytics tools. While these tools have their place, the growing maturity of analytics functions within PR agencies is giving rise to new, highly customized use cases.

For example, we maintain a database of all our “successful” pitches—those that secured reporter interest—and apply analytics to understand what reporters want. An illustrative insight: In our analysis of survey-related pitches, we discovered subject lines with stats in the form of percentages performed best.

Other emerging examples of custom analytics include:

Customized sentiment analysis. Instead of relying on out-of-the-box sentiment monitoring tools, we can train custom models that account for brand-specific nuances. This is particularly helpful for companies like law firms, whose thought leadership may appear in articles about litigation or regulatory violations—themes that would trigger a “negative” rating from traditional sentiment monitoring tools.

Custom categorization. We can augment the automated topical analysis in social listening tools with our own custom tags. For example, when we analyze social post-performance, we like to categorize content based on the 3 Cs: cultivated, curated and created posts.

The big takeaways:

- Evaluate your current analytics tools: Are they meeting your specific needs, or are you relying on generic metrics?
- Explore custom analytics solutions.
- Manage your data: You only get out what you put in. If your data isn't clean and well-structured, there is only so much analytics can do.

No more spin on PR ROI

Every public relations professional has

been asked by leadership, “What's the ROI?” And for years, we've danced around the issue with indirect and qualitative metrics. However, with the emergence of new technology platforms available to PR pros, we can report more meaningful metrics that shed light on the true impact of earned media. Memo, for example, provides article readership through publisher partnerships so you know exactly how many people have read your coverage.

Methods to use to accurately report PR ROI: Real article readership, through platforms like Memo, SimilarWeb and SEM-Rush; traffic and conversions from your target audience; regression analysis to correlate the impact of earned media on sales.

Methods for reporting ROI that you should scrap: Unique visitors per month for the entire outlet; pageviews for the sake of pageviews, with sky-high bounce rates; saying “you can't quantify the monetary value of PR.”

The big takeaways:

- Revisit your KPIs. Determine which “new” metrics make sense to bring into your reporting.
- Partner with marketing. You'll need access to Google Analytics to be able to report on metrics like referral traffic and conversions from that referral traffic.
- Prepare internal messaging. If executives are used to seeing millions in impressions, reporting that an article “only” received 1,000 pageviews may come as a shock. Education will be critical to put these new numbers into perspective.

Gen AI changes the game

Gen AI is arguably the most significant development for our industry since social media. Savvy communicators leverage gen AI as a brainstorming and research assistant, data analysis tool and countless other use cases that save time and effort.

Both Google and Bing have incorporated gen AI models into their search algorithms, including Google's Search Generative Experience and Bing's new AI-powered search experience. Every SGE result generates an answer box that summarizes data from multiple sources, which appear in a scannable source panel. Unlike traditional search results, which just include a list of links, AI-generated search results may include pros, cons and key considerations. Users can ask follow-up questions and go deeper without ever clicking on a website.

Can gen AI replace your best writer or

graphic designer? We'd argue no—especially considering Google's March 2024 “helpful content update” that penalizes low-quality AI-generated content. Can it accelerate the creative process and expedite content production? Absolutely.

While gen AI holds significant upside, it also poses new risks and ethical quandaries. Private GPT sandboxes will resolve many of users' privacy concerns, but not the IP and copyright issues in the data on which these models are trained. Other questions abound: Should we disclose the use of gen AI in every instance? Are we amplifying existing biases? Are we perpetuating falsehoods?

The big takeaways:

- Develop a gen AI policy that clearly outlines acceptable and unacceptable use.
- Adopt gen AI tools that can be “walled off” so you can experiment without worrying about improper data disclosure.
- Generative search takes a lot of raw computing energy, so Google will prioritize lightweight, structured content.
- Google's SGE is still experimental—even the most sophisticated SEO marketers don't yet know a surefire way to impact what shows up in the answer box and source panel.

Search goes social

Social media is the go-to news source for millions of Americans. It has become the top product discovery channel for Millennials and Gen Z and 31 percent of all consumers use social media to find out answers to their questions. Further, social media has become the new WebMD with a third of Gen Z turning to TikTok for health advice and 44 percent turning to YouTube before visiting a doctor.

The big takeaways:

- Listen to how people are talking about your brand—and your competitors' brands—on social media to understand how you should be showing up for your audience.
- Prioritize authentic educational content to be rewarded by social media algorithms.
- Be authentic. To be a trusted resource



Cortney Stapleton



Sally Slater

Continued on next page

Harnessing the power and potential of new tech

Knowing when and how to leverage new tools in innovative ways is essential for keeping clients on top of the game.

By Laura Cubillos

In today's world, integrating the latest technology and tools into your work isn't optional—it's vital. While it may feel daunting to stay on top of all the new tools and services, understanding when and how to integrate technology into the every day is essential to keep your clients one step ahead. At Padilla, we're constantly looking for that little bit extra to solve unmet client needs—sometimes ones they didn't even know they had—through innovative approaches, creative thinking, new ways of working and continuous learning. "Make it Better" is a core value that guides how we work and interact with clients, colleagues and the world around us, and leveraging tech is a way to do just that.

Even if you don't feel tech-savvy, it's important to understand how to use available tools and anticipate future innovation. Here are three ways you can maximize technology to unlock key insights, develop new strategies and deliver novel client solutions.

Connect with your audience. A deep understanding of your target consumer is vital for a successful campaign and is particularly important when working with premium products and brands. Employing tools to identify specific characteristics of your target helps you connect and deliver brand messages in a way that's meaningful and impactful to your audience.

This was particularly true in a recent multi-tactic campaign for a premium food client. Thanks to client investments in customized market research, we dug deep to uncover the unique attributes and needs of our specific target market that were addressed by our client's premium brand eating experience. It's important to note we didn't get there on our first shot; we reanalyzed existing survey data and integrated other media partner measurement tools to peel back layers of consumer behavior and perceptions in a way that allowed us to establish a deeper connection. We used these insights to thoughtfully curate a mix of four influencers who could individually tailor authentic brand messages that would resonate deeply with the people we wanted to reach.

Accurately measure success. Measurement is essential for delivering a successful campaign, but it isn't always clear or easy to show impact in PR. Going back to the aforementioned example, we used this same tool to measure campaign impact.

The results? The influencer component was nearly three times as impactful as expected for increasing brand awareness, value and sales, outperforming the more traditional PR approaches including digital ads and point-of-sale messaging. But we wouldn't have known that without a deeper analysis of the survey tool dataset.

The client's investment in market research allowed us to uncover metrics hidden beneath the surface, capturing both initial visibility and engagement as well as lasting residual effects, and gave us a clearer understanding of long-term combined tactic impact. This not only proved we picked the right influencers and messages for this campaign but will help inform strategic direction and influencer tactics in future work.

Be prepared for shifts in tools. In the world of tech, change can happen fast. It's essential to stay in the know when new technology launches, or when the tools you're currently using grow and evolve.

In the food, beverage and wellness space, the recent launch of the Instacart Developer Platform was a moment where this rang true.

IDP gives third-party companies the keys to implement a more granular, customized shopping experience directly into their sites and apps. At launch, IDP is offering certain self-sufficient website and app development teams the ability to integrate Instacart functionality and content directly into their meal planning, recipe, health, nutrition, and entertainment content, unlocking new opportunities to build connected experiences, enhance the customer journey and meet consumer needs. This also makes it easier to track sales conversion.

Within two days of the announced launch, our development team proactively joined the waitlist for the beta release. As consumers look for less friction in their

food and beverage shopping and purchasing experiences, we need to be ready to identify applicable use cases for clients and be a sounding board for internal teams who may be interested in leveraging this upgrade. It's essential to monitor emerging digital retail technologies and advancements so you can evaluate the opportunity the moment the tech hits the ground.

Elevate your skillset with the power of AI.

By this point, everyone is using AI in one way or another, and AI's capabilities are accelerating by the day. From research and inspiration to image and video creation, generative AI is a game changer in PR and the world at large—but the technology crumbles if we aren't bringing our own knowledge and skills to the table as well.

Take for instance a recent client project to identify and map top leaders in the field of sustainability. Ask AI to do the job and you'll get a list of experts that fail to consider the unique needs and nuances of the particular client—not exactly the thoughtful work you'd want to deliver. Rather, you can use that list as a starting place and verify, add and connect the dots using your own valuable knowledge and insights, considering factors like sentiment and other nuances that AI simply cannot comprehend. This basic but important example drives home the point that AI removes barriers and jumpstarts the work, but human skill is needed to refine, finesse and truly meet the client's needs. As AI continues to evolve, we need to adapt, test and learn what's possible, always remembering tech can only go so far.

Laura Cubillos is Executive Vice President of the Food, Beverage and Nutrition Practice at Padilla and a Founding Partner at Food-Minds. ○



Laura Cubillos

Trends transforming marcomms

— Continued from page 10

on social media, don't hop on the trends for the sake of it. Participate in conversations relevant to your brand and industry.

- Prioritize engagement with your target audience and their influencers over broad engagement. "Going viral" isn't a win if it's with the wrong people.

Technology is reshaping the marketing

and communications landscape, a trend that will only accelerate as companies integrate new tools and processes into their everyday activities. Marcomms leaders must get ahead of these developments—or risk getting left behind.

Cortney Stapleton is CEO of The Bliss Group. Sally Slater is Executive Vice President and Head of Innovation at The Bliss Group. ○

Applying attorney-client privilege to PR

PR firms should be mindful of ways their work with a client's internal legal team or its external legal counsel may be protected by the attorney-client privilege.

By Daniel Finnegan, Jennifer Klausner and Michael Lasky

Public relations firms are increasingly occupying an important seat at the table when their clients confront a crisis of one type or another. The 24-hour news cycle and the constant availability of “trending” information on social media have only exacerbated the need for effective strategic communications. Crisis work regularly involves legal issues and legal advice—these matters range from regulatory or compliance matters, to sensitive employment issues, to claims or litigations, corporate restructuring and mergers and acquisitions.

PR firms need to be mindful of ways their work product may be protected by the attorney-client privilege whenever working with a client's internal legal team or its external legal counsel.

The attorney-client privilege protects communications between clients and their attorneys which relate to the provision of legal advice. Ordinarily, the presence of a third party other than the attorney and client—such as a PR firm—on a communication will “break” or “waive” the privilege. This means that the communication may be subject to production to an opposing party in a litigation, or in response to a subpoena. There are, however, three exceptions that may apply to protect the privilege when a PR firm is assisting an attorney with the provision of legal advice on behalf of a client. These are:

1. The exception for aiding in legal strategy, which applies when a PR firm is needed to help provide legal advice or achieve a circumscribed legal or litigation goal;

2. The “functional equivalent” exception, which applies when the employees of the PR firm are considered by a court to be the “functional equivalent” of employees of the client; or

3. The “translator” exception, which applies when the PR firm is necessary to facilitate or interpret communications between an attorney and the client.

A recent court decision illustrates how these rules are applied to potentially extend the attorney-client privilege to PR professionals. In *In re Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans*, the Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans retained legal counsel to represent the Archdiocese in advance of a bankruptcy filing. Before the Archdiocese filed for bankruptcy, the bankruptcy counsel retained a PR firm. The en-

gagement letter was entered into between the law firm and the PR firm—presumably in an attempt to shield the work product of the PR firm and communications with the PR firm from disclosure in the bankruptcy proceeding. The engagement letter stated that the PR firm's purpose was to be the “sole provider of public relations and crisis communication counsel for the Archdiocese regarding its potential restructuring.” In the litigation following the bankruptcy filing, a dispute emerged over whether certain communications involving the PR firm were privileged or whether those communications had to be produced in the litigation. The Archdiocese took the position that these communications were covered by both the functional equivalent and translator exceptions, and thus argued that the communications were protected by the attorney-client privilege. The court disagreed and ordered the communications with the PR firm to be produced in the litigation.

The court reached this conclusion because it found the PR firm was working solely to craft responses to media inquiries and not to aid legal counsel with the legal advice it provided to the Archdioceses. In particular, the court noted there were no bankruptcy lawyers included on any of the most relevant communications, and that the “ultimate purpose” of the PR advice was solely to “benefit the Archdiocese's reputational and business/mission goals.” The court further held that the PR firm employees exercised no independent decision-making authority and were not the Archdiocese's “sole representative” to the media.

Steps that a proactive PR firm can take to protect the attorney-client privilege

The Archdiocese of New Orleans decision illustrates that courts will strictly scrutinize claims of attorney-client privilege involving PR firms. This means that everyone involved in a crisis situation or a legal matter—the PR firm, the lawyers and the client—need to take proactive steps to protect the attorney-client privilege. It's usually an uphill battle to keep communications involving a PR firm privileged because courts tend to narrowly construe the exceptions to attorney-client privilege waiver. Therefore, it's important to take each one of the steps outlined below. Even failing to follow one of these steps can be enough for a court to find that the privilege has been waived.

Here are the six key steps to follow:

PR firms should contract directly with the attorney. PR firms should be engaged directly by the client's attorney, not the client. The PR firm should send its invoices to the attorney, even if the fees are ultimately passed on to their joint client. The invoices should specifically describe how the PR firm's work helps the attorney to provide legal advice.



Daniel Finnegan

Describe the engagement as legal in nature. The engagement agreement should describe the PR firm's work as aiding in legal strategy and services. The more a PR firm's work can be tied to legal strategy, the stronger the argument for retaining the privilege.



Jennifer Klausner

Always copy attorneys. PR firms should copy their client's legal counsel on all communications involving potential legal matters. The fact that the bankruptcy attorneys were not included on the relevant communications in the Archdiocese of New Orleans decision was an important fact relied upon by the court in denying protection of the privilege.



Michael Lasky

Clearly mark communications. Legal communications should be clearly marked as protected by the attorney-client privilege. This can be accomplished by simply writing “Attorney-Client Privileged Communication” at the top of the relevant communication.

Always keep communications confidential. The PR firm should keep communications involving legal matters confidential. In particular, the PR firm should never share these communications with any third parties.

Always keep legal work separate. The PR firm should keep legal-related PR work separate from any other PR work it performs.

Always keep legal work separate. The PR firm should keep legal-related PR work separate from any other PR work it performs.

Continued on page 17



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A holistic approach to market disruption

Successfully transforming markets through integrated marketing communications.

By Steve Halsey

In today's rapidly evolving marketplace, innovation isn't just a buzzword but a necessity for companies aiming to disrupt their sectors and deliver lasting impact. At our agency, we believe that strategic integrated marketing communications is the cornerstone for businesses of all sizes—from *Fortune* 500 giants to nimble startups—to not only navigate these waters but to lead the charge in transformation. For companies looking to disrupt supply chains, gain market share and improve lives, integrated marketing communications can be a game changer.

Fueling market disruption

Market disruption occurs when an innovation significantly alters the way that consumers, industries, or businesses operate. Such innovation often solves problems in a way that the market did not know was possible. For *Fortune* 500 companies, disruption might mean leveraging cutting-edge technology to redefine product categories; for mid-market companies, it could involve adopting new business models that outpace larger competitors; and for startups, disruption often looks like introducing groundbreaking products or services that change the status quo.

The role of integrated marketing communications

At the heart of successful market disruption is effective communication. That's because truly disruptive innovation is often disorienting, misunderstood and in need of context for what it's about to disrupt and why it matters. IMC helps address this by taking a strategic, cohesive approach that blends paid, earned and owned components to deliver a unified message across multiple platforms and channels. Such synergy not only ensures consistency in messaging but also optimizes the consumer journey from awareness to action. This is essential for gaining market share in fragmented markets and fully realizing the business opportunity. So how does it manifest itself?

Large corporations often face the inertia of scale, making it challenging to pivot quickly. Strategic IMC helps these behemoths act like nimble startups by facilitating faster, more agile responses to market changes. By leveraging robust data analytics, AI-driven insights and comprehensive digital strategies, *Fortune* 500 companies can personalize their outreach at scale, predict market trends and manage their brand

reputation across all touchpoints, turning size into an advantage rather than a constraint.

Mid-sized firms occupy a unique niche: they are powerful enough to make significant market impacts yet small enough to pivot when necessary. Integrated strategies for these firms focus on leveraging their agility to carve out market niches before larger competitors can respond. By employing targeted communications strategies that highlight their innovative solutions and customer-centric approaches, mid-market companies can position themselves as the perfect alternatives to their larger counterparts.

Startups inherently embody disruption, but without the right marketing strategies, even the most revolutionary ideas can fail to achieve market traction. For these smaller players, IMC must focus on building brand visibility and credibility rapidly. Utilizing guerrilla marketing tactics combined with digital and social media campaigns can create buzz and foster a community of early adopters. Moreover, partnerships with influencers and thought leaders can amplify their disruptive potential, making their innovative solutions known and trusted.

Driving disruption

At our agency, we have deployed IMC to help a *Fortune* 500 science company create a multi-channel approach to introduce a new grass-health technology that enhances the playability of golf courses. Through an integrated campaign that included a custom VR experience, owned and paid media, and targeted content marketing, we helped them disrupt the turf space with the 360-degree immersive experience and set a new standard for golf course management.

A mid-sized MedTech firm wanted to introduce a revolutionary new medical device and associated treatment for a chronic, debilitating condition, so we created a campaign that highlighted patient stories and robust scientific data. The strategic use of educational content and engagement with healthcare professionals via digital channels significantly increased awareness and technology adoption in a niche dominated by older and more invasive medical technologies.

And when it comes to being scrappy, a robotics startup asked us to help them launch an innovative concept to revolutionize manufacturing processes at mid-sized in-

dustrial companies. They wanted to get tech reporters and automation influencers to help dispel the myths and change the narrative around the impact of automation on America's manufacturing workforce. So, we engaged key influencers, ran hybrid media events and executed an accompanying digital campaign. The result? The company leapfrogged the competition, landed pilot projects with major manufacturers and bolstered interest from major investors.



Steve Halsey

As you can see from these examples, each deployment was different and distinct because each was designed to deliver a bespoke outcome based on the given business strategy, size of company and level of disruption desired. That's the beauty—and frankly, the fun—of creating IMC campaigns. You are not just figuring out how to get the right message to the right audience at the right time. You are truly helping companies unleash their business plans and inspire their most important audiences to take action, resulting in positive business outcomes.

A one-size-fits-all model won't work. You must truly understand the target market, its dynamics and the competitive landscape. Creating guiding personas will help you identify, target, track and gauge impact across channels. And, success requires a willingness to blend the art and science of strategy, creativity, discipline and cross-channel executional excellence into something that breaks through the clutter and effectively positions the disruptive product or technology as, well, disruptive.

Tips for success with IMC

There are five essential steps to effective integration. They are:

Align your objectives. Start by grounding your marketing and communications objectives in your business goals. Whether it's increasing brand awareness, driving sales or entering new markets, your communications strategy should support these aims directly.

Understand your audience. Deeply analyze your target demographic. Use data analytics to understand their behaviors, preferences and pain points and develop resulting story-based personas to help tailor messaging and content for maximum

— Continued on page 17



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A playbook for digital transformation

The challenges that can arise—and several lessons that might be learned—when guiding clients through digital transformation.

By Neby Ejigu

Another playbook? It seems like the remix that never ends! Well, here's one more to add to your playlist. This one shares the hard-earned lessons from guiding countless clients—big and small—through their digital transformation journeys, successes, failures and frustrations to drive better business outcomes.

Before we start, you might ask, "Why should I care?" Let's be real: A client's digital transformation changes everything, especially how they communicate. Understanding their transformation and being able to guide them through it becomes crucial. This is where marketing and PR teams step up by working together and breaking down those old barriers.

Whether you're an in-house marketer or an agency pro handling multiple clients, these are some lessons to help you drive growth and get real results. This playbook covers the basics: choosing the right tech, staying safe and tracking success.

Core challenges

Strategic focus in a noisy landscape. Clients often struggle to stay focused amid the buzzwords and ever-evolving tactics. Your role is to help them maintain a laser focus on long-term goals, prioritizing initiatives that directly support core business objectives and deliver tangible value.

Data-driven decisions for measurable impact. Data is plentiful, but actionable insights are what drive client success. We've seen clients thrive by mastering data-driven storytelling and translating raw numbers into strategies that fuel impactful marketing campaigns and targeted PR pitches. Remember, data-driven organizations acquire customers at a 23x higher rate.

Avoiding the tech trap: strategic adoption is key. Emerging technologies offer exciting possibilities, but too often we see clients chase shiny objects rather than focusing on fit. Guide your clients to make discerning choices. Ensure tools align perfectly with their goals, deliver true ROI and integrate seamlessly into existing workflows to prevent costly disruptions and inefficiencies.

Cybersecurity: safeguarding your clients' digital fort. We've observed firsthand the devastating consequences of cyberattacks on businesses. Marketers and PR professionals play a crucial role in protecting client brand reputation and customer data. Advise your clients on implementing ro-

bust security solutions like CrowdStrike and Okta. A staggering 60 percent of businesses hit by cyberattacks fail within six months, highlighting the critical need for proactive security measures.

Unified attribution: proving the value of every touchpoint. Siloed data is a major roadblock preventing clients from accurately tracking their customer journeys and demonstrating the effectiveness of marketing and PR efforts. Unified attribution is the solution. Help your clients map actions, communications and measurable outcomes—lead generation, website traffic, media mentions—to showcase the strategic value of each touchpoint and secure crucial resources.

Your strategic toolkit

Measurement frameworks to track success. Implement robust measurement frameworks to quantify the impact of every initiative. This enables precise tracking of outcomes and aligns marketing efforts with business objectives, ensuring that each action contributes to overarching goals.

Seamless integration to make everything click. Imagine your client's data and systems as a complex web of information. The key to unlocking true transformation is making all those threads connect seamlessly. For in-house teams, that means hooking into their existing tools—like their customer database or product info hub—to get the data they need to make quick, smart decisions. This smooth flow of info lets everyone on the team, from marketing to sales, work together like a well-oiled machine.

For agencies, the challenge is being adaptable. Every client's tech setup is unique. Your superpower is being able to adjust your approach to fit their existing systems. Focus on tools that play nicely with their stuff, ensuring a smooth rollout and avoiding any headaches.

AI & automation: your time-saving BFFs. Let's face it, repetitive tasks can suck the life out of creativity. For in-house teams, AI tools are like having a whole new department on your side! These tools can speed up tedious chores like generating reports, crunching data or personalizing content at scale. The result? A team with more time to focus on big ideas and innovative strategies instead of getting bogged down in the daily grind.

Agencies can win big here too! Automating routine tasks frees up your team to de-

liver game-changing ideas. Recommending AI-powered solutions to clients doesn't just improve their efficiency, it shows you're a forward-thinking partner who truly gets their needs.

From personalization to personal. The magic of personalization lies in understanding your client's customers on a deeper level. This means using tools that uncover hidden insights about their target audience, allowing you to craft tailored experiences at every stage of the customer journey. For in-house teams, this translates to happy customers and a solid loyalty base.



Neby Ejigu

Agencies can take this approach and scale it across their entire portfolio. Segmenting audiences and creating personalized campaigns becomes a breeze. That's how you build strong, lasting relationships between brands and the people they serve. Advanced AdTech for Deep Personalization: Employ sophisticated AdTech to gain deeper insights into your client's target audiences, allowing for the creation of highly personalized customer experiences. This not only enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty but also sets the foundation for scalable, personalized campaigns across your client portfolio.

Guiding clients through transformation challenges

We're all aware that digital transformation can be quite intense. Each client encounters distinct hurdles, whether it's garnering support across a sprawling organization or ensuring seamless technology transitions. Here are some ways you can assist them in navigating through these challenges.

Securing buy-in. Change can be daunting, especially for stakeholders focused on short-term metrics. Build a compelling case by speaking their language. Translate transformation initiatives into tangible business goals, highlight ROI potential and showcase success stories that resonate within their industry. Tie everything back to the core objectives that matter most to them.

Compelling case studies. Success breeds confidence. Gather a collection of client success stories, both internal and external to your organization. The key here is curating examples that resonate with your client's specific challenges and industry. Showcase

Continued on next page

Managers unaware of employee burnout

Employees at U.S. companies are experiencing high levels of burnout, but managers are lagging behind when it comes to their awareness of the problem.

By Steve Barnes

Employees at U.S. companies are experiencing high levels of burnout, but managers are lagging behind when it comes to their awareness of the problem, according to a recently released study from communications consulting firm The Grossman Group in collaboration with The Harris Poll.

The survey of 1,115 employees and 971 managers found that only 24 percent of employees surveyed said they were “thriving” in their current position. However, things look much rosier from the vantage point of the managers surveyed. Almost nine out of 10 of them (89 percent) said their employees were thriving in the jobs they now hold, revealing a major disconnect between employees and managers.

But only 37 percent of the managers themselves said they were thriving in their own positions, with 63 percent referring to

themselves as “burned out or ambivalent.”

The biggest factor behind work-related burnout for employees was “constant change,” which was cited by 43 percent of them. Coming in a close second was “senior management creates unnecessary work,” which 41 percent mentioned. High employee turnover (39 percent) and limited mental health benefits (37 percent) were also major contributors to on-the-job stress. Constant change was also listed as the top cause of burnout for managers (50 percent).

Younger workers also prioritized different factors when saying what provoked burnout for them. They were twice as likely to say that a “toxic work environment” and “communication overload” were sources of burnout than older employees were, and were three times as likely to attribute it to “interpersonal conflict.”

The study noted that this state of affairs is leading to a job environment in which 33 percent of U.S. hiring managers said that they predict employee turnover will increase this year. And it turns out that employee turnover is rather expensive, with each turnover estimated to cost on average, \$36,295 annually in lost productivity and rehiring costs.

So how can the employee turnover wave be slowed down? First off, the study says, managers need to sharpen their listening skills—being open to new ideas and feed back, using multiple vehicles to solicit opinions and focusing on talking less and paying more attention to the employees.

Other key strategies include emphasizing manager training, ensuring regular check-ins with all employees and managers, and ensuring that there’s plan in place to manage change-fatigue.

“Purposeful plans should be in place,” the study noted, “recognizing that everyone has a role to play in building a thriving culture.” ○

Successful market disruption

— Continued from page 14

resonance with your audience.

Coordinate across channels. Ensure that all channels—from earned and social media to traditional media and advertising—speak with one voice. Consistency reinforces your message and boosts brand recognition.

Leverage technology. Utilize the latest tools for data collection and analysis. Automation tools can help synchronize your campaigns across various platforms, ensuring a seamless customer experience.

Monitor and adapt. Continuously evaluate the performance of your communications efforts and be ready to adapt your

strategy based on real-time feedback and evolving market conditions.

The transformative power of IMC

Integrated Marketing Communications represents a paradigm shift from traditional marketing and communications practices. It emphasizes a unified approach where every message, channel and strategy works in concert to create a cohesive user experience. Understanding the evolution of IMC, its key components and strategic importance is essential. Implementing it requires breaking down organizational silos to ensure seamless and consistent communication across all consumer interactions. It also requires an integrated team of multi-disciplined experts capable of working seamlessly together from strategy

through execution.

Whether you’re a behemoth in your industry, a mid-sized challenger or a groundbreaking startup, the ability to disrupt markets and gain a competitive edge lies in how effectively you communicate your innovations. Effective IMC is not just about spreading the word; it’s about creating a strategic narrative that resonates with your audience and compels them to act.

By embracing this holistic approach, companies can positively disrupt their markets, significantly improve the lifetime value of their customers and contribute to a better, more innovative and sustainable future.

Steve Halsey is Principal and Chief Growth Officer at G&S. ○

Digital transformation playbook

— Continued from page 16

measurable results achieved through similar digital transformations.

Building a collaborative relationship. True transformation demands synergy. For in-house teams, foster open communication across departments to ensure everyone is rowing in the same direction. Become an extension of your client’s team through proactive communication, shared goals and transparent progress reporting. These partnerships built on trust are the bedrock of lasting success.

As we move forward, the demand for tangible outcomes from all our PR and marketing initiatives will continue to rise. It’s time

to engage in conversations with clients who have yet to fully leverage technology to enhance their brand. Digital transformation journeys are ever-evolving, and optimization is a continuous process. Perfection may

be unattainable, much like nirvana, but the journey itself is where the growth and optimization truly lie.

Neby Ejigu is Senior Partner of Marketing Technology at FINN Partners. ○

Attorney-client privilege

— Continued from page 12

for the client. If the legal-related work is intermingled with non-legal work, a court is more likely to find that none of the work is legal.

When a PR firm is contacted to assist with a potential legal matter, the firm should promptly raise the issue of attorney-client privilege and discuss the best steps to pro-

tect the privilege. Raising this issue proactively will also demonstrate a PR firm’s experience, expertise and value.

Michael Lasky is Founder and Chair of Davis+Gilbert’s Public Relations Law Practice and co-Chair of its Litigation + Dispute Resolution Practice. Jennifer Klausner is Partner in the Davis+Gilbert’s Litigation + Dispute Resolution Practice. Daniel Finnegan is Associate in the Davis+Gilbert’s Litigation + Dispute Resolution Practice. ○

Winning the agency vs. AI battle

Companies might be tempted to handle PR duties on their own by using AI-powered technologies, but these tools can never provide the services and expertise that a good agency partner can offer.

By Tom Faust

In an evolving and volatile media environment, maintaining an active and vigilant public relations program has never been more essential to enhancing corporate reputation and supporting business goals. At the same time, the communications industry is under greater pressure than ever as a plethora of services, technologies and other tools become available to businesses. The most recent example being a bevy of free, AI-powered solutions that can—in theory—write press releases with the click of a button.

It's understandable that, in an uncertain economy with companies looking for every opportunity to manage costs, the prospect of leveraging such resources looks like an attractive option. Unfortunately, it's not so easy. AI-enabled tools may be able to tackle the mechanics of more mundane PR tasks, but they can never replicate the full spectrum of services, experience and relationships that a strong agency partner brings.

In this time of endless options, dazzling technology and wild claims about the “end of PR,” it's wise to take a step back and really examine critical areas where agency partners add value far beyond the press release—areas that are often forgotten when solely focused on checking the PR box with the lowest possible cost.

Real strategic counsel

One source of the idea that an agency can be replaced with Chat GPT is reducing PR to press releases. If you are using your agency primarily to write and issue press releases, it's no wonder the relationship is not valued. The “highest and best use” of your agency partner should be providing informed and expert advice that draws on multiple professionals' years of experience.

This should range from testing corporate messaging for credibility and differentiation to bringing new and creative ideas, to helping optimize language and devise strategy when communicating with employees, investors, partners and customers around challenging issues.

A good agency also acts as an “honesty broker” that ensures its clients doesn't get tunnel vision, where “hard selling” products and services to media takes the place of providing strategic insight or sharing market knowledge. Agencies know how to find the sweet spot where the media's needs and the client's business objectives can meet in a way that makes for a compelling story that

will engage target audiences more than any list of product features.

True media knowledge

Media relations is about so much more than the pitch. With newsrooms continuing to shrink, the ratio of PR professionals to reporters continues to increase. As a result, the competition for attention is fierce. This means that building and maintaining relationships with media is more critical than ever for success. Even if you have compelling news

This is where experienced and connected PR professionals can provide a critical link. Because they interact with media on an ongoing basis, have a strong understanding of the media at many levels: individual reporters' likes and dislikes and the kinds of pitches that will resonate, as well as the requirements that the reporter's editor might impose before publication. Finally, they understand how the outlet's editorial policies, workflow and approach could affect the interaction.

A strong communications partner should also be able to think broadly about how to segment content and turn a single piece of coverage into many by ensuring that each reporter has a compelling angle that gives them a reason to write. We recently helped one of our clients maximize the coverage on an IT research report by adopting this approach. While the client was initially looking for one solid story in a leading technology outlet, we advised they customize the data by vertical markets, giving an entirely new group of industry-specific reporters access to bespoke data that addressed the concerns of their distinct readerships. This resulted in 10x the coverage that a narrower approach might have generated.

Holistic campaign design

A good agency will also help you integrate paid, earned and owned media cost-effectively. More and more opportunities across media outlets, industry conferences and podcasts, come with a price tag. But that doesn't mean they should immediately shift to the sales team. A holistic communications plan ensures that these various channels complement each other with each playing its specific role.

For example, a large international investment firm was struggling to choose between whether certain content was appropriate for the IR team or for PR, where the ideas and insights held greater value.

We devised a strategy that satisfied both needs and extended the content into other channels as well. As a result, the fulsome campaign includes owned, earned and paid media that worked seamlessly together.

Advance crisis preparedness

Crisis management is communications in the moment. This need arises for every company sooner or later, and agencies tend to be valued most highly when they are “in the foxhole” with their clients, running interference, fielding inquiries and mitigating negative fallout. Rarer is the work done in advance of the crisis that can have a huge impact when things go badly.

An agency's first job in this vein is to push clients to invest time in preparation. It's all too common for companies to push off thinking about crises until they are in the middle of one. From experience, we know that scenario planning, identifying stakeholders, establishing media protocols and developing other elements of a crisis playbook can and should be done as part of the client's strategic planning, and that should be reviewed and updated annually.

Social media enhancement

Finally, and a more recent development for B-to-B companies, is a comprehensive and strategic program to enhance a company's social media presence. Although social media has been around for more than two decades, too many organizations still struggle to use these platforms to their full potential. We've seen everything from companies with zero corporate profiles to those whose activity is limited to reposting news releases. Still, others have stronger content but lack any sort of coordination with the profiles of key executives.

An agency partner should bring proficiency in both the mechanics of social media as well as content strategy that encompasses frequency, length and category of posts, in addition to content promotion via paid boost campaigns.

It would be misleading to say that emerging technologies such as AI have no value in communications. Every PR firm I know is working on how to best leverage AI-powered tools to ensure they don't get left behind. But, as exciting as the new technology may be, they are no replacement for the myriad, uniquely human ways that agencies do before, after and completely separate from the iconic press release that deliver strategic value to our clients.

Tom Faust is Managing Director at Stanton. ○



Tom Faust

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The **story** is always there 

Navigating the data revolution

Recent innovations in artificial intelligence-powered technology are helping communicators overcome the challenge of mastering data science and providing a blueprint for modern PR success.

By Adam Pawluk and Ken Deutsch

As communication professionals, we're always looking to give our clients a competitive edge that will help them stand out in crowded markets. As our industry buzzes with talk of data science as a new secret weapon, many PR pros have grappled with the challenge of mastering these tools. The complexity of data science often feels like cracking a code, requiring expertise to harness effectively.

Yet, thanks to recent technological advancements—such as the rise of generative AI and the emergence of user-friendly platforms like ChatGPT—the once-intimidating world of data science is now within reach. These innovations are not just changing the game; they're providing opportunities to “futureproof” brands, opening new possibilities for communicators.

Understanding your audience

Gone are the days of a one-size-fits-all campaign that relies on broad assumptions and generalizations about an audience. At JPA Health, we understand that knowing your audience inside and out is critical to messaging and content that will capture their attention and evoke a response. We developed our AI-powered tool, GRETEL Trails, to make unlocking valuable insights into an audience's demographics, preferences and behaviors faster and more manageable than ever.

By sifting through social media chatter, diving into purchasing patterns and dissecting online behaviors, we can paint a more comprehensive picture of what truly resonates with each audience. From the topics that pique their interest to the content formats that keep them coming back for more, GRETEL Trails provides the intel we need to craft strategies that hit the mark every time, ensuring that your brand remains relevant—futureproofed—in a rapidly changing landscape.

Seizing opportunities

There's also futureproofing your brand against missed avenues for growth. If navigating endless news clips and media coverage feels like searching for a needle in a haystack, integrating data science can streamline the process significantly. By comparing clips to clients' messages and objectives, you can quickly pinpoint changes to insert brands into competitor coverage and secure future placements, proactively seizing opportunities that might otherwise

slip through the cracks.

By adopting data science practices, you can significantly expand your domain knowledge by reducing redundancy—but it doesn't replace people. While data science aids in efficiency, it's the people working with the data that elevate our work. It takes a keen eye for strategy and established relationships to transform these identified opportunities into tangible results.

Measuring impact and forecasting trends

Data science can also help communicators measure a campaign's impact. Traditional metrics such as impressions and reach are declining in importance due to their imprecision, as they often fail to convey a campaign's effectiveness. Here, data science offers a more nuanced approach, measuring factors such as sentiment analysis to assess the emotional tone of the audience's response. By analyzing these metrics, communicators can understand what aspects of their campaigns are working and what needs improvement.

Beyond assessing past performance, data science is also a powerful way to predict trends. Communicators can unveil patterns and insights to guide future strategies by delving into historical data. For example, suppose an analysis consistently shows success for a particular content type. Based on that strategic insight, we can integrate similar content into upcoming campaigns, keeping our clients ahead of the curve.

Challenges and considerations

Embracing data science isn't just about immediate gains but setting brands up for continued relevance and success in a dynamic market. That's why we must approach data science with a clear understanding of its potential and challenges, futureproofing brands against possible pitfalls while harnessing its transformative power to stay ahead of the competition.

While having vast and complex data at our disposal may help us gain deeper insights, make informed decisions and create more effective campaigns, it may also require us to think differently about how we work. For example, analysis requires human expertise for the most accurate interpretation and strategic application of insights, not to mention navigating the intricacies of data privacy and security to ensure adherence to laws and ethical guidelines. Seasoned data

scientists, like those at JPA Health, can help clients and internal agency teams take the steps necessary to safeguard sensitive information and maintain trust with stakeholders.

At JPA Health, we're proud of our role as early adopters of data science and understand its transformative potential in shaping behaviors. By seamlessly integrating data science into a comprehensive suite of marketing and communications tactics, we've learned how to maximize its power to create lasting impact, futureproofing brands and empowering our clients to make a tangible difference in people's health. We believe that with the right skills, tools and team support, today's communicators can unleash the full potential of data, driving unprecedented results in promoting healthier lives.

Adam Pawluk is Chief Client Officer, Life Sciences at JPA Health. Ken Deutsch is Executive Vice President, Data Science at JPA Health and leads many of the agency's generative AI efforts. ○



Adam Pawluk



Ken Deutsch

PR brief

The Shipyard acquires Fahlgren Mortine

Fahlgren Mortine, No. 19 in *O'Dwyer's* rankings of PR Firms with 2023 fee income of \$39.2 million, has been acquired by its Columbus, OH neighbor The Shipyard, a fast-growing ad agency.

The shop has worked for Smucker's, Bob Evans Restaurants, Kroger, Ohio Lottery, Avery Dennison, Visit Myrtle Beach, Cardinal Health, University of Buffalo, Travel Nevada and DHL.

The Shipyard will maintain the FM brand with CEO Neil Mortine and President Marty McDonald in charge. Christine Turner will continue as President of TURNER, the travel, tourism and lifestyle shop that FM acquired in 2014. The combined company will have nearly 400 staffers with expertise in tourism and economic development, financial services, consumer products, energy, retail, building products, logistics, technology and healthcare.

The Shipyard, which was cited by *Adweek* as one of the fastest growing agencies in 2023, has offices in Newport Beach, Sacramento and San Diego.



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Tackling a new era of misinformation

Amid the rapid spread of misinformation, how can communicators evaluate the best response strategies and protect brands from reputational damage?

By Kathy Bloomgarden

We're confronting an era fraught with high political tensions, and we're poised to enter a contentious election cycle. At the same time, businesses are dealing with increasingly advanced cyber-security attacks, and waves of misinformation are compounded by the rapid expansion of Generative AI.

Misinformation can impact all levels of an organization and needs to be top of mind for leadership to effectively counter business and reputational threats. Communications increasingly has a seat at the table in managing the fallout of misinformation. However, the alarming speed at which information floods our newsfeeds, coupled with the growing usage of covert tactics to intentionally spread misleading content—for instance, deepfakes and bot accounts—calls for communicators to shift from a reactive approach to a proactive one.

With pre-emptive analytics and robust response strategies, communicators can identify the voices behind the threats, evaluate the best course of action and, ultimately, protect their brand from further damage. At Ruder Finn, our in-house analytics and tech incubator—RF TechLab—allows employees to explore new technologies and integrate innovative offerings for clients at the intersection of communications and technology.

Identifying misinformation through 'faction analysis'

Misinformation spreads with more speed and scope than facts, especially online. According to research done by the MIT Media Lab, falsehoods are "70 percent more likely to be retweeted on X (formerly Twitter) than the truth, and reach their first 1,500 people six times faster." In the digital age that we live in, a significant portion of online misinformation is spread deliberately by factions pursuing political, social or ideological agendas. Research from Harvard found that people who knowingly and willingly shared misinformation online were "more likely to also report support for political violence, a desire to run for office and warm feelings toward extremists."

The use of bots, or automated social media accounts, has also made it much easier for agenda-driven factions to perpetuate false narratives. At the end of 2022, we all watched the digital ecosystem erupt when a fake X handle posed as Eli Lilly, claiming "We are excited to announce insulin is

free now." The post garnered over 1,500 retweets and 11,000 likes in mere hours, causing Lilly's shares to drop more than 6 percent the day after the tweet.

What's more, factions can better conceal their identities and motives with AI Deepfakes while pushing out more convincing messages. We've seen the emergence of distorted—yet persuasive—deepfakes impersonating influential figures from Taylor Swift to Joe Biden.

The potential damage of AI-generated video and audio extends globally, proven by the recent attempt to manipulate India's general election. In April, fake videos of two A-list Bollywood actors criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi and called for people to vote for the opposing Congress party. The videos were viewed on social media more than half a million times in a week.

"Faction Analysis" is critical to identify the root source of false claims before they breed polarized echo chambers and, ultimately, create an erosion of trust in mainstream media. By identifying who is involved in factions that generate misinformation, communicators have the chance to develop a response strategy that addresses the actions of a specific group. The RF TechLab completes faction analysis in the preparation stage of a campaign. This approach identifies the various agenda-driven groups—which can include super fans, extremists, and bot accounts—that can potentially contribute to a viral misinformation moment. Understanding where the threat originates from early on is paramount to prevent a bud of inaccuracy from blooming into a crisis and prepare an effective, strategic response if it does.

To respond or not to respond?

When developing a strategic response to crises, whether derived from misinformation or truth, more analysis is needed to know if to react, and if so, when. Although resonant at the moment, many viral instances are short-lived and quickly overtaken by the "next thing" in the media cycle. The turnaround time of a crisis can drastically vary based on news cycles, and social media amplification from online bots, public engagement and sharing patterns, among others.

While ten years ago viral moments had a larger share of voice in the public eye, the sheer volume of information that we con-

sume daily in the digital era means that the cycle of relevancy moves faster in correlation. This has pros and cons for communicators—while it considerably shortens our window for a timely reaction in the cases where a response is needed, we must keep an eye on "conversation decay" which is when a viral topic may undergo a natural decline over time, often after an initial peak. Communicators feel pressured to respond to a viral moment or crisis in a timely manner, but sometimes, a response can reignite discourse that would've naturally dropped off as the public's focus shifted to the next story.



Kathy Bloomgarden

We've all heard the saying, "The flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long." The increasingly viral nature of modern media allows for seemingly everyone to have a say, amplifying viral moments to levels that may appear too widespread for communicators to mitigate. However, as communicators, we have the power to leverage the rapid expansion of AI and new technologies to take control of corporate narratives and connect individuals with accurate and meaningful information. To combat the threat that misinformation poses for organizations at all levels, companies need to pivot their strategies to prioritize analyzing and monitoring misinformation at every stage: inception, build-up, peak and resolution. Employing these tactics, communicators can pinpoint the root cause of misinformation and decide if and when to respond.

Kathy Bloomgarden is CEO of Ruder Finn. ◉

PR brief

Edelman sails with Viking

Edelman handles Viking Holdings, the river and ocean luxury cruise line that plans to raise \$1 billion via an IPO priced in the \$21 to \$25 per share range.

Launched in 1997, Viking says it offers experiences for "The Thinking Person" who is interested in history, science, culture and cuisine.

With a fleet of 92 small ships, Viking claims to be the only cruise line offering sailing adventures on all seven continents. Its itineraries cross five oceans, 21 rivers, and five lakes.

The Bermuda-based company registered \$4.7 billion in revenues during 2023.

The IPO's valuation falls in the \$10.2 billion range at midpoint of the proposed range. Viking will trade on the Big Board.



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A tough year for tech

PR firms representing the tech sector had a tough year in 2023, according to *O'Dwyer's 2024 rankings of technology PR firms.*

By Steve Barnes

Any way you slice it, the tech sector had a tough year.

While 78 firms appeared on our 2023 list, for 2024 that number has slid to 63. And if you compare last year's top 63 firms with this year's group, net fees are down 17.5 percent—going from \$858 million to \$708.3 million.

The biggest firms did a bit better than the rest of the pack. The drop there was only 7.7 percent—from \$556.8 million to \$514.1 million.

Highwire rethinks its way to growth

"It was a challenging year for the tech sector," said Highwire Principal Carol Carrubba. "Rising interest rates, inflation and the proliferation of AI caused many tech organizations to rethink communications strategies and resourcing."

Nevertheless, Highwire, which came in at #5 on our tech list, still managed to post 5 percent growth in 2023. Carrubba attributes much of that growth to the agency's move toward "deeply integrating content, social and creative services into our strategic communications programs. We've seen repeatedly that integrated programs deliver more business impact and increased value."

Highwire is looking to spur further growth with the recent acquisition of Candor Content, a content marketing company with expertise across technology and healthcare. Carrubba says that the acquisition will offer clients "expanded capabilities across SEO, lead generation, brand journalism and more." The agency has also hired Magaret Cote as the head of insights and analytics.



Carol Carrubba

AI, she notes, will continue to be the big story in the sector. "It goes without saying that AI is the biggest driving force in tech right now. It's revolutionizing every industry. For example, in healthcare AI is poised to reduce the administrative burden that cripples healthcare providers, improve comprehension of healthcare text, and ultimately, improve patient outcomes."

Carrubba also expects to see "an increase in the need for cybersecurity communications. In late 2023 the SEC enacted the Cyber Disclosure Laws, meaning organizations now have four days to assess and

disclose whether they've been impacted by a cybersecurity breach. The regulation highlights the importance of cybersecurity to a brand's reputation and puts pressure on communications leaders."

She also sees developments in energy and sustainability as central components in the agency's tech business. "We've seen more AI-powered tools employed to automate energy transformation along with the integration of blockchain technology in the energy sector. The rapid growth of renewable energy sources is also front and center."

But Carrubba also stresses that "every industry will be impacted by this. As every company grapples with customer and data security, we aim to strengthen our guidance on all regulations, leveraging our strong cyber expertise bench to advise on complying with legislation from a communications perspective."

And finally, she cites the agency's investment in it team as a big part of its success. "We redoubled our commitments to innovation, DEI and team empowerment," she notes. "Our culture thrived while we grew, despite the tech industry's economic downturn."

PAN maintains stability

PAN Communications, the #10 firm on our tech list, "adapted effectively, maintaining stability as the market underwent significant corrections," according to president and CEO Philip Nardone.

"Even as the tech sector destabilized, our early adoption and embrace of growing tech like AI made us a magnet for clients pivoting in this direction. Due to legacy brands adopting AI, new AI offerings emerging and an increased focus in ethical AI, we are proud



Philip Nardone

to say more than 50 percent of our clients touch this space," Nardone said.

He says that PAN experienced growth across the public sector, health tech, commerce (supply chain, logistics, ecommerce) and security. "As these industries adapt to the intersection of AI, security and data, we've been well-positioned." In addition, he says that the agency "saw a spike in demand for comprehensive content strategies and thought leadership across our client base."

Later this year, PAN is introducing a new data platform that will further demonstrate how its efforts are making a tangible business impact—an essential tool as the tech economy remains shaky.

Nardone also notes the increasingly pivotal role his agency's staff plays in its success. "We used 2023 to continue to build a foundation that puts employees first," he says, citing its Hyflex+ work model, a permanent policy that gives employees the flexibility to work from anywhere, and its ongoing commitment to DEI. "As of this year, 20 percent of our team members identify as persons of color, and 30 percent of our 2023 hires were racially and/or ethnically diverse."

As the year progresses, Nardone says he expects for PAN "not only to grow through the organic expansion of our current client base and new accounts but also to explore innovative ways to enhance our offerings, be it through mergers and acquisitions or strategic hires."

LaunchSquad moves into strong position

"2023 was a particularly turbulent year for tech and venture-backed companies, which make up the majority of our client roster," said LaunchSquad Partner Jason Mandell.

"The pullback in investments and the weak IPO and M&A markets led to increased pressure for our clients to grow responsibly, and in many cases resulted in budgets tightening across the marketing and communications functions."

Mandell said that the agency responded to those rapidly changing budgets by working closely with clients "to realign our scope and services with their new circumstances. In response, we shifted resources into sales and business development, and we were able to add a fantastic cohort of new clients to our roster, especially in the climate and sustainability sector."

He noted that the growth in climate and sustainability work stems in part from "the U.S. government's vast commitment and



Jason Mandell



O'Dwyer's technology PR rankings, pg. 26

— Continued on page 29

The background of the advertisement features a woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored, ribbed top, looking thoughtfully to the right. The overall color palette is a mix of deep purple, magenta, and blue. In the upper left, the Hotwire logo is displayed in a bold, pink, sans-serif font. Below the logo, the tagline 'Ignite possibility' is written in a white, sans-serif font. The main headline, 'Hotwire, the global technology communications and marketing consultancy', is prominently displayed in a large, white, sans-serif font across the middle. Below the headline, three short paragraphs describe the company's mission and services. At the bottom left, contact information is provided, including an email address, website, and social media handles. At the bottom of the page, a list of services is presented in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

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RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN TECHNOLOGY

Firm	2023 Net Fees	Firm	2023 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$206,602,000	33. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	\$1,965,747
2. Hotwire, New York, NY	58,034,400	34. 360PR+, Boston, MA	1,555,000
3. Finn Partners, New York, NY	49,000,000	35. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	1,518,002
4. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	34,660,000	36. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,483,130
5. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	31,619,262	37. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	1,357,500
6. ICR, New York, NY	28,492,065	38. Tier One Partners, Boston, MA	1,249,208
7. Walker Sands, Chicago, IL	28,126,652	39. Bliss Group, The, New York, NY	1,090,420
8. Zeno Group, New York, NY	27,325,423	40. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	1,038,810
9. Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	26,706,000	41. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	989,800
10. PAN Communications, Boston, MA	23,513,376	42. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	901,575
11. APCO, Washington, DC	19,000,000	43. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	865,377
12. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	18,313,708	44. Virgo PR, New York, NY	625,000
13. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	15,800,000	45. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	616,850
14. Hunter, New York, NY	14,600,000	46. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	592,364
15. Matter Communications, Boston, MA	14,269,000	47. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	586,000
16. MikeWorldWide, New York, NY	14,138,148	48. Comm. Strategy Group (CSG), Denver, CO	454,030
17. Bospar, San Francisco, CA	13,020,712	49. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	384,656
18. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	11,976,142	50. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC, Annapolis, MD	377,705
19. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER), Columbus, OH	9,394,727	51. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	359,426
20. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	7,235,000	53. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	344,057
21. Avoq, Washington, DC	7,132,349	53. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	299,153
22. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	6,564,136	54. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	283,221
23. Alloy, Atlanta, GA	5,892,098	55. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	232,604
24. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	5,070,543	56. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	196,878
25. V2 Communications, Boston, MA	4,701,725	57. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	97,580
26. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	4,593,320	58. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	93,950
27. Kiterocket, Phoenix, AZ	3,495,388	59. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	84,419
28. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	3,239,130	60. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	65,427
29. Global Gateway Advisors, New York, NY	3,081,000	62. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	54,631
30. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms., Seattle, WA	2,747,965	62. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	33,095
31. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	2,400,000	63. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	9,713
32. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,015,222	64. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	4,912

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2023 was 'mixed bag' for financial PR firms

O'Dwyer's interviewed executives at some of the top-ranked PR agencies representing the financial services sector to hear how they handled a roller coaster of a year and what trends they predict for the finance world in the coming year and beyond.

By Jon Gingerich

The numbers don't lie. The 53 firms ranked by *O'Dwyer's* for financial PR and investor relations this year brought in a combined total of \$394 million in finance-related net fees in 2023, a 13.7 percent decline from the \$456 million those firms brought in the year before.

Looking at our top-ten-ranked financial PR firms, it was much the same story. The top ten were responsible for a combined total of \$326 million in 2023, similarly down 13.5 percent from the \$377 million netted by the top ten financial firms in 2022.

Unfortunately, 2023 wasn't the bounce-back year PR agencies representing the financial services sector had hoped for. Stubborn inflation, aggressive interest-rate increases to combat that inflation, never-ending stock-market volatility, decades-high mortgage rates and a series of high-profile bank collapses—namely, First Republic Bank and Silicon Valley Bank—all contributed to a roller coaster of a year that left consumers and investors skittish. At least the U.S. economy avoided a recession.

Indeed, it wasn't all bad news. In fact, six of the top 10 firms ranked by *O'Dwyer's* for financial PR and investor relations charted growth in finance-related fees last year. A seventh firm was even. You might say the numbers illustrate less of a bad year than a resilient communications landscape weathering a temporary storm.

ICR inches ahead

Despite a dip in overall net fees last year, ICR exhibited strong growth in its finance practice in 2023, accounting for \$88.7 million in finance-related net fees, an increase of more than \$5 million from 2022's \$83.6 million.

The New York-based powerhouse, which was founded in 1998, claims the number-two spot in *O'Dwyer's* rankings of financial PR agencies.

ICR CEO and co-Founder Tom Ryan said he attributed the strength of his firm's financial practice to the degree of expertise it can offer clients operating in an otherwise volatile market.

"Although the capital markets remained fairly quiet in 2023, our teams continued to secure fi-



Tom Ryan

ancial PR and investor communications support work with a broad range of clients across all industry sectors," Ryan told *O'Dwyer's*. "The ongoing market volatility made it even more important for companies to manage their messaging and ensure they were effectively communicating their story at all times. We believe our extensive understanding of the markets, how investors think and how the financial media and other influencers operate, resonates in the marketplace and allows us to build new and lasting client relationships."

APCO advances to #3

The strongest gains in *O'Dwyer's* financial/IR rankings this year came from APCO, which shattered expectations in an otherwise lackluster year with skyrocketing finance earnings. The Washington-based firm, which maintains 32 offices around the world, brought in more than \$42.5 million in finance-related net fees last year, revealing gains of more than \$25 million from 2022's \$17.3 million.

APCO's otherworldly gains now place the agency in our number-three spot for finance, a two-place advancement from its previous number-five position last year.

According to the agency, APCO's growth was especially accelerated following the acquisition of London-based financial and corporate communications shop Camarco last year.

"One year on and we're seeing very strong demand from APCO's clients for these services, which is very exciting," Camarco CEO and Chairman Geoffrey Pelham-Lane told *O'Dwyer's*. "It shows just how important it is for the top players to offer clients a more



Geoffrey Pelham-Lane

holistic perspective that includes maximizing their valuation in the capital markets."

Problem-solving puts Vested ahead

Financial services specialists Vested bucked a trend in the finance PR world last year by once again achieving healthy growth, earning \$24.7 million in finance-related net fees compared to 2022's \$23.8 million to maintain the number-four spot on *O'Dwyer's* list.

Group CEO Binna Kim said the agency's continued success in the face of economic uncertainty is a reflection of its core value proposition, which Kim referred to as a "true strategic marcomms consultancy for financial CMOs and CCOs."

She also cited the agency's new online platform Finance Studio and new businesses such as financial CMO/CCO community Financial Narrative, both of which experienced exponential growth.

"We're in the business of problem-solving, and much of our strategic work in 2023 was around exactly this, from crisis communications and reputation management, to robust revenue generation programs for high growth companies, to rebranding and advertising campaigns," Kim said.

When asked what trends we might keep on the lookout, Kim cited an ongoing evolution to make financial brands appear more human, which is manifesting itself in several different ways. On one hand, Kim said her agency is currently handling several rebranding and repositioning exercises for financial brands that want to be more engaging to newer generations. Vested is also working on new creative campaigns that allow financial brands to engage a wider array of consumers, from robust social media campaigns—including TikTok—to physical experiences to more out-of-the-box creative. Third, the agency is helping firms remove complications from their messages.

"Much of the work we're doing in PR is to try and eliminate corporate speak and unnecessary jargon," Kim said. "This is very much aligned to Vested's core mission



Binna Kim



O'Dwyer's financial PR rankings, pg. 30

Continued on next page

Tech roundup

— Continued from page 24

investment in climate change solutions, we have significantly grown our climate and sustainability roster and it is currently our largest practice area. This work—from carbon removal, to food waste reduction, to energy and transportation—is extremely fulfilling for our people, and has been part of LaunchSquad's core values since our founding."

LaunchSquad has also "implemented significant changes across the company, particularly in sales and business development, operations, and people initiatives. We feel we are in a very strong position today to prosper as the tech, innovation, and venture capital economy inevitably reemerges."

While Mandell said that AI will "offer exciting new ways to improve the way we work," LaunchSquad still plans to "invest in helping our people become highly creative and adaptable so they can generate high impact for clients using their own intellect. Comms is still a people-driven profession and will be for quite some time."

He added that he is "confident that this year will be stronger in almost every category compared to 2023. This is partially due to the changes we have been implementing, as well as the broader market improvements that are setting us on a growth path again."

Alloy rides a growth wave

Alloy, our #22 tech firm, had a banner year, says CEO Raj Choudhury. "Thanks to an acquisition and organic growth, we grew 103 percent in 2023—exceeding our initial expectations."

The agency also had a 92 percent employee retention rate, "which exceeded industry averages." Choudhury says that meant the

firm was "able to redirect HR resources to create value in other areas."

Nevertheless, he notes that the firm was not immune from tech's difficulties. "We faced headwinds as the tech sector battled volatility. Some of our clients suffered layoffs that affected our partnerships in various ways."

Alloy recently announced a significant investment from Purpose Group, which Choudhury says will be "used to fuel our



Raj Choudhury

growth strategy, including our ability to accelerate our M&A strategy," which includes "broadening and deepening our capabilities by acquiring innovative, right-fit units."

As far as AI goes, he says Alloy is "already realizing positive benefits from the dawn of this technology. Since implementing new AI-based tools and feature sets in our stack, we've made measurable gains—from decreasing content editing rounds to streamlining graphic design workflows to accelerating website development timeframes."

Choudry expects this year to show signs of overall improvement as well. "In addition to organic revenue growth, we're identifying areas of efficiency—from new office space to resource management to AI tools—which we expect to positively impact the bottom line in 2024."

Hotwire embraces change

"Our industry is still navigating long-term questions about how marketing and communications leaders will integrate AI into our workflows, tech stack and the partnerships we prioritize," said Hotwire Glob-

al CEO, North America Heather Craft.

"Clients turned to our team for consultation around building or refining AI narratives, engaging with AI media and building relationships with AI influencers, as boards and c-suites quickly reacted to the initial groundswell," she added.

Craft also cites "increased generational diversity in the global workforce, with varying perspectives and preferences around workstyle, work environment, and what's valued and expected from an employer."

Hotwire, the #2 firm on our tech list, accelerated its investment upskilling its team in 2023, as well as developing solutions designed to empower organizations by leveraging advanced analytics, AI, and comprehensive data insights to better identify the most impactful messaging, storylines, reporters, and influencers. Its new data intelligence offerings: MessagingIQ, NewsroomIQ, and IQBrief, have been utilized by brands such as Discord, Avanade and ABB to add greater intelligence to their communications and marketing programs.

While 2023 was a pivotal year for many industries, Craft notes that "we're in an industry that has long embraced change and never sat idle. We look forward to the year ahead, as the role that marketing and comms. plays has never been more critical, and our team is well positioned to help elevate our clients' brand reputation, deepen the relationships that matter and ultimately drive revenue." ○



Heather Craft

Financial roundup

— Continued from page 28

which is to help financial brands bring more people into the financial system by making finance more engaging and human."

Relationships spell success for Stanton

Stanton wrapped up another solid year in 2023, bringing in \$11 million in finance-related net fees compared to 2022's \$10.4 million. The New York-based agency, which was founded in 2009, now takes the number-seven position, up from number-nine last year.

Managing Director Tom Faust attributed the agency's success to three key factors. The first was an expansion of existing relationships as clients began relying on the agency to do more. Second, Faust said the agency has invested in a great team that does im-

pressive work, resulting in an agency with a reputation as a partner of choice among many financial brands. Finally, Faust cited the growing roster of new clients looking for a proactive, engaged partner that can work across PR, digital marketing and content.

"The economy has put a premium on communications, and financial businesses are seeking out strong, nimble partners who proactively bring ideas and provide strategic guidance," Faust said.

When asked where he sees the finance world headed in the coming year and beyond, Faust referred to the future as a "mixed bag," a term that might also serve as a suitable characterization for the year the industry recently wrestled its way out of. Faust said the market continues to perform despite the myriad financial challenges facing businesses and individuals, and he's confident dealmaking will return to robust

health—it's just a question of when.

"With uncertainty, financial firms need to actively engage with customers, partners and investors. An important impact is continued emphasis on developing content for various channels to reach audiences 'where they live' in both earned and owned media," Faust said. "We see an acute need for a strong media presence that signals durability and credibility, and this is especially in alternative markets that continue to grow. There remains skepticism and confusion around alternatives among some audiences, despite their becoming more and more part of the mainstream. PR is the answer to this challenge." ○



Tom Faust

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN FINANCE

Firm	2023 Net Fees	Firm	2023 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$100,839,000	28. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	\$1,037,982
2. ICR, New York, NY	88,796,510	29. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	923,295
3. APCO, Washington, DC	42,500,000	30. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	773,483
4. Vested, New York, NY	24,705,000	31. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	580,016
5. Finn Partners, New York, NY	15,600,000	32. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	536,990
6. Cognito, New York, NY	12,322,322	33. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	491,224
7. Stanton, New York, NY	11,052,598	34. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	442,057
8. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	10,699,200	35. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	340,000
9. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	10,300,000	36. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	278,732
10. Dukas Linden Public Relations, New York, NY	9,461,299	37. Akrete, Evanston, IL	258,965
11. Avoq, Washington, DC	8,541,293	38. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	225,000
12. Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	7,880,212	39. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	208,826
13. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	7,868,725	40. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	188,290
14. BackBay Communications, Boston, MA	6,612,990	41. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	152,587
15. Zeno Group, New York, NY	5,736,010	42. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	152,000
16. Bliss Group, The, New York, NY	4,827,551	43. PSC (Princeton Strategic Comms.), Trenton, NJ	140,581
17. Hewes Communications, New York, NY	2,954,959	44. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	120,000
18. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	2,341,015	45. 360PR+, Boston, MA	110,000
19. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	2,068,161	46. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	91,268
20. Tier One Partners, Boston, MA	2,047,954	47. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	84,083
21. Lowe Group, Wauwatosa, WI	1,719,524	48. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	52,500
22. Buttonwood Comms. Group, New York, NY	1,543,167	49. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	42,275
23. Taylor, New York, NY	1,400,000	50. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	35,000
24. Comms. Strategy Group (CSG), Denver, CO	1,368,967	51. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	14,551
25. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	1,208,158	52. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	12,100
26. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	1,175,000	53. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	5,371
27. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	1,045,080		

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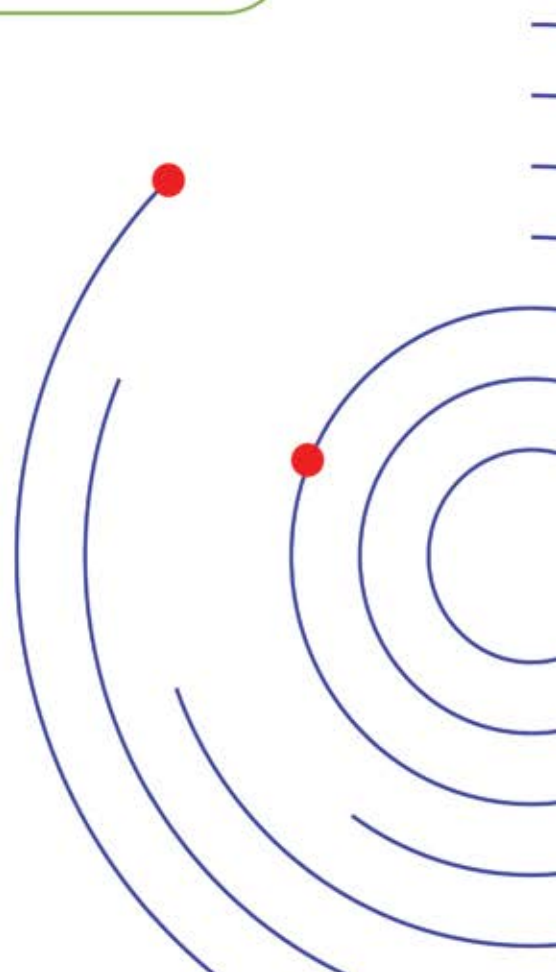
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Healthcare PR firms posted paltry 2.6% growth in '23

The once fast-paced healthcare PR sector slowed to a crawl in 2023 as *O'Dwyer's* 83 ranked health firms managed to grow only 2.6 percent to \$1.7 billion.

By Kevin McCauley

The once fast-paced healthcare PR sector slowed to a crawl in 2023 as *O'Dwyer's* 83 ranked health firms managed to grow only 2.6 percent to \$1.7 billion.

They feasted on COVID-19 spending during the previous two years, reporting a 24.8 percent gain in 2022 and a whopping 46.6 percent rise in 2021.

The top ten firms in 2023 did a little worse than their lower-ranked counterparts. They reported a paltry 2.1 percent rise to \$1.5 billion in 2023.

Half the group (Real Chemistry, Ruder Finn, APCO, Imre and Crosby) posted gains while the rest (Inizio Evoke, Edelman, Spectrum, Finn Partners and ICR) either suffered declines or were flat.

APCO acquires Gagen Macdonald

The Washington-based firm enjoyed a 68.1 percent surge in fee income to \$57 million, a financial performance partly powered by the acquisition of Gagen Macdonald and its robust healthcare business.

The deal added to APCO's advisory services with organizational transformation, inclusive workforce and workplace of the future capabilities, according to Evan Kraus, President and Managing Director, Operations.

Engagements focused on large corporate structure projects, spin-offs and the restructuring of old and newly formed health care entities, inclusive of internal and external communications.

APCO's healthcare practice reported major increases in the health insurance sector and diversification in services offered to its large global pharmaceutical firms. The firm helped clients navigate the complex geopolitical, regulatory and policy-related issues shaping the health sector.

Kraus said APCO's capability to integrate government relations, executive positioning, creative storytelling, earned media, while leaning in and leveraging a unique microtargeting approach to paid media, enhances clients' ability to reach health care audiences and drive value to clients' businesses.

"Our One APCO approach continues to position us as the advisors of choice for the most innovative organizations working to improve health and advance



Evan Kraus

health equity," noted Mathew Shearman, co-chair of APCO's global health practice. "With deep health sector expertise in every market in which we operate, APCO is supporting clients around the world to navigate both the external and internal complexity that is transforming the health care business environment."

Insights, collaboration pay off at Zeno

Zeno Group pounded out an 8.4 percent rise in healthcare revenues to \$14.2 million.

That upbeat performance underscores its "commitment to meet the increasing demand for innovative communications solutions and deep audience insights in the health sector," said Kristie Kuhl, Health + Wellness, Global Managing Director.

Zeno, which operates in North America, Europe and Asia, expanded its reach with wins across the health spectrum including Argenx, one of the world's fastest growing biotechnology companies, American Association for Respiratory Care, and Alcon, the global leader in eye care.

The health + wellness unit chalked up significant organic growth with existing clients that engaged Zeno on more types of services and in more geographies.

Kuhl cited Zeno's work for the CDC Foundation's Live to the Beat campaign to reduce heart attack and stroke in Black Americans as a perfect example of the firm's deep insights and collaboration.

The award-winning work tapped Zeno's deep digital and health expertise and the multicultural competency of Zeno's strategic partner EGAMI Group.

Zeno, which is part of DJE Holdings, had a presence in major industry events in 2023 including the STAT Summit where Kuhl interviewed the CEOs of Harmony Biosciences and Amylyx Pharmaceuticals.



Kristie Kuhl

Real Chemistry reorganizes

Real Chemistry CEO Shankar Narayanan capped a record-setting year (revenues rose 7 percent to \$595 million) by rolling out a new organizational structure to enable long-term growth.

The firm realigned its internal teams into capability areas and best-in-class centers of expertise. They are activation, advertising, analytics and insights, integrated communications, medical, and targeting.

Narayanan expects the move will strengthen Real Chemistry's expertise, drive greater collaboration and allow teams to be more agile to serve clients.

During the past year, the firm accelerated the adoption of AI and emerging technologies across all aspects of its business.

It established a partnership with enterprise Generative AI expert Writer.ai, giving all team members access to the Writer platform tool.

The tool improves work quality and creates new ways to reach patients and healthcare providers with accessible, personalized content at scale.

Earlier this year, Real Chemistry acquired Avant Healthcare, a full-service medical communications company using high science, data-driven strategies, and innovative digital and creative capabilities to develop and facilitate impactful messaging to healthcare providers.

Avant was folded into Real Chemistry's medical group, which has 450 staffers steeped in medical communications/education/affairs and scientific visualization.

Evoke Evolves into Inizio Evoke

No. 2-ranked Evoke introduced its new brand and platform, Inizio Evoke, during the past year. The move united its specialty agencies and capabilities under a singular brand with core service areas in marketing, communications, transformation, media and access.

"Inizio Evoke is purpose-built to ensure clients receive the most effective solutions tailored to the dynamic healthcare landscape now and far into the future," said Maryellen Royle, Group President, Comms.

Despite the economic headwinds expe-



Shankar Narayanan



O'Dwyer's healthcare PR rankings, pg. 36

Continued on page 34

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PR | MARKETING | ADVOCACY

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Healthcare roundup

Continued from page 32

rienced across the industry in 2023 (Inizio Evoke recorded a 7.6 percent dip in revenues to \$340 million), the firm saw great interest and engagement from clients on key brand and disease education initiatives, omnichannel efforts, and health equity and corporate initiatives.



Maryellen Royle

Royle said clients continued to seek core comms support and fresh thinking across data and regulatory milestones, clinical trial recruitment, internal communications, social and digital media, and new approaches to thought leadership.

“In public health, we again helped steer our clients through a sea of medical misinformation and ‘fake news’ to educate and engage the public and healthcare professionals about the importance of immunization,” she noted.

Inizio Evoke’s data sciences teams helped meet the increased demands for more analysis, insights and intuitive data products.

“We unveiled four audience intelligence core solutions, including Narratev, designed to uncover digital behaviors to optimize marketing impact,” said Royle. “It’s rooted in our unique perspective around evolving engagement with key stakeholders across the treatment continuum by looking at real-world evidence fit to client needs and then leveraging that data set into actionable recommendations.”

Looking ahead, Royle said her firm’s new and more integrated structure is paying dividends as “clients seeking support in one service area are now more easily connecting our global capabilities across multiple offerings, providing a unique competitive advantage, and enhancing collaboration to drive transformational growth.”

Finn navigates fragmented ecosystem

Finn Partners, which reported flat healthcare revenues of \$52 million, worked across the payer, patient community, product innovation, policy and provider sectors.

“In a year that led many other agencies to struggle, Finn was solid and stable—retaining talent and client relationships, investing in professional development through its international Heath Academy, and adding new skills and services to its mix,” said Gil Bashe, Global Health and Purpose Chair.

Fern Lazar, who leads the Global Health Practice, and Tom Jones, NYHealth Lead, created a powerhouse unit that services the biopharma and medical devices sectors.

They launched an array of services that in-



Gil Bashe

clude clinical trial patient recruitment, C-Suite thought leadership services, investor relations, real-time global media monitoring and issues analysis, health-sector data analyses, along with solid pre-launch and launch capabilities.

Finn advanced its position in global health via the hiring of D.C.-based Richard Hatzfeld, and the 2023 acquisition of Dublin-based Hyderus led by Mark Chataway, Managing Partner, and Christopher Nial, senior partner.

Hyderus has run campaigns with Finn in the EMEA and Asia regions, and has ties to India-headquartered SPAG/Finn to support multinational biotech and pharmaceutical companies in introducing new medicines to some of the world’s fastest-growing population regions with rising economies and access to technology. That reach led to FINN working with the international vaccine alliance GAVI—uniting the public and private sectors to protect health by increasing the equitable and sustainable use of vaccines.

Bashe noted that Finn has a substantial operation in Israel. “Our presence in Israel is a bridge to the world’s key sources for health innovation in digital health, hospital systems, and AI-driven medical advances,” he said.

Led by Goel Jasper, managing partner, FINN represents one of the world’s top hospitals, Sheba Medical Center, and Gray-Matters Health, providing FDA-approved-for-market neuromodulation-based PTSD treatment.

Imre adds to client roster

Imre, which is headquartered in Baltimore, posted a 12.2 percent rise in healthcare revenues to \$55 million.

“We experienced a banner year by creating work that disrupts the norms in healthcare marketing and adding more agency-of-record engagements than in any other year,” said Anna Kotis, President.

The firm invested in senior leadership hires who have deep healthcare marketing expertise, and appointed a Strategic Committee in partnership with its executive board.

Kotis said the 2023 growth came from a mix of new business wins combined with organic growth in healthcare and consumer spaces.



Anna Kotis

“We added nine new logos to our client roster last year—several of which are in highly competitive categories such as oncology, eye care and weight loss,” she said.

Looking ahead, she said it will be increasingly challenging for specialized brands to stand out.

“There’s an ongoing need to assist clients in delivering authentic, credible content and experiences for greater engagement and impact,” said Kotis. “That is what imre has come to be known for and what we will continue to be.”

Ruder Finn stays ahead of the curve of ‘What’s Next’

Ruder Finn recorded a 7.5 percent jump in healthcare revenues to \$60.2 million, fueled partly by wins from Sanofi, Seagan, Pfizer and Teva Pharmaceuticals.

The firm launched the AI-powered RF Studio, which ensures that healthcare client programming is seeded in predictive insights and supported by measurable data and analytics. That programming ranges from KOL and patient influencer mapping to omnichannel disease education campaigns to regulatory communications and policy shaping, according to Christie Anbar, global healthcare lead.



Christie Anbar

She said RF’s healthcare practice not only invests in new technologies and tools, but also people, to remain ahead of the curve on “what’s next” in emerging, market-shaping trends for our clients and their stakeholders.

The firm added Jennifer O’Neill, Executive VP of Healthcare Growth and Integrated Marketing, and Alex Taylor, Senior VP of Media Relations, Healthcare. Anbar noted that RF as an independent shop, attracts independent thinkers who are not afraid to speak up, contribute ideas, problem solve and get things done. “We are passionate collaborators who can also work independently to see things through and deliver for clients,” she said.

JPA Health Enjoys 21.5% Growth

JPA Health reported a robust 21.5 percent rise in revenues to \$24.3 million as the D.C.-based firm continued to embed data sciences throughout its operations, bolstered by the acquisition of True North Solutions.

That Cambridge-based consulting firm is known for its expertise in predictive analytics and AI-driven solutions. JPA also expanded its proprietary AI-powered insights engine, Gretel Trails.

Continued on next page

How not to chase ambulances

There's a fine line between newsjacking and taking advantage. Our job as public relations professionals is to tread that line carefully.

By Richard Dukas

Newsjacking is a term for quickly hopping on a breaking story to offer an expert to the media who can shed some light on some aspect of it. If done right, you've helped a news organization produce well-informed reporting. Everyone wins.

In any career, from law to medicine to PR, chasing ambulances—figuratively or literally—means exploiting a bad situation for personal gain. Not a good look, and it likely won't work in your favor.

When a tragedy like the recent Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore happens, everyone's immediate concern should be for the victims and their families. There's no such thing as a small death toll. One life is too many.

At the same time, the wider impact on society can't be ignored: In this case, it was the supply chain and logistical impact in the region, with far broader implications for the movement of coal and other commodities. This comes on the heels of lingering pan-

demie disruption, labor shortages and shipping detours due to Red Sea attacks. It's not just about profits but about making sure vital goods—including food, fuel and medicine—get where they need to go.

Several major news organizations were already covering the shipping repercussions even while the search and rescue operations continued as the sun rose on March 26. After securing some talking points, we were able to offer several media organizations a transportation expert to assess the impact.

The resulting coverage noted how the economic impact, as our expert put it, "pales in comparison to the human toll," while discussing how the temporary closing of Baltimore's port and indefinite loss of the bridge and connected highway impacts traffic, transportation, the environment and general quality of life in the region.

When looking at similar situations and pitching reporters and producers, here are a few tips for treading the above-mentioned line of sensitivity:

Acknowledge the tragedy. Show your humanity by adding a heartfelt note about mourning the victims.

Check your gut. "This is a good time to buy the right insurance" or "this stock will benefit" isn't a good pitch after a tragedy. "Here's how this will impact our daily lives," more so.

Never make it about personalities. "John Smith of ABC Advisory predicted this would happen months ago" will make everyone groan.

Offer resources. "These five steps can help those affected by this event" adds a note of public spiritedness.

Use restraint. If the expertise in question can wait, observe a respectful amount of time until the human toll is assessed before reaching out.

Bottom line: Never forget that news and media are all about human lives and how we live them. In a time of darkness, illuminating information helps create control out of chaos.

Richard Dukas is Chairman & CEO of Dukas Linden Public Relations. ○



Richard Dukas

Healthcare roundup

Continued from page 24

The firm secured a multi-year, multi-million-dollar contract with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

CEO Carrie Jones said contract aims to address the mental health and substance use disorders crisis among America's youth, reflecting the agency's growing influence and responsibility in public health.



Carrie Jones

With the publication of its report, "One World, One Health," JPA launched its One Health practice. The initiative highlights the urgent need for increased communication and collaboration across human, animal, and environmental health sectors. Endorsed by global health authorities and aligned with several United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, the One Health approach aims to foster a holistic understanding of emerging health challenges.

JPA strengthened its team by welcoming Tish Van Dyke to oversee its Public Health, One Health and Federal Government prac-

tices. With over two decades at Edelman, Van Dyke's extensive experience significantly enhances the agency's capabilities in these specialized areas.

Claire Morse joined the firm as the head of human resources. Jones said Morse's leadership is crucial in maintaining the agency's culture and propelling its growth, ensuring JPA Health continues to attract top talent.

Looking forward, Jones said JPA Health is poised to further expand its biopharma clientele and the sophisticated services they seek, ensuring its continued leadership across healthcare communications.

Year of collaboration for Avog

Avog, which ranks as the No. 17 healthcare firm with 2023 fee income of \$11 million, collaborated with organizations across the health spectrum.

"We engaged in patient advocacy for healthcare providers, promoted crucial drug discovery initiatives, enhanced the visibility of biotech startups, and built awareness for public health agendas," said COO Molly Scherrman.

In partnership with Ad Council and the CDC, Avog developed a PSA campaign for prediabetes education and awareness. "The national campaign leaned into emotion and entertainment to persuade audiences to take a one-minute prediabetes risk assessment, which is the first step toward a diagnosis

and a door-opener to treatment," noted Scherrman.

The Chicago Department of Public Health turned to Avog to raise awareness about the Mpox vaccine among the groups most likely to be affected. As the disease spread widely throughout Chicago, Avog drew insights from data and community interviews and learned the Grindr app was popular with patients. That informed its strategy to run the campaign on the app paired with outreach at LGBTQ+ bars and events to share this critical public health information.



Heather Craft

The firm's work with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network focused on targeting policymakers connected to a bill that funds cancer research at the NIH and NCI. Working with NY State of Health, Avog developed campaigns to reach individuals with health plans to make sure they knew how to keep their coverage amid the unwinding of the pandemic health emergency. "We developed strategies and messaging to engage key audiences about the affordable insurance options," said Scherrman. ○

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN HEALTHCARE

Firm	2023 Net Fees	Firm	2023 Net Fees
1. Real Chemistry , San Francisco, CA	\$595,000,000	43. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	\$1,300,000
2. Inizio Evoke , New York, NY	340,300,000	44. TASC Group, The , New York, NY	1,225,050
3. Edelman , New York, NY	196,837,000	45. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	1,176,882
4. Spectrum , Washington, DC	80,000,000	46. Otter PR , St. Petersburg, FL	1,082,903
5. Ruder Finn Inc. , New York, NY	60,220,000	47. Bospar , San Francisco, CA	1,025,364
6. APCO , Washington, DC	57,000,000	48. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	921,555
7. imre, LLC , Baltimore, MD	55,000,000	49. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	889,878
8. Finn Partners , New York, NY	52,000,000	50. L.C. Williams & Associates , Chicago, IL	876,775
9. ICR , New York, NY	28,924,159	51. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	791,000
10. Crosby , Annapolis, MD	27,013,376	52. Red Thread PR , Philadelphia, PA	766,882
11. Palladian Partners, Inc. , Silver Spring, MD	25,065,120	53. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	757,324
12. JPA Health , Washington, DC	24,326,000	54. Bellmont Partners , Minneapolis, MN	751,547
13. Zeno Group , New York, NY	14,741,962	55. Singer Associates PR, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	674,576
14. MikeWorldWide , New York, NY	12,393,749	56. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	671,030
15. Sam Brown Inc. , Wayne, PA	12,362,428	57. Landis Communications , San Francisco, CA	581,000
16. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	11,681,212	58. Tier One Partners , Boston, MA	505,326
17. Avoq , Washington, DC	11,005,730	59. Slide Nine Agency , Columbus, OH	459,154
18. Health+Commerce , Eagle, ID	9,897,728	60. Ehrhardt Group, The , New Orleans, LA	455,572
19. Matter Communications , Boston, MA	9,606,000	61. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	436,625
20. Bliss Group, The , New York, NY	7,671,756	62. Stanton Communications , Washington, DC	430,595
21. Hunter , New York, NY	7,400,000	63. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications) , Trenton, NJ	416,184
22. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	6,658,948	64. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	415,500
23. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	5,600,000	65. Franco , Detroit, MI	382,712
24. PAN Communications , Boston, MA	5,420,764	66. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	382,012
25. MCS Healthcare PR , Bedminster, NJ	4,246,571	67. 3E Public Relations , Pine Brook, NJ	371,500
26. Highwire PR , San Francisco, CA	4,175,651	68. Marketing Maven Public Relations , Camarillo, CA	328,246
27. MP&F Strategic Comms. , Nashville, TN	4,069,967	69. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	271,789
28. Vault Communications , Plymouth Meeting, PA	3,329,203	70. Hahn Agency , Austin, TX	247,548
29. Moore, Inc. , Tallahassee, FL	3,134,371	71. Rosica Communications , Fairlawn, NJ	235,148
30. Global Gateway Advisors , New York, NY	2,676,000	72. Boardroom Comms., Inc. , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	200,000
31. MediaSource , Columbus, OH	2,622,644	73. Milk & Honey PR , New York, NY	194,611
32. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	2,578,982	74. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	124,000
33. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	2,502,016	75. Lavidge , Phoenix, AZ	107,519
34. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms. , Seattle, WA	2,354,006	76. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC , Annapolis, MD	64,616
35. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	2,352,516	77. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	54,321
36. Cura Strategies , Arlington, VA	2,137,032	78. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	46,500
37. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	1,892,644	79. Shiftology , Springfield, OH	36,156
38. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	1,720,000	80. Wordhampton PR, Inc. , East Hampton, NY	31,500
39. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	1,596,939	81. Inspire PR Group , Westerville, OH	20,500
40. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	1,425,771	82. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	12,000
41. V2 Communications , Boston, MA	1,381,419	83. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	9,000
42. Comms. Strategy Group (CSG) , Denver, CO	1,372,920		



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CrosbyMarketing.com • O'Dwyer's Industry Rankings: #10 Healthcare and #22 Overall

Overcoming an impasse in M&A transactions

There are many reasons why an M&A transaction can reach an impasse, but a lack of willingness to negotiate will always result in a deal that's dead on arrival.

By Rick Gould

In an M&A transaction, the ultimate goal should be to resolve any impasse that arises through an approach to negotiate based on the interests of the buyer and seller. You should always be willing to negotiate. You must be willing to sit down with your adversary—preferably face to face—and attempt to make a deal that serves your interest better than your best alternative.

Absent that, the deal is dead on arrival.

You thought this buyer was the right buyer. All the boxes were checked: culture, fit, clients, excellent possibility for cross-referrals, diversified specialties, high-quality management team and an amazing brand that would enable you to enhance your own brand. When an impasse is reached, we need to do a cost-benefit analysis. As a seller, you need to ask: What will it cost to walk away and restart the process of finding the right buyer?

Here's an actual example in which I represented the seller.

In this case, the main issue was the percentage of the down payment at closing. The seller had a \$15 million firm with 22 percent recasted EBITDA. The seller's Valuation was \$16.5 million. The seller wants 50 percent of the Valuation at closing, on the high side. The buyer's acquisition model was 30 percent at closing, normal for PR M&A models for a \$15 million firm. Buyer and seller have gone through many Zoom meetings and both are stuck in their position. They also disagreed on the multiple to be used.

We said it was 5x. The buyer said 3x, which was ludicrous (\$9.9 million valuation). The buyer based their position on one previous deal negotiated. They were inflexible. So, we needed to look at the interests of both buyer & seller.

The seller's position on valuation was based on industry standard, factual, historical deals in the past three years. The buyer, however, was correct on the norm for the downpayment.

We were frustrated by the inflexible buyer regarding the multiple norms and the resulting valuation and what my seller client was asking for 50 percent at closing, definitely was on the high side for a strategic acquisition by a larger PR agency.

What I was looking for was ways to expand the pie, make trades that would satisfy the buyer and enable my seller client

to get the valuation necessary to not walk away.

Face-saving was at the root of this negotiation. We did not want to sabotage the transaction and knew we needed to acquiesce on one of the three major issues.

To get to the finish line we ultimately agreed on a \$14 million valuation and 40 percent cash at closing. Neither side was totally happy but both sides believed it was a fair compromise. Other minor issues were openly discussed and resolved, to a mutually satisfactory outcome.

What we also built into the agreement were three critical additional items.

1. The earn-out (buyout) term would be five years instead of four years, giving the buyer additional time to pay the remaining 60 percent.

2. A contingent agreement clause, that if the net revenues decreased by more than 20 percent in any year the buyer will be given a sixth year to fulfill the final payment.

3. A contingent agreement clause, that if net revenues increased by more than 20 percent after year one of the earn-out the valuation would be increased to \$15.3 million, from \$14 million, which would be a win-win for both seller and buyer.

The negotiating objective should be to create "value" for the long term by implementing a transaction price and terms that are satisfactory for all parties.

Value isn't necessarily only financial dollars received initially. In an M&A transaction, the amount of the down payment at closing is always an immediate issue. The seller wants as much as possible at closing since it's non-refundable and not subject to a clawback. It's money in the bank, guaranteed.

The buyer wants to pay as little as possible at closing in that is the financial risk of the buyer. If the seller doesn't meet up to the expectations of the buyer she/he cannot change the deal. So, we attempt to use precedent, the industry standard in determining the percent of Valuation paid up front.

There are also other items that may come into play: a shorter term for the earn-out (buyout), a more aggressive earn-out model for the seller, with the potential to earn a larger amount in the future, a shorter work requirement for the seller post-closing.

The percentage and dollars of a down payment aren't the only factors that can be negotiated. I have had cases where a seller was willing to agree to a lower percent at closing as a tradeoff for working a four-day week instead of five.

We need to explore personal interests as well as business interests, to create a win-win for all parties. One should always pursue a long-term approach.

Suggestions for sellers

Do your homework on your opponent prior to serious discussions. Try to gather information about your opponent, their strengths and weaknesses, their goals and their options. How much do they want your firm?

Prepare extensively and use objective criteria. Have support for your positions, especially if involving valuation. Have expert opinions and documented case studies based on previously published transactions.

Look at your walk-away alternatives. How much do you want this transaction?

Keep egos out of it. The goal is a mutually beneficial transaction. You will be working & collaborating with the buyer post-closing.

Communicate. Without communication, there is no negotiation.

Know your boundaries. Set limits on your most optimistic expectation and your most pessimistic acceptable settlement.

Establish trust. This is critical. You need to trust that your adversary is bargaining and negotiating in good faith, even if major differences in position.

Be flexible. Be willing to agree on tradeoffs

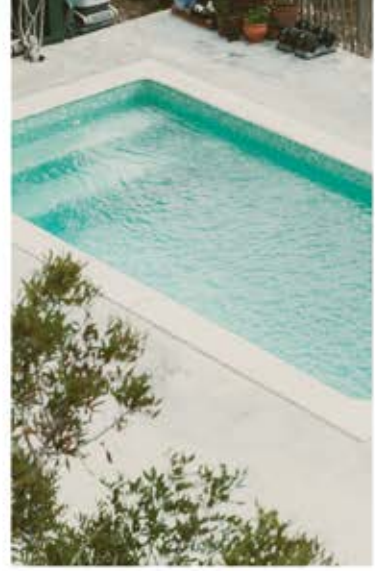
Empathize with your opponent in the negotiations. Be a good listener and show that you understand and appreciate their opinion, even if you don't agree.

Respect the interests of your opponent and disclose your own interests. Need we say more?

Rick Gould is Managing Partner of Gould+Partners, a New York-based merger and acquisition consultancy specializing in the PR industry. He can be reached at rick@gould-partners.com. ○



Rick Gould



CELEBRATING A

Decade of Distinction

Hemsworth, an award-winning global communications agency specializing in brand strategy and impactful media relations programming, is celebrating its 10th anniversary. To mark this milestone, we are pleased to introduce four distinctive new divisions – Hemsworth Travel & Tourism; Hemsworth: Food, Wine & Spirits; Hemsworth: Lifestyle; and Hemsworth: Franchise Brands. In addition, we are thrilled to share the launch of 10 innovative 'client-first' PR and social media packages designed to address the evolving need for a more flexible agency partner with expertise and passion within our core sectors.



For a complimentary strategy session, or to discuss how our newly launched, tailored packages may work for you, contact Samantha.Jacobs@HemsworthCommunications.com.



RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN EDUCATION

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$11,155,000
2. Finn Partners, New York, NY	10,800,000
3. APCO, Washington, DC	7,900,000
4. Avoq, Washington, DC	7,440,012
5. Communications Strategy Group (CSG), Denver, CO	3,650,914
6. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	2,517,817
7. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	1,582,054
8. TASC Group, The, New York, NY	1,400,000
9. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	1,242,547
10. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	1,219,252
11. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	1,185,802
12. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,038,247
13. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	837,249
14. Rosica Communications, Fairlawn, NJ	642,066
15. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	540,000
16. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	524,787
17. 360PR+, Boston, MA	497,000
18. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	485,000
19. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	453,268
20. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	388,200
21. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	288,982
22. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	287,499
23. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	280,815
24. Franco, Detroit, MI	233,385
25. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	197,751
26. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	189,243
27. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	158,892
28. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	150,830
29. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	130,226
30. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	120,000
31. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	116,610
32. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	114,278
33. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	89,929
34. Boardroom Communications, Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	75,000
35. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	67,631
36. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	61,942
37. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	38,610
38. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	36,000
39. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	33,000
40. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	31,810
41. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	20,250
42. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	15,000
43. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	1,122

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN NON-PROFITS

1. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	\$11,234,340
2. Avoq, Washington, DC	3,609,645
3. TASC Group, The, New York, NY	2,752,000
4. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	2,125,282
5. Alloy, Atlanta, GA	1,473,024
6. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	1,460,036
7. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	1,110,487
8. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	945,287
9. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	845,643
10. Franco, Detroit, MI	747,403
11. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	692,127
12. Scenario Communications, Los Angeles, CA	600,000
13. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	576,656
14. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	562,947
15. Rosica Communications, Fairlawn, NJ	410,087

Non-Profits cont.

16. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	360,000
17. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	342,960
18. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	319,207
19. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	267,225
20. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	259,278
21. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	242,000
22. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	240,150
23. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	239,703
24. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	234,116
25. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	231,214
26. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	224,732
27. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	213,533
28. Boardroom Communications, Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	200,000
29. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	191,225
30. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	148,990
31. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	139,095
32. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	138,864
33. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	130,000
34. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	128,034
35. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	125,000
36. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	108,387
37. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	105,000
38. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	99,449
39. Wordhampton Public Relations, Inc., East Hampton, NY	77,375
40. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	74,626
41. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	70,678
42. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	61,163
43. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	51,000
44. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	45,720
45. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	39,310
46. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	35,663
47. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	24,064
48. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	19,353
49. 360PR+, Boston, MA	7,500

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

1. APCO, Washington, DC	\$52,500,000
2. Fiona Hutton & Associates, Inc., Los Angeles, CA	9,711,727
3. Finn Partners, New York, NY	9,400,000
4. Avoq, Washington, DC	5,987,625
5. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	5,447,629
6. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	4,635,932
7. Singer Associates PR, Inc., San Francisco, CA	4,249,453
8. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,726,139
9. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	2,656,396
10. Cura Strategies, Arlington, VA	2,645,865
11. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms., Seattle, WA	2,046,506
12. Global Gateway Advisors, New York, NY	2,022,000
13. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	897,767
14. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	690,922
15. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	603,000
16. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	505,477
17. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	237,476
18. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	211,497
19. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	154,901
20. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	98,875
21. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	77,840
22. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	38,831
23. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	27,500
24. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	12,251

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN AGRICULTURE

1. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	\$13,905,093
2. Bader Rutter & Associates, Inc., Milwaukee, WI	8,400,213
3. Edelman, New York, NY	3,604,000
4. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	2,408,184
5. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	2,330,000
6. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	1,611,258
7. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	1,501,115
8. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,138,865
9. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	987,191
10. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	674,091
11. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	601,246
12. Avoq, Washington, DC	507,587
13. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	477,733
14. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	422,569
15. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	251,768
16. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	203,500
17. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	80,001
18. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	56,440
19. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	38,776
20. Akrete, Evanston, IL	21,000
21. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	13,000
22. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	2,190

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN TRAVEL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Finn Partners, New York, NY	\$23,500,000
2. J/PR, New York, NY	20,493,000
3. Edelman, New York, NY	20,283,000
4. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	20,100,000
5. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER), Columbus, OH	17,136,078
6. MMGY NJF, New York, NY	10,525,265
7. Lou Hammond Group, New York, NY	9,709,612
8. Zeno Group, New York, NY	6,701,846
9. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	6,635,600
10. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	5,304,166
11. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	5,079,446
12. Avoq, Washington, DC	4,882,492
13. MMGY Wagstaff, Los Angeles, CA	4,835,456
14. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	4,060,000
15. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	3,252,393
16. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	2,300,000
17. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	2,196,365
18. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	2,159,340
19. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,603,845
20. Hemsworth, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,345,693
21. Reya Communications, Doral, FL	677,420
22. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	605,400
23. Singer Associates PR, Inc., San Francisco, CA	592,050
24. 360PR+, Boston, MA	535,000
25. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	530,130
26. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	394,662
27. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	378,439
28. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	338,170
29. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	310,375
30. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	267,000
31. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	264,538
32. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	262,181
33. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	257,553
34. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	211,292
35. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	150,830
36. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	135,952
37. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	98,213
38. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	96,000

Travel & Economic Development cont.

39. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	\$79,840
40. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	60,000
41. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	53,076
42. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	26,000
43. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	20,250
44. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	17,500

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN HOME FURNISHINGS

1. Zeno Group, New York, NY	\$17,078,389
2. Edelman, New York, NY	12,795,000
3. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	4,405,117
4. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	3,835,913
5. Hunter, New York, NY	3,500,000
6. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,320,137
7. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	2,300,000
8. 360PR+, Boston, MA	1,875,000
9. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	564,000
10. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	428,935
11. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	425,000
12. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	356,082
13. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	272,700
14. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	207,990
15. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	175,000
16. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	150,830
17. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	142,114
18. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	72,431
19. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	62,048
20. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	7,875

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN BEAUTY & FASHION

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$57,819,000
2. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	20,310,000
3. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	11,100,000
4. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	8,515,009
5. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	4,970,783
6. Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company, New York, NY	2,639,637
7. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	2,551,467
8. Hunter, New York, NY	2,500,000
9. Zeno Group, New York, NY	2,328,519
10. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	1,800,000
11. Taylor, New York, NY	1,600,000
12. Scenario Communications, Los Angeles, CA	1,500,000
13. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	978,815
14. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	927,984
15. 360PR+, Boston, MA	746,000
16. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	711,606
17. J/PR, New York, NY	592,000
18. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	554,877
19. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	400,280
20. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	330,000
21. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	278,475
22. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	204,230
23. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	158,400
24. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	99,890
25. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	78,168
26. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	62,103
27. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	37,356
28. Wordhampton PR, Inc., East Hampton, NY	32,712
29. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	13,346
30. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	11,612
31. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	3,713

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN AGRICULTURE

1. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	\$13,905,093
2. Bader Rutter & Associates, Inc., Milwaukee, WI	8,400,213
3. Edelman, New York, NY	3,604,000
4. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	2,408,184
5. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	2,330,000
6. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	1,611,258
7. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	1,501,115
8. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,138,865
9. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	987,191
10. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	674,091
11. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	601,246
12. Avoq, Washington, DC	507,587
13. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	477,733
14. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	422,569
15. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	251,768
16. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	203,500
17. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	80,001
18. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	56,440
19. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	38,776
20. Akrete, Evanston, IL	21,000
21. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	13,000
22. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	2,190

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN TRAVEL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Finn Partners, New York, NY	\$23,500,000
2. J/PR, New York, NY	20,493,000
3. Edelman, New York, NY	20,283,000
4. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	20,100,000
5. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER), Columbus, OH	17,136,078
6. Matter Communications, Boston, MA	14,269,000
7. MMGY NJF, New York, NY	10,525,265
8. Lou Hammond Group, New York, NY	9,709,612
9. Zeno Group, New York, NY	6,701,846
10. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	6,635,600
11. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	5,304,166
12. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	5,079,446
13. Avoq, Washington, DC	4,882,492
14. MMGY Wagstaff, Los Angeles, CA	4,835,456
15. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	4,060,000
16. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	3,252,393
17. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	2,300,000
18. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	2,196,365
19. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	2,159,340
20. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,603,845
21. Hemsworth, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,345,693
22. Reya Communications, Doral, FL	677,420
23. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	605,400
24. Singer Associates PR, Inc., San Francisco, CA	592,050
25. 360PR+, Boston, MA	535,000
26. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	530,130
27. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	394,662
28. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	378,439
29. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	338,170
30. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	310,375
31. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	267,000
32. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	264,538
33. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	262,181
34. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	257,553
35. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	211,292
36. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	150,830
37. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	135,952
38. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	98,213

Travel & Economic Development cont.

39. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	\$96,000
40. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	79,840
41. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	60,000
42. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	53,076
43. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	26,000
44. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	20,250
45. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	17,500

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN HOME FURNISHINGS

1. Zeno Group, New York, NY	\$17,078,389
2. Edelman, New York, NY	12,795,000
3. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	4,405,117
4. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	3,835,913
5. Hunter, New York, NY	3,500,000
6. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,320,137
7. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	2,300,000
8. 360PR+, Boston, MA	1,875,000
9. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	564,000
10. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	428,935
11. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	425,000
12. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	356,082
13. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	272,700
14. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	207,990
15. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	175,000
16. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	150,830
17. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	142,114
18. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	72,431
19. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	62,048
20. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	7,875

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN BEAUTY & FASHION

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$57,819,000
2. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	20,310,000
3. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	11,100,000
4. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	8,515,009
5. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	4,970,783
6. Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company, New York, NY	2,639,637
7. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	2,551,467
8. Hunter, New York, NY	2,500,000
9. Zeno Group, New York, NY	2,328,519
10. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	1,800,000
11. Taylor, New York, NY	1,600,000
12. Scenario Communications, Los Angeles, CA	1,500,000
13. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	978,815
14. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	927,984
15. 360PR+, Boston, MA	746,000
16. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	711,606
17. J/PR, New York, NY	592,000
18. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	554,877
19. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	400,280
20. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	330,000
21. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	278,475
22. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	204,230
23. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	158,400
24. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	99,890
25. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	78,168
26. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	62,103
27. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	37,356
28. Wordhampton PR, Inc., East Hampton, NY	32,712
29. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	13,346
30. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	11,612
31. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	3,713

**RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN
REAL ESTATE/FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$6,918,000
2. Akrete, Evanston, IL	2,143,603
3. Boardroom Communications, Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1,700,000
4. Singer Associates PR, Inc., San Francisco, CA	1,583,074
5. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	1,247,602
6. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	1,110,000
7. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	1,024,631
8. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	900,000
9. Avoq, Washington, DC	825,380
10. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	720,000
11. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	548,336
12. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	396,884
13. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	393,110
14. Franco, Detroit, MI	384,015
15. J/PR, New York, NY	356,000
16. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	318,777
17. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	313,904
18. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	296,626
19. Zeno Group, New York, NY	253,102
20. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	251,261
21. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	230,650
22. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	210,500
23. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	207,392
24. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	201,942
25. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	196,782
26. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	153,756
27. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	153,217
28. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC, Annapolis, MD	135,182
29. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	115,580
30. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	75,000
31. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	60,301
32. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	36,584
33. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	35,800
34. Wordhampton Public Relations, Inc., East Hampton, NY	35,055
36. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	29,838
36. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	25,750
37. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	21,430
38. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	15,675
39. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	15,270
40. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	8,558

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN PURPOSE/CSR

1. Finn Partners, New York, NY	\$11,300,000
2. APCO, Washington, DC	8,700,000
3. Avoq, Washington, DC	8,588,178
4. Taylor, New York, NY	3,800,000
5. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,680,934
6. Bliss Group, The, New York, NY	1,407,995
7. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	327,669
8. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	278,486
9. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	254,890
10. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	175,005
11. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	88,677
12. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	28,085
13. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	25,023

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN ENTERTAINMENT

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$20,640,000
2. Finn Partners, New York, NY	11,700,000
3. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	5,897,225
4. Avoq, Washington, DC	2,999,998
5. Scenario Communications, Los Angeles, CA	2,600,000
6. Taylor, New York, NY	2,300,000
7. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	1,517,915
8. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	1,450,000
9. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	1,050,683
10. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,011,164
11. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	789,085
12. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	560,025
13. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	448,462
14. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	269,986
15. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	261,186
16. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	227,500
17. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	194,037
18. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	175,000
19. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	168,965
20. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	163,670
21. 360PR+, Boston, MA	159,000
22. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	149,604
23. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	113,000
24. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	74,000
25. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	35,540
26. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	21,000
27. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	20,790
28. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	12,476
29. Wordhampton Public Relations, Inc., East Hampton, NY	6,500
30. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	6,116

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN SPORTS & LEISURE

1. Taylor, New York, NY	\$10,300,000
2. MikeWorldWide, New York, NY	4,992,946
3. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	2,979,116
4. Zeno Group, New York, NY	2,122,553
5. Finn Partners, New York, NY	2,100,000
6. Edelman, New York, NY	1,086,000
7. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	1,015,300
8. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	943,450
9. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	893,017
10. 360PR+, Boston, MA	694,000
11. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	594,101
12. Avoq, Washington, DC	259,040
13. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	194,793
14. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	160,000
15. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	150,000
16. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	100,000
17. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	80,663
18. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	61,000
19. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	52,026
20. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	51,000
21. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	47,675
22. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	16,702
23. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	7,500
24. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	4,000

**RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY & GREENTECH**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$6,657,000
2. APCO, Washington, DC	3,100,000
3. Avoq, Washington, DC	2,766,025
4. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	2,112,611
5. Kiterocket, Phoenix, AZ	1,920,743
6. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	1,710,000
7. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	1,708,005
8. V2 Communications, Boston, MA	1,351,542
9. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	1,022,067
10. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	900,000
11. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	851,235
12. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	786,824
13. Zeno Group, New York, NY	776,768
14. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	753,347
15. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	558,757
16. Communications Strategy Group (CSG), Denver, CO	554,023
17. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	522,479
18. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	381,000
19. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	323,779
20. 360PR+, Boston, MA	270,000
21. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	245,000
22. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	209,725
23. Rosica Communications, Fairlawn, NJ	160,000
24. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	151,775
25. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	120,000
26. Tier One Partners, Boston, MA	117,430
27. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	94,068
28. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	76,328
29. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	67,012
30. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	14,041
31. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	12,265
32. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	3,543

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN ENERGY

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$52,824,000
2. Avoq, Washington, DC	\$11,916,384
3. APCO, Washington, DC	\$10,400,000
4. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	\$4,129,528
5. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	\$3,085,710
6. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	\$2,960,277
7. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	\$2,175,257
8. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	\$1,624,191
9. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	\$1,223,005
10. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	\$1,073,205
11. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	\$741,485
12. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	\$670,557
13. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	\$626,000
14. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	\$449,484
15. Franco, Detroit, MI	\$345,637
16. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	\$183,000
17. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	\$163,759
18. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	\$158,903
19. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	\$153,540
20. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	\$135,000
21. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	\$114,674
22. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	\$29,064
23. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	\$5,262
24. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	\$5,233

**RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN
AUTOMOTIVE/TRANSPORTATION**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$31,505,000
2. APCO, Washington, DC	19,000,000
3. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	7,320,000
4. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	6,625,547
5. Avoq, Washington, DC	5,530,252
6. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	4,724,014
7. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	4,277,000
8. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	4,031,734
9. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	2,456,772
10. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,971,783
11. Franco, Detroit, MI	1,934,049
12. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	944,715
13. 360PR+, Boston, MA	602,000
14. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	582,500
15. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	457,581
16. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	420,000
17. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	329,240
18. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	315,024
19. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	212,323
20. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	197,751
21. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	145,248
22. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	136,430
23. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	118,790
24. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	103,182
25. Boardroom Communications, Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	100,000
26. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	5,625

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN INDUSTRIAL

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$51,109,000
2. Zeno Group, New York, NY	8,065,781
3. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	5,108,692
4. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	4,690,000
5. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	3,856,376
6. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	2,066,300
7. Avoq, Washington, DC	1,713,409
8. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,186,504
9. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	1,086,866
10. Bader Rutter & Associates, Inc., Milwaukee, WI	969,045
11. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	676,623
12. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	474,955
13. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	418,888
14. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	397,258
15. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	352,400
16. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	340,000
17. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	331,600
18. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	259,930
19. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	233,990
20. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	157,341
21. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	141,600
22. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	139,000
23. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	57,474
24. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	31,710
25. Franco, Detroit, MI	21,500
26. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	18,420

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

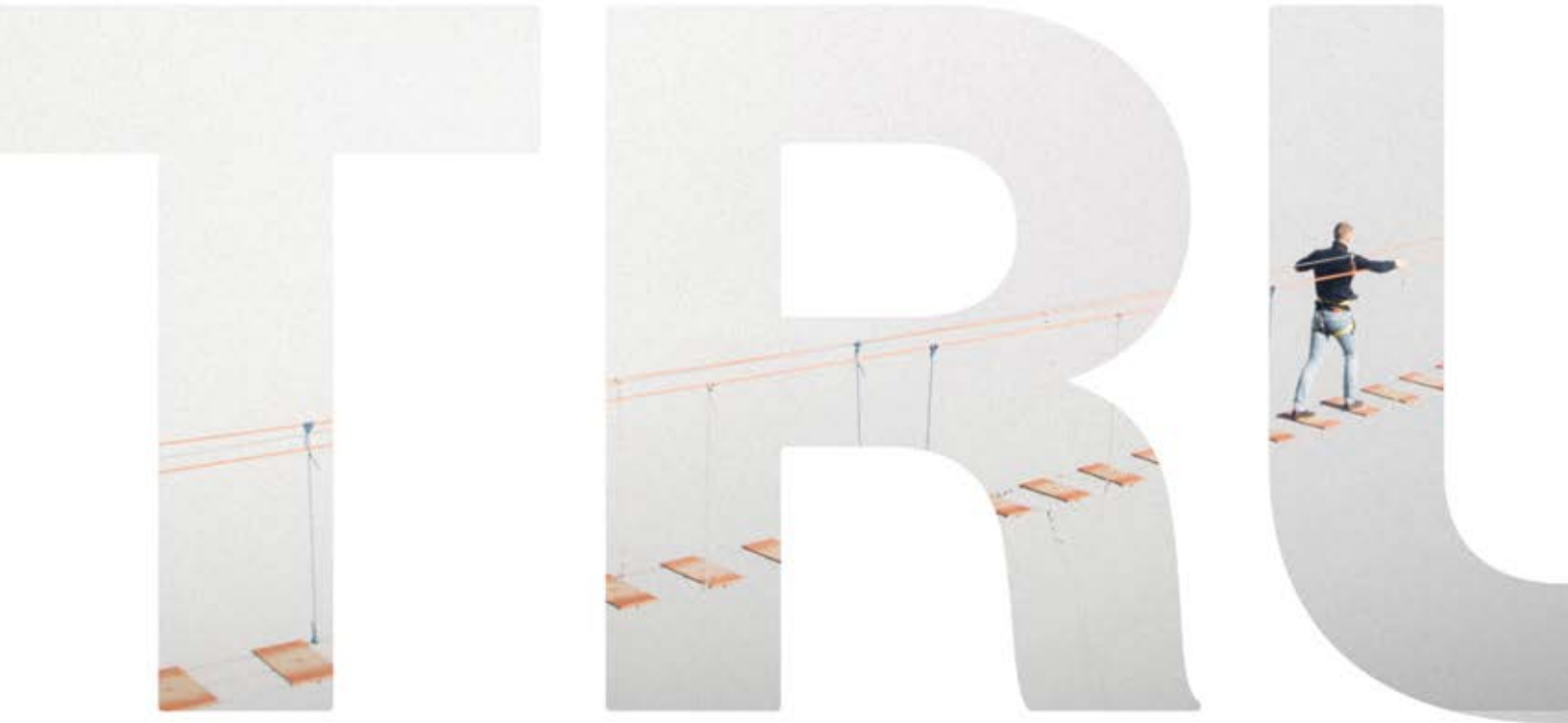
Firm	2023 Net Fees	Firm	2023 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$106,770,000	30. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	\$469,510
2. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	21,890,000	31. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	344,230
3. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	10,041,361	32. Bader Rutter & Associates, Inc., Milwaukee, WI	343,235
4. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	10,006,055	33. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	325,000
5. Infinite Global, New York, NY	9,413,881	34. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	292,644
6. Bliss Group, The, New York, NY	7,246,838	35. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	288,915
7. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	6,600,000	36. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	286,692
8. MikeWorldWide, New York, NY	6,397,217	37. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	269,957
9. Zeno Group, New York, NY	5,976,211	38. 360PR+, Boston, MA	250,000
10. Ripp Media/PR, Inc., New York, NY	2,700,000	39. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	182,000
11. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	2,458,761	40. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	171,203
12. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	2,306,762	41. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	148,915
13. Avoq, Washington, DC	2,246,846	42. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	142,552
14. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	2,130,518	43. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	128,830
15. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,779,755	44. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	93,298
16. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	1,601,333	45. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	92,982
17. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	1,531,086	46. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	83,922
18. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,528,000	47. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	80,315
19. Boardroom Comms. Inc., Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,525,000	48. Akrete, Evanston, IL	73,113
20. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	1,186,315	49. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	57,787
21. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	905,993	50. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	50,000
22. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	803,909	51. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	35,606
23. Franco, Detroit, MI	797,126	52. Wordhampton PR, Inc., East Hampton, NY	28,814
24. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	748,898	53. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC, Annapolis, MD	21,544
25. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	736,226	54. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	11,201
26. Bellmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	662,413	55. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	10,100
27. Virgo PR, New York, NY	625,000	56. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	4,925
28. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	527,479	57. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	3,648
29. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	485,343		

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN FOOD & BEVERAGE

Firm	2023 Net Fees	Firm	2023 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$148,274,000	26. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	\$311,511
2. Zeno Group, New York, NY	36,882,127	27. cenario Communications, Los Angeles, CA	300,000
3. Hunter, New York, NY	23,200,000	28. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	288,115
4. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	15,640,000	29. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	265,000
5. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	14,799,891	30. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	201,683
6. MikeWorldWide, New York, NY	11,183,275	31. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	192,596
7. Finn Partners, New York, NY	10,000,000	32. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	183,725
8. APCO, Washington, DC	9,200,000	33. Franco, Detroit, MI	173,515
9. Taylor, New York, NY	7,100,000	34. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	136,700
10. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	5,800,000	35. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	135,463
11. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	4,700,944	36. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	130,420
12. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	4,695,900	37. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	122,255
13. 360PR+, Boston, MA	4,675,500	38. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	117,446
14. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	3,304,115	39. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	104,593
15. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	2,983,090	40. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	94,428
16. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	1,863,345	41. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	90,000
17. Bader Rutter & Associates, Inc., Milwaukee, WI	1,722,570	42. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	82,147
18. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	1,650,000	43. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	81,993
19. MMGY Wagstaff, Los Angeles, CA	1,285,752	44. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	78,000
20. Avoq, Washington, DC	1,002,777	45. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	77,350
21. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	782,542	46. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	70,000
22. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	630,000	47. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	23,546
23. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	526,947	48. Hemsworth, Fort Lauderdale, FL	18,000
24. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	407,939	49. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	18,000
25. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	395,501	50. Tier One Partners, Boston, MA	15,640

RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN RESTAURANTS

1. Zeno Group, New York, NY	\$9,129,924	10. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	\$404,350
2. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	9,123,974	11. Wordhampton PR, Inc., East Hampton, NY	369,440
3. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	5,282,541	12. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	201,565
4. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	2,504,000	13. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	109,380
5. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,330,042	14. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	92,101
6. Edelman, New York, NY	2,193,000	15. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	71,745
7. MMGY Wagstaff, Los Angeles, CA	1,767,400	16. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	46,000
8. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	1,499,237	17. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	20,460
9. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	420,000		





It's crucial when credibility
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It's the best insurance against
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consumer indifference.

It's what our 6000 experts
help companies and brands
earn every day.

PR firms posted mere 1.8% growth in '23

O'Dwyer's ranked independent firms toughed out a rugged year in 2023, posting a measly 1.8 percent gain in fee income.

By Kevin McCauley

Nosediving technology spending, tumbling healthcare outlays and recession-jittery consumers jolted the public relations industry in 2023 as the 146 independent firms ranked by *O'Dwyer's* posted a paltry 1.8 percent growth to a combined \$4.7 billion in fee income.

That lackluster performance followed a robust 18.2 increase in 2022 and a 29.7 surge in 2021 as the nation emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ranked firms reported a 1 percent drop in total yearend 2023 employment to 22,856 people.

The Big Ten firms registered 1.5 percent growth to \$3.1 billion and a 1 percent dip in workers to 15,151.

They were boosted by the debut of Avog at the No. 10 position. Formed by the merger of Kivvit and Subject Matter, Avog showed a 103.6 percent gain to \$89.3 million.

Edelman retains spot as PR's only \$1B firm

Despite a 3.7 percent dip in revenues to \$1.04 billion, Edelman retained its crown as being PR's only \$1 billion firm.

The flagship U.S. region accounted for much of Edelman's revenues slippage as it registered a 9.1 percent drop in fee income to \$639 million.

The EMEA sector rebounded during 2023, rising 7.1 percent to \$229 million.

Latin America showed solid growth (+29.7 percent to \$35 million) while the APAC region inched ahead by 1.7 percent to \$103 million.

Canada was off 2.3 percent to \$32 million.

Edelman's healthcare and technology practices struggled during the past year. They were down 12 percent and eight percent, respectively.

On the plus side: public affairs was up 19.5 percent, business-to-business rose 19 percent, food & beverage jumped 15.6 percent, and crisis increased 4.2 percent

Edelman released six Trust Barometer

Reports in 2023 in the areas of healthcare equity, workplace trust, climate change, racial justice and consumer trust in brands.

The firm made a round of key hires during the year. They include Alex Thompson (Global Chair of Cor-

porate Affairs and Impact practices), Brian Buchwald (Global Head of Product, Trust Data and Technology).

Edelman upped Kirsty Graham (CEO, U.S.), Ed Williams (President, International), Smita Reddy (Global chair, Food & Beverage), Justin Westcott (Global Chair, Technology), Radina Russell (Head of U.S. Corporate), Julian Payne (Global Chair, Crisis) and Margot Edelman (GM, New York)

Kivvit, Subject Matter form Avog

Kivvit and Subject Matter merged during 2023, which effectively doubled the size of their respective firms to revenues of \$89.3 million.

Rebranded as Avog, the firm ranks as a Top 10 independent shop, offering strategic communications, issue advocacy and creative content services from its five-office network staffed by about 220 employees.

The new name speaks to the firm's position as a national advocacy and communications firm that invokes thinking, evokes emotion and provokes action, according to CEO Nicole Cornish.

She said Avog applies its unique combination of data-informed policy expertise, message strategy and content creation to motivate key stakeholders.

It works to elevate ideas, build brands and tackle reputational or policy challenges.

"Starting with a channel-agnostic lens, while staying laser-focused on audience behaviors, we set strategy for a blended communications approach to break through the noise," said Cornish.

Avog maintained the executive leadership teams of its predecessor firms, including Managing Partners Steve Elmendorf, Paul Frick, Jimmy Ryan, Dan Sallick and Eric Sedler.



Nicole Cornish



Kathy Bloomgarden

RF Focuses on growth drivers

Ruder Finn CEO Kathy Bloomgarden guided her firm to 10 percent growth in fee income to the \$175.5 million during 2023.

A focus on three key drivers of growth sparked Ruder Finn's upbeat financial performance.

Bloomgarden said the firm invigorated its pioneering TechLab designed to help companies identify and pilot new technologies for smarter engagement; transformed the agency into a fully integrated marketing shop focused on today's business impact and challenges; and expanded its footprint and talent across tech-forward skill sets.

The New York-based firm, which has been in business for more than 75 years, doubled down on internal communications, crisis PR, generative AI and digital marketing to meet the growing needs of clients.

During 2023 and early 2024, Ruder Finn made three digital marketing acquisitions. They include Pandan Social (Malaysia), Ateline (United Arab Emirates) and Flightpath (New York).

Those acquisitions support the firm's shift to a full-service integrated marketing consultancy and reinforce its strategic expansion by supporting the teams that it already has have in place.

"Ruder Finn has defined and redefined PR for over 75 years, shaping communications that moves industry-defining brands, companies, and leaders from what's now to what's next," said Bloomgarden.

'Historic shutdown of capital markets' hurts ICR

ICR posted a 9.1 percent fee income decline to \$146.2 million in 2013 as it felt the impact of the historic shutdown of the capital markets, including IPOs and M&As.

CEO Tom Ryan said his firm continued to support the business communications needs of hundreds of companies across industry sectors and played a full role in consequential corporate situations and events.

"We applied consid-



Tom Ryan



Richard Edelman



O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms, pg. 52

erable focus to strengthen and expand the ICR platform, completing three acquisitions during the year: Consilium, a European healthcare agency; Lumina, a Palo Alto-based, B2B tech PR firm; and Bullfrog + Baum, a consumer PR firm that was combined with ICR's existing consumer PR team to form Blue Engine LLC," said Ryan.

The acquisitions expanded ICR's PR group to more than 180 staffers. The firm also introduced new and expanded offerings in the areas of investor access, ESG advisory, event management and crisis communications while further investing in critical data analytics and Generative AI capabilities.

ICR used 2023 to expand its global footprint, add new team members and forged a more diversified service offering

"We are well positioned for 2024, particularly with the expected return of more normalized capital markets activity in latter part of the year," said Ryan.

Finn navigates through tech turbulence

Finn Partners was not immune to the shifts and turbulence in the technology sector, but its new client wins and expansion of existing relations helped stabilize the overall business, according to CEO Peter Finn.

The firm's fee income dipped just 1.0 percent in 2023 to \$195.4 million as it added 175 new clients.

Finn's fast-growing consumer segment picked up 36 new clients including Mazda, Country Archer, Kodiak Cakes, Nature's Path, Oatly, Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Wild Planet.



Peter Finn

The firm's sports portfolio grew with National Women's Soccer League and USA Fencing.

Organically, Finn got boosts from Honeywell, 2K Games, IEEE, Little Caesars, World's 50 Best Restaurants and Net-scout.

Finn made three acquisitions to deepen its expertise and expand the global footprint.

Those pick-ups including: outre' creative, a creative and digital design agency specializing in financial services; Hyderus, an international health-focused communications and policy firm; and C. Blohm & Associates, a PR and content marketing agency with expertise in B2B education and education technology.

With the increased business turbulence and volatility, Finn said his firm is a trusted counselor and creative steward to clients, helping them grow in a rapidly changing world.

"Our journey is a textbook case study in how creating a culture of shared values, delivering excellence for clients, and using



O'Dwyer's rankings of top gainers, pg. 55

our superpowers for good has proven to be the best formula for ongoing success," Finn added.

Real Chemistry benefits from AI

Real Chemistry bucked the downward revenues trend in 2023 as its fee income rose 7 percent to \$595 million.

"The investments we've made in data and AI continue to outperform, as the pace of change accelerates toward digital and omnichannel engagement, said CEO Shankar Narayanan, CEO of Real Chemistry.



Shankar Narayanan

He said Real Chemistry's precise targeting of healthcare providers and patients has become essential to pharmaceutical marketers.

"Our 5-year CAGR of 24 percent is testament to our ability to forge successful relationships with clients and continually expand how we work with them to bring their important therapies to patients and healthcare providers," added Narayanan.

Real Chemistry acquired TI Health, a data-driven marketing and predictive analytics company that delivers omnichannel healthcare provider engagement, insights and activation solutions, during the past year.

In early 2024, it added Avant Healthcare to expand its medical communications capabilities across the entirety of the drug commercialization lifecycle.

Narayanan realigned Real Chemistry's organizational structure into six key capability areas and best-in-class centers of expertise: activation, advertising, analytics and insights, integrated communications, medical and targeting.

He said that fits the firm's "strategic vision—to provide best-in-class and fully integrated solutions for clients across the marketing and communications continuum."

French|West|Vaughan grows 7 percent

French|West|Vaughan CEO Rick French led the agency to a 7 percent increase in 2023 fee income to \$40.1 million.

The firm benefited from new business wins and assignments from Guinness World Records, Crocs, Heaven Hill Distillery (Deep Eddy Vodka), Andrew Jackson Hermitage, Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Taylor Sheridan's Bosque Ranch Coffee, Pepsi Bottling Ventures, Steakhouse Elite, PureTalk Wireless (AT&T) and Natural Balance Pet Foods.



Rick French

F|W|V's consumer marketing practice accounts for roughly 73 percent of the annual fee income in specialty areas such as apparel & fashion, food & beverage (including wine & spirits), destination marketing, entertainment and branded content, retail marketing, animal health & wellness, outdoor sports & leisure, and on-the-go lifestyle connectivity.

In 2023, French acquired Detroit-based The Millersch Group, an automotive and manufacturing industry focused B2B PR firm; and sold CGPR, a Boston-area firm that it initially acquired in 2020.

The agency's audited fee income does not include revenue from its Prix Productions longform content division, a \$45 million-plus company that develops, co-finances and produces films, documentaries, and television series for a number of major Hollywood studios.

Stanton punches above its weight

Stanton grew 5.5 percent to \$11.1 million as it added new financial clients to its roster, including Empower, The Connor Group, Leste Group, and Palm Tree Advisors.

The firm successfully executed its strategy to diversify its financial client base with solid wins across the real estate investment, financial consulting, private investment, retirement and wealth management sectors.

Stanton also led communications on more than 75 mergers, acquisitions and recapitalizations of businesses last year.

"The level of customer service and results that our team consistently delivers has made Stanton a partner of choice for financial brands, several of whom have worked with us for over a decade," said Charlyn Lusk, Managing Director. "Clients know that we punch above our weight by bringing senior professionals and true strategy to every engagement, and they rely on us as an integral



Charlyn Lusk

Continued on page 50

part of their team whose work helps achieve their business goals.”

Noting that Stanton is active in executing digital, design and marketing work, Lusk said the firm is well positioned to create a unified, seamless, client-centric experience across channels and activities for clients.

5WPR bolsters its brand

Co-CEOs Matt Caiola and Dara Busch led the New York-based 5WPR to two workplace awards—Ragan’s Top Workplaces in Communications list and Digiday Work-Life Employer of the Year Finalist—and launched a new digital agency, HOW.

An extension of the 5W brand, which was named after the five Ws of journalism: who, what, when, where and why, The HOW Agency strategically applies those continued principles of communication to the digital experience.



Dara Busch and Matt Caiola

“Every digital agency can pull together the same laundry list of services, but it’s the people running the show who will keep your brand fresh and spotless,” said Caiola.

The firm also expanded its executive team, welcoming executive VPs Jarrod Bull from Yard NYC and Robyn Wellikoff from Spectrum Science, as well as Cory Crayn and Kara Silverman who both returned to the agency from TodayTix Group and Clarity, respectively.

5WPR reported \$61.6 million in fees, which was down 2.1 percent, during its 21st year in business.

It added clients Royal Air Maroc, Patient-Fi, Turismo de Lisboa, and Skyscanner, and picked up business from legacy accounts like Webull and It’s A 10 Haircare.

Rise in gross billings boosts Coyne PR

Coyne Public Relations slipped 4.2 percent to \$37.4 million during 2023 but the revenue shortfall was compensated by a \$5.8 million jump in gross billings.

CEO Tom Coyne attributes the billings growth to innovative expansions in integrations, influencer engagements, and a vibrant return to in-person events.

The New Jersey firm, which counts Hilton,



Tom Coyne

Shell, Humana, Orange-theory Fitness, CeraVe and Pacira BioSciences as clients, collected about 50 PR industry awards in 2023.

The agency stepped up its commitment to nurturing talent via investment in Coyne College, an in-house educational initiative complemented

by a comprehensive digital learning library.

“This initiative underscored a deep-rooted culture of continuous improvement and learning,” said Coyne.

Looking to 2024, Coyne PR is poised to continue advancing employee growth and employing data-driven strategies to navigate the ever-evolving PR landscape.

Coyne said his firm “is not just an agency; it’s a beacon of excellence in public relations.”

First woman takes helm at G&S

G&S Business Communications used 2023 to carry out the planned CEO succession plan as Anne Green took over for Luke Lambert upon his retirement from the firm.

Green, who joined G&S in 2018 as part of its acquisition of CooperKatz, became the first woman to head the firm. She held the CEO slot at CooperKatz.

Green is now responsible for agency performance, operations, growth, innovation, culture and the continued evolution of its fully integrated suite of marketing and communications services.

Brian Hall was promoted to President, where he is in charge of client service; and Kate-Threewitts was upped to the shop’s first-ever chief people officer role.

Chief Growth Officer Steve Halsey completed his tenure as the Global Chair of Page Up, successfully leading the premier professional association for senior strategic communication leaders on its return to in-person events and programming post-pandemic.

G&S had a mixed year in terms of 2023 performance as fee income dipped 6.1 percent to \$26.9 million.

Clients tightened their budgets at the beginning of the year due to concerns about a possible recession.

The firm’s integrated communications offering opened up new opportunities, including significant growth in paid media activity to support client campaigns.

As 2023 closed out, G&S enjoyed some significant new business wins in the health-



Anne Green

care and the advanced manufacturing space.

Racepoint Global weathers the storm

Tech heavy Racepoint Global focused on weathering the storm in 2023 as net fee income fell 17.2 percent to \$9.1 million.

Early-year decisions by tech giants to cut costs created an industry-wide ripple effect, noted Bob Osmond, making it clear in Q1 that 2023 was not going to be a year of financial growth.

“Our focus was on deepening existing client relationships, refining and expanding our offerings, and continuing to invest in building a rewarding employee experience,” he said.

Noting that Racepoint’s average client tenure remains at five years, Osmond said companies continue to entrust us to deliver

more services across our portfolio, from executive thought leadership and owned content to live influencer and media events to visual content from RPG Studios.” Organic growth accounted for about 60 percent of new revenue during 2023.

Osmond said Racepoint added significant new clients in both embedded- and consumer-facing technology during the second half of the year.

The momentum carried into 2024 as the firm announced three new clients (Edge-Cortex, indie Semiconductor and Sensera Systems) on March 26.

Osmond said 2024 is all about acceleration. “We are investing in new services and continued training and development for our people,” he said. “We believe our focus on culture is why our involuntary turnover rate remains in the low single digits.”

Bliss invests in places, products, people

The Bliss Group, which posted a 6.9 percent rise in revenues to \$22.2 million, used 2023 to focus on making a series of strategic investments in places, products and people.

The firm expanded its geographic footprint internationally, opening its first London office to provide best-in-class service to clients with a European presence across professional services, financial services, healthcare, and impact sectors.

“As the second largest financial services hub in the world and a growing center for healthcare innovation, London is a logical place for Bliss to deepen our presence and



Bob Osmond



Cortney Stapleton

O'Dwyer's rankings

Continued from page 50

better support clients with an international footprint," said Cortney Stapleton, CEO of Bliss. "We are excited to engage with new companies looking for creative ways to drive impact through insight while continuing to support our U.S.-based partners."

Bliss also partnered with Next Practices Group to launch Bliss Bio Health (BBH), a sister life sciences marketing agency. BBH aims to disrupt the healthcare ecosystem by integrating the science, patient experience, and business of health to create a real white space in healthcare and better remove the barriers to optimal care.

The foundation of Bliss' insight-driven work was supported by the formation of its research & analytics team, which leverages proprietary research, analytics, brand strategy and award-winning innovations to better understand our clients and the audiences they serve.



Lou Hoffman

Bliss also appointed Reed Handley, Alexis Odesser and Sally Slater as the agency's first ever group of Executive VPs, reflective of their deep expertise in growth, client service and innovation. The firm also named Ken Kerrigan as co-lead of the professional services practice.

Hoffman's U.S. business continues to roll

While the The Hoffman Agency's global growth slowed in 2023 to 1.5 percent to \$26.7 million, its U.S. operation increased by 11 percent.

From a base of \$4.63 million during the 2020 pandemic, THA has nearly doubled revenue in the U.S., landing at \$8.67 million last year.

"More importantly, the firm has driven this hypergrowth without things breaking, as reflected in the 37 percent of revenue coming from clients who have engaged the agency for three years or longer," said Lou Hoffman.

Key 2023 wins include Diligent, a multi-market program that covers the UK, France, Germany, Australia and Japan, with the U.S. team serving as the global hub.

A second noteworthy addition to the agency's client portfolio is Georgia Tech University. "This engagement started with a McKinsey-like assignment to differentiate the engineering school and continued with an integrated communications campaign," explained Hoffman.

Diligent and Georgia Tech join long-time THA anchor clients Nokia, Supermicro and TSMC.

Hoffman noted the firm's talent branding and acquisition practice gained traction last year. New assignments included a recruitment campaign based on a microsite for the City of Fremont and a global Glassdoor campaign for a semiconductor client.

THA clients benefited from the launch of "The Story Studio," which puts content resources—writers, designers, freelance talent, etc.—under one tent, reporting to the North America MD, Gerard LaFond.

This move builds upon the company's "story is always there" mantra and its "Periodic Table of Business Storytelling" methodology.

It continues to reposition the Hoffman Agency as a firm that addresses pain points with paid, owned and earned media, according to Hoffman.

Missing in action

Forty-five of the 146 ranked firms posted year-to-year declines in fee income. Thirteen more registered flat revenues. And nine of the Top 100 firms that participated in the 2023 rankings apparently decided to throw in towel this year or failed to submit financial statements.

They include Wachsmann (No. 33 with \$25.3 million in fee income), M Booth Health (No. 35 at \$21.8 million), Clarity (No. 46 at \$16.9 million), Merritt Group (No. 47 at \$15.4 million), SourceCode Communications (No. 63 at \$8.8 million),

LaVoieHealthScience (No. 78 at \$5.7 million), Crenshaw Communications (No. 81 at \$5.5 million), Forefront Communications (No. 89 at \$4.5 million) and Idea Grove (No. 96 at \$3.8 million).

Six firms beyond the Top 100 also walked. They are Victorious PR, Rally Point PR, Judge Public Relations, WordWrite Communications, Stuntman PR and Press Record Communications.

O'Dwyer's more than compensated for the losses, adding ten new Top 100 Firms, and another six shops beyond the No. 100 position.

Avog, which was formed by the merger of formerly ranked Kivvit and unranked Subject Matter, debuted in the No. 10 slot with fees of \$89 million. Palladian Partners (No. 33 at \$25 million), Vault Communications (No. 46 at \$12.8 million), Bader Rutter (No. 53 at \$11.4 million), Ascend Agency (No. 56 at \$10.7 million), Hahn Agency (No. 56 at \$10 million), MMGY Wagstaff (No. 67 at \$7.8 million), Global Gateway Advisors (No. 69 at \$7.7 million), Scenario Communications (No. 88 at \$5 million), and Cura Strategies (No. 91 at \$4.7 million) joined the Top 100.

MediaSource, Global Situation Room, Bob Gold & Associates, 3E Public Relations, Shiftology, and Reya Communications are other newcomers to the 2024 rankings. ○



The Stevens Group facilitates mergers and acquisitions in the public relations and digital marketing industries. TSG represents both sellers and buyers. We help build bridges that create true synergy and cultural fit for buyers and sellers that meet the test of time.

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O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS WITH MAJOR U.S. OPERATIONS

Firm	2023 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2022
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$1,037,907,000	6,116	-3.9
2. Real Chemistry, San Francisco, CA	595,000,000	2,199	7.0
3. Inizio Evoke, New York, NY	340,300,000	1,513	-7.5
4. APCO, Washington, DC	229,300,000	1,190	23.0
5. Finn Partners, New York, NY	195,400,000	823	-1.0
6. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	175,500,000	1,140	10.0
7. ICR, New York, NY	146,212,734	418	-9.1
8. Zeno Group, New York, NY	143,959,607	747	4.0
9. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	105,115,000	370	14.7
10. Avoq, Washington, DC	89,331,546	219	103.6
11. Spectrum, Washington, DC	80,000,000	275	6.4
12. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	61,600,868	234	-2.1
13. Hotwire, New York, NY	58,034,400	430	-2.8
14. imre, LLC, Baltimore, MD	55,000,000	250	12.2
15. Hunter, New York, NY	51,200,000	247	21.0
16. MikeWorldWide, New York, NY	49,105,335	191	-7.5
17. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	45,849,220	188	-10.0
18. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	40,082,838	147	7.0
19. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER) Columbus, OH	39,219,271	218	even
20. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	39,100,000	240	11.4
21. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	37,434,373	169	-4.2
22. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	36,498,665	116	20.1
23. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	35,794,913	135	5.3
24. Matter Communications, Boston, MA	35,124,000	225	-11.1
25. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	34,794,719	152	24.2
26. Havas Formula, New York, NY	30,064,059	136	-12.7
27. PAN Communications, Boston, MA	28,934,140	167	-6.5
28. Walker Sands, Chicago, IL,	28,126,652	153	-7.8
29. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	26,994,761	128	1.6
30. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	26,866,566	134	-6.1
31. Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	26,706,000	61	1.5
32. Taylor, New York, NY	26,460,846	101	even
33. Palladian Partners, Inc., Silver Spring, MD	25,065,120	103	even
34. Vested, New York, NY	24,705,000	65	4.0
35. JPA Health, Washington, DC	24,326,000	91	21.8
36. Bliss Group, The, New York, NY	22,244,562	92	6.9
37. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	21,750,000	57	15.1
38. J/PR, New York, NY	21,441,000	110	25.3
39. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	21,071,000	88	4.0
40. Regan Communications Group, Boston, MA	20,117,206	119	even
41. Marathon Strategies, New York, NY	19,716,633	62	even
42. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	18,141,969	96	-10.6
43. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	18,088,898	108	-10.2
44. Bospar, San Francisco, CA	14,046,076	72	-22.8
45. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	13,465,212	67	-5.8
46. Vault Communications, Plymouth Meeting, PA	12,809,947	53	1.5
47. Sam Brown Inc, Wayne, PA	12,362,428	26	8.2
48. Cognito, New York, NY	12,322,322	79	-6.1
49. 360PR+, Boston, MA	12,200,000	62	10.0
50. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	12,087,008	46	2.0
51. Davies Public Affairs, Santa Barbara, CA	11,975,000	34	2.0
52. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	11,643,543	61	-1.0
53. Bader Rutter & Associates, Inc. Milwaukee, WI	11,400,000	40	-6.5
54. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	11,163,868	51	12.2
55. Stanton, New York, NY	11,052,598	40	5.5
56. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	10,773,989	51	84.1
57. Ascend Agency, Irvine, CA	10,762,861	13	40.4
58. MMGY NJE, New York, NY	10,525,265	48	10.7
59. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	10,054,984	52	7.5
60. Health+Commerce, Eagle, ID	9,897,728	27	23.4
61. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	9,887,530	33	-10.7
62. Fiona Hutton & Associates, Inc., Los Angeles, CA	9,711,727	25	26.6
63. Lou Hammond Group, New York, NY	9,709,612	45	7.1
64. Dukas Linden Public Relations, New York, NY	9,461,299	31	1.0
65. Infinite Global, New York, NY	9,413,881	44	10.4
66. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	9,131,436	41	-17.2
67. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	8,344,836	17	15.1
68. MMGY Wagstaff, Los Angeles, CA	7,888,608	54	even
69. Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	7,880,212	40	26.7
70. Global Gateway Advisors, New York, NY	7,792,000	24	1.5
71. V2 Communications, Boston, MA	7,434,686	29	-4.8
72. Alloy, Atlanta, GA	7,365,122	55	112.4
73. Berk Communications, New York, NY	7,349,984	27	-18.5

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS WITH MAJOR U.S. OPERATIONS

Firm	2023 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2022
74. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	7,298,564	39	5.5
75. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	7,212,544	40	2.5
76. Raffetto Herman Strategic Communications, Seattle, WA	7,148,477	36	-7.8
77. Singer Associates Public Relations, Inc., San Francisco, CA	7,099,153	16	5.7
78. Communications Strategy Group (CSG), Denver, CO	6,896,487	40	4.9
79. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	6,787,390	26	16.3
80. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	6,780,564	36	1.0
81. BackBay Communications, Boston, MA	6,612,990	33	15.0
82. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	6,226,714	26	14.8
83. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	5,652,398	30	3.8
84. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	5,577,840	40	-5.9
85. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	5,468,946	39	26.7
86. Kiterocket, Phoenix, AZ	5,416,131	35	-1.2
87. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	5,296,753	37	15.8
88. Franco, Detroit, MI	5,028,645	31	31.3
89. Scenario Communications, Los Angeles, CA	5,000,000	24	-9.1
90. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	4,914,372	22	1.0
91. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	4,892,327	29	2.0
92. Cura Strategies, Arlington, VA	4,782,897	20	15.2
93. BRG Communications, Alexandria, VA	4,600,750	26	24.0
94. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	4,500,000	12	even
95. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	4,458,000	22	-7.1
96. CashmanKatz, Glastonbury, CT	4,365,000	26	11.0
97. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	4,319,848	21	26.9
98. The Sway Effect, New York, NY	4,300,000	20	2.3
99. MCS Healthcare Public Relations, Bedminster, NJ	4,246,571	18	14.1
100. Tier One Partners, Boston, MA	3,935,557	22	3.7
101. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	3,827,000	16	-7.3
102. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	3,772,057	18	20.0
103. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	3,610,316	16	3.0
104. Boardroom Communications, Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	3,600,000	19	even
105. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	3,353,043	22	3.0
106. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	3,316,469	18	5.5
107. Gatesman, Pittsburgh, PA	3,199,597	35	9.9
108. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	3,154,291	18	even
109. Global Situation Room, Washington, DC	3,047,424	10	15.3
110. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	3,023,625	11	-10.0
111. Hewes Communications, New York, NY	2,954,959	7	11.9
112. The TASC Group, New York, NY	2,840,436	14	-5.4
113. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,726,139	11	2.0
114. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc., New York, NY	2,700,000	7	even
115. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	2,568,787	12	even
116. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	2,551,467	15	49.8
117. Akrete, Evanston, IL	2,496,681	7	4.6
118. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	2,319,093	13	40.3
119. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	2,189,814	12	13.2
120. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,057,000	6	-3.2
121. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,015,222	23	-36.0
122. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	2,006,318	14	5.0
123. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	1,810,000	7	-4.6
124. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	1,805,483	19	3.0
125. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	1,798,324	65	-13.2
126. Lowe Group, Wauwatosa, WI	1,719,524	7	6.7
127. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	1,660,883	7	-6.3
128. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,603,845	17	16.1
129. Buttonwood Communications Group, New York, NY	1,543,167	7	3.9
130. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	1,539,970	5	2.9
131. Milk & Honey PR, New York, NY	1,538,082	8	-11.5
132. Rosica Communications, Fairlawn, NJ	1,447,301	9	-13.0
133. Hemsworth Communications, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,426,693	16	-11.2
134. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	1,395,800	8	29.0
135. Virgo PR, New York, NY	1,250,000	3	-43.2
136. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	1,163,169	8	1.1
137. Superior PR, Chicago, IL	1,141,874	5	5.5
138. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	1,092,075	7	-22.3
139. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	1,038,810	9	26.6
140. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	1,009,633	9	6.7
141. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	944,715	5	-13.9
142. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	763,361	3	18.6
143. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	740,000	7	-38.3
144. Reya Communications, Doral, FL	677,420	2	7.5
145. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC, Annapolis, MD	599,147	3	even
146. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	592,364	3	-40.8
147. Wordhampton Public Relations, Inc., East Hampton, NY	581,396	5	even

A strategic approach to authentic engagement

Taking a deep dive into the latest PR trends to effectively elevate brand visibility.

By Cathy Angel

The world of public relations is more dynamic than ever. The constant emergence of new online PR tools, an increasingly complex social media landscape and the evolution of traditional media into comprehensive digital platforms are combining to create a new world for PR professionals. In that new world come endless opportunities for brands to amplify their reach ... but it's important to know how to navigate it all. From purpose-driven messaging to AI-driven productivity, there are several key trends that brands must dive into, understand and later embrace as part of their communications strategy, to remain competitive, elevate their offerings and grab the attention of consumers who are inundated with content on a daily basis.

The power of authenticity

Today's consumers are overloaded with around 10,000 brand messages daily, and almost three-quarters of consumers feel loyalty towards a particular brand or company, according to the 2020 Zendesk Customer Experience Trends Report. Trust is the foundation of any successful relationship, and people are more likely to connect with brands that are genuine and transparent. For this reason, the role of authenticity in public relations can't be overstated. Authenticity is living your truth and embracing who your brand is in every form of communication with your audience. To build loyal fans, brands must create emotional connections and rise above the noise with messages that are in sync with their core values. The first step in creating brand authenticity is to develop guidelines that align with the company's mission and values. Once these brand guidelines are established, consistency in messaging across all platforms is key. Brands should also be where their customers can reach them—such as the right social media platforms to engage with their target demographic—sharing helpful information, answering questions, listening to consumers and most importantly ... taking thoughtful action when they receive feedback. These interactions help to humanize a brand, creating a deeper connection with its audience.

Personalized media pitches and connections

Content is king, but too much of a good thing ... you know the old saying. The media—and consumers—have content coming at them from every direction and in addition to reacting, they also have 24/7 access

to the content they're seeking. A strategic approach is necessary to ensure a brand's message reaches its audience at the right time, in the best possible way.

Earned media placements are one of the top ways that brands can build credibility and trust with their target audiences. Earned media is free exposure for a brand, but to secure it, the message must stand out amongst the thousands of emails journalists receive in a day. When connecting with a journalist, it's important to prove what you have to say is interesting, important and newsworthy. In addition, according to Muck Rack's 2024 "State of Journalism" report, 83 percent of journalists prefer to be pitched via a one-on-one email. Personalized pitches are the best way to build relationships with journalists and show them that you have considered their interests and are willing to lend a helping hand. Mass emails are impersonal and are many times obvious. Serious thought should also be put into subject-line copy, which, as simple as it is, can make or break a pitch. To ensure your email is opened, make sure your subject line is relevant to the journalist's interest, has a strong hook and draws them in quickly. Tailor your pitch to make it personal and relevant to each contact by mentioning one of their articles that you read recently, offering fresh angles or insights and explaining why your content would be helpful to their audience. Keep in mind that relationship building is just as important as the pitch. Make time to chat with your media contacts outside of pitching them your story ideas, get to know them as you would a friend. Be concise and respectful and always show gratitude once an article or story about your brand has been published.

The use of AI in public relations

The public relations industry has been harnessing the power of AI for quite some time with media monitoring and data analysis. AI and automation will continue to be integrated into public relations practices, and at a higher level, over the next few years. This will provide opportunities to streamline everyday tasks, freeing up PR professionals to focus on relationship-building, strategy and creativity. AI content is much quicker to produce than human-written articles, but it is critical to understand that as of today, there are limitations, and there is not yet a one-size-fits-all approach. Humans still have a significant advantage over technology when it comes to writing with pas-

sion and delivering a specific brand voice, tone and personality. Tools like ChatGPT can help with research and creating quick content, but a human touch is necessary for fact-checking, relationship building, adding personality and making sure your content is in line with your brand standards. Search engines—and the media, hurting your credibility—have begun flagging AI content because it is similar to previously published materials. Since AI content is generated from pre-existing content, it still requires a person to drive the strategy and fine-tune the result. Also important to remember is that people tend to share articles they feel a personal connection to, but as AI does not have the emotional intelligence to create a story, your content should be developed by those who know how to deliver your brand messaging—and understand your consumer—best.

The world of public relations will continue to evolve. The most successful brands will be those that create authentic, consistent and engaging content while establishing and preserving genuine connections. By leveraging these trends—and paying attention to the next—brands and their PR partners can ensure they are creating effective, modernized strategies that will help them attract their target audiences and reach their goals.

Cathy Angel is Vice President at Hemsworth. ○



Cathy Angel

PR brief

FINN Partners lands Greentech Environmental

FINN Partners is selected to provide integrated PR and marketing services for Greentech Environmental, which produces high efficiency HVAC filters and is a leading innovator in air purification and odor control solutions.

FINN's scope of work for the client will include creative storytelling, media relations, corporate communications and thought leadership, social engagement and creative projects.

The program will support Greentech's expected growth in commercial and consumer markets, with an emphasis on commercial buildings, hospitality, indoor agriculture, and pet.

"Greentech recently introduced a new line of high efficiency HVAC filters with ODOGard technology, the only filter on the market that eliminates VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and odors at the molecular level," said Greentech VP of sales and marketing Blake Bobosky. "Recognizing the potential of this technology to improve indoor environments, we are excited to partner with FINN Partners to help grow our brand awareness and expand our U.S. footprint."

LEADING GAINERS AMONG PR FIRMS

Firm	2023 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2022
Firms in the top 25 (representing fees from \$34.8M to \$1.04B)			
1. Avoq, Washington, DC	\$89,331,546	219	103.6
2. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	34,794,719	152	24.2
3. APCO, Washington, DC	229,300,000	1,190	23
4. Hunter, New York, NY	51,200,000	247	21
5. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	36,498,665	116	20.1
6. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	105,115,000	370	14.7
7. imre, LLC, Baltimore, MD	55,000,000	250	12.2
8. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	39,100,000	240	11.4
9. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	175,500,000	1,140	10
10. Real Chemistry (tie), San Francisco, CA	595,000,000	2,199	7
10. French West Vaughan (tie), Raleigh, NC	40,082,838	147	7
Firms ranked 26 through 50 (representing fees from \$12.1M to \$30.1M)			
1. J/PR, New York, NY	\$21,441,000	110	25.3
2. JPA Health, Washington, DC	24,326,000	91	21.8
3. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	21,750,000	57	15.1
4. 360PR+, Boston, MA	12,200,000	62	10
5. Sam Brown Inc., Wayne, PA	12,362,428	26	8.2
6. Bliss Group, The, New York, NY	22,244,562	92	6.9
7. Vested, New York, NY	24,705,000	65	4
8. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	21,071,000	88	4
9. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	12,087,008	46	2
10. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	26,994,761	128	1.6
Firms ranked 51 through 100 (representing fees from \$3.9M to \$12.0M)			
1. Alloy, Atlanta, GA	\$7,365,122	55	112.4
2. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	10,773,989	51	84.1
3. Ascend Agency, Irvine, CA	10,762,861	13	40.4
4. Franco, Detroit, MI	5,028,645	31	31.3
5. Bellmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	4,319,848	21	26.9
6. Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	7,880,212	40	26.7
7. Otter PR, St. St. Petersburg, FL	5,468,946	39	26.7
8. Fiona Hutton & Associates, Inc., Los Angeles, CA	9,711,727	25	26.6
9. BRG Communications, Alexandria, VA	4,600,750	26	24
10. Health+Commerce, Eagle, ID	9,897,728	27	23.4
Firms ranked 101 through 148 (representing fees from \$581.4K to \$3.8M)			
1. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	\$2,551,467	15	49.8
2. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	2,319,093	13	40.3
3. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	1,395,800	8	29
4. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	1,038,810	9	26.6
5. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	3,772,057	18	20
6. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	763,361	3	18.6
7. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,603,845	17	16.1
8. Global Situation Room, Washington, DC	3,047,424	10	15.3
9. PSC (Princeton Strategic Communications), Trenton, NJ	2,189,814	12	13.2
10. Hewes Communications, New York, NY	2,954,959	7	11.9

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS BY CITY/GEOGRAPHY

Firm	2023 Net Fees	FT Empl.	Firm	2023 Net Fees	FT Empl.
ATLANTA					
1. Jackson Spalding	\$34,794,719	152	9. Finn Partners	\$12,447,000	45
2. Edelman	25,842,000	107	10. Marathon Strategies	8,613,906	19
3. Alloy	7,365,122	55	11. Cura Strategies, Arlington, VA	4,782,897	20
4. Trevelino/Keller	7,298,564	39	12. BRG Communications, Alexandria, VA	4,600,750	26
CONNECTICUT					
1. CashmanKatz, Glastonbury, CT	\$4,365,000	26	13. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms.	3,574,239	13
CHICAGO					
1. Edelman	\$100,937,000	517	14. Global Situation Room	3,047,424	10
2. APCO	28,600,000	87	15. Stanton Communications	2,568,787	12
3. Walker Sands	28,126,652	153	16. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC, Annapolis, MD	599,147	3
4. Finn Partners (includes Detroit)	20,351,000	87	17. Infinite Global	427,904	2
5. Greentarget Global LLC	11,163,868	51	NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY		
6. G&S Business Communications	6,712,871	37	1. Edelman (includes Rochester)	\$241,541,000	1,004
7. Zapwater Communications, Inc.	5,296,753	37	2. 5W Public Relations	61,600,868	234
8. L.C. Williams & Associates	4,914,372	22	3. Finn Partners	60,571,000	348
9. Public Communications Inc.	4,892,327	29	4. Hunter	51,200,000	247
10. Highwire PR	4,126,223	12	5. MikeWorldWide	49,105,335	191
11. Akrete, Evanston, IL	2,496,681	7	6. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	37,434,373	169
12. O'Malley Hansen Communications	1,660,883	7	7. Taylor	26,460,846	101
13. Tier One Partners	1,516,178	11	8. Vested	24,705,000	65
14. Superior PR	1,141,874	5	9. Bliss Group, The	22,244,562	92
15. Infinite Global	\$213,952	1	10. J/PR	21,441,000	110
FLORIDA					
1. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	\$21,750,000	57	11. APCO	19,200,000	78
2. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	13,465,212	67	12. Cognito	12,322,322	79
3. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	12,087,008	46	13. Marathon Strategies	11,102,727	25
4. Edelman, Miami, FL	7,993,000	37	14. Stanton	11,052,598	40
5. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	7,212,544	40	15. MMGY NJF	10,525,265	48
6. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	5,652,398	30	16. Lou Hammond Group	9,709,612	45
7. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	5,468,946	39	17. Dukas Linden Public Relations	9,461,299	31
8. Boardroom Comms., Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	3,600,000	19	18. Highwire PR	9,412,329	34
9. Zapwater Communications, Miami, FL	1,912,756	6	19. Caliber Corporate Advisers	7,880,212	40
10. Hemsworth, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,426,693	16	20. Global Gateway Advisors	7,792,000	24
11. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	1,038,810	9	21. Berk Communications	7,349,984	27
12. Reya Communications, Doral, FL	677,420	2	22. G&S Business Communications	6,755,642	36
MIAMI					
1. rbb Communications	\$13,465,212	67	23. Infinite Global	5,134,844	24
2. Edelman	7,993,000	37	24. The Sway Effect	4,300,000	20
3. Zapwater Communications	1,912,756	6	25. MCS Healthcare PR, Bedminster, NJ	4,246,571	18
4. Reya Communications, Doral, FL	677,420	2	26. Hewes Communications	2,954,959	7
BOSTON					
1. PAN Communications	\$28,934,140	167	27. TASC Group, The	2,840,436	14
2. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	26,994,761	128	28. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc.	2,700,000	7
3. Matter Communications	23,573,000	123	29. AMP3 Public Relations	2,551,467	15
4. Regan Communications Group	20,117,206	119	30. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	2,319,093	13
5. 360PR+	12,200,000	62	31. PSC (Princeton Strategic Comms.), Trenton, NJ	2,189,814	12
6. Racepoint Global	9,131,436	41	32. Buttonwood Communications Group	1,543,167	7
7. V2 Communications	7,434,686	29	33. Butler Associates, LLC	1,539,970	5
8. BackBay Communications	6,612,990	33	34. Milk & Honey PR	1,538,082	8
9. Rasky Partners, Inc.	6,226,714	26	35. Rosica Communications, Fairlawn, NJ	1,447,301	9
10. Finn Partners	6,027,000	26	36. Virgo PR	1,250,000	3
11. Highwire PR	4,375,762	15	37. 3E Public Relations, Pine Brook, NJ	1,163,169	8
12. Tier One Partners	2,419,379	11	38. Lawlor Media Group	763,361	3
WASHINGTON, D.C.					
1. Edelman	\$93,281,000	321	39. Feintuch Communications	592,364	3
2. Avoq	89,331,546	219	40. Wordhampton PR, East Hampton, NY	581,396	5
3. Spectrum	80,000,000	275	PENNSYLVANIA		
4. imre, LLC, Baltimore, MD	55,000,000	250	1. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	\$18,141,969	96
5. APCO	43,500,000	196	2. Vault Comms., Plymouth Meeting, PA	12,809,947	53
6. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	36,498,665	116	3. Sam Brown Inc., Wayne, PA	12,362,428	26
7. Palladian Partners, Inc., Silver Spring, MD	25,065,120	103	4. Red Thread PR, Philadelphia, PA	3,610,316	16
8. JPA Health	24,326,000	91	5. Gatesman, Pittsburgh, PA	3,199,597	35
TEXAS					
1. Edelman (incl. Dallas & Houston), Austin, TX	\$30,149,000	128	6. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	1,092,075	7
2. Hahn Agency, Austin, TX	10,054,984	52	FLORIDA		
3. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	9,887,530	33	1. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	\$21,750,000	57
4. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	6,780,564	36	2. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	13,465,212	67
5. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	5,577,840	40	3. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	12,087,008	46
6. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	3,154,291	18	4. Edelman, Miami, FL	7,993,000	37
7. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	1,805,483	19	5. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	7,212,544	40

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS BY CITY/GEOGRAPHY

Firm	2023 Net Fees	FT Empl.	Firm	2023 Net Fees	FT Empl.
MIDWEST CITIES					
1. Edelman, Chicago, IL	\$100,937,000	517	14. Infinite Global	855,807	4
2. Fahlgren Mortine (incl. TURNER), Columbus, OH	39,219,271	218	15. Zapwater Communications	847,816	5
3. APCO, Chicago, IL	28,600,000	87	16. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	740,000	7
4. Walker Sands, Chicago, IL	28,126,652	153	SAN FRANCISCO & NORTH CALIFORNIA		
5. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	21,071,000	88	1. Edelman	\$37,304,000	146
6. Finn Partners (incl. Detroit), Chicago, IL	20,351,000	87	2. Highwire PR	35,794,913	135
7. Bader Rutter & Assoc., Inc., Milwaukee, WI	11,400,000	40	3. Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	26,706,000	61
8. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	11,163,868	51	4. LaunchSquad	18,088,898	108
9. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	6,787,390	26	5. Bospar	14,046,076	72
10. G&S Business Comms., Chicago, IL	6,712,871	37	6. Singer Associates PR, Inc.	7,099,153	16
11. Zapwater Comms., Inc., Chicago, IL	5,296,753	37	7. Finn Partners	4,806,000	26
12. Franco, Detroit, MI	5,028,645	31	8. Edelman	2,848,000	11
13. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	4,914,372	22	9. Infinite Global	2,781,374	13
14. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	4,892,327	29	10. Perry Comms. Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,726,139	11
15. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	4,458,000	22	11. Landis Communications	2,057,000	6
16. Bellmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	4,319,848	21	12. Karbo Communications	2,015,222	23
17. Highwire PR, Chicago, IL	4,126,223	12	WESTERN CITIES		
18. Inspire PR Group, Westerville, OH	3,827,000	16	1. Edelman (incl. Beverly Hills), Los Angeles, CA	\$56,952,000	241
19. Slide Nine Agency, Columbus, OH	3,353,043	22	2. Edelman, San Francisco, CA	37,304,000	146
20. MediaSource, Columbus, OH	3,316,469	18	3. Edelman, Seattle, WA	31,897,000	126
21. Beehive Strategic Comm., St. Paul, MN	3,023,625	11	4. Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	26,706,000	61
22. Akrete, Evanston, IL	2,496,681	7	5. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	18,088,898	108
23. Lowe Group, Wauwatosa, WI	1,719,524	7	6. Bospar, San Francisco, CA	14,046,076	72
24. O'Malley Hansen Comms., Chicago, IL	1,660,883	7	7. Davies Public Affairs, Santa Barbara, CA	11,975,000	34
25. Tier One Partners, Chicago, IL	1,516,178	11	8. Finn Partners, Portland, OR	11,477,000	54
26. Superior PR, Chicago, IL	1,141,874	5	9. Lee Andrews Group, Los Angeles, CA	10,773,989	51
27. Shiftology, Springfield, OH	1,009,633	9	10. Ascend Agency, Irvine, CA	10,762,861	13
28. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	944,715	5	11. Edelman, Portland, OR	10,464,000	36
29. Infinite Global, Chicago, IL	213,952	1	12. Health+Commerce, Eagle, ID	9,897,728	27
SOUTHEAST			13. Fiona Hutton & Assocs., Inc., Los Angeles, CA	9,711,727	25
1. French West Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	\$40,082,838	147	14. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	8,658,274	43
2. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	34,794,719	152	15. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	8,344,836	17
3. Edelman, Atlanta, GA	25,842,000	107	16. MMGY Wagstaff, Los Angeles, CA	7,888,608	54
4. Finn Partners (incl. Florida), Nashville, TN	24,127,000	115	17. Singer Assocs. PR, Inc., San Francisco, CA	7,099,153	16
5. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	21,750,000	57	18. Comms. Strategy Group (CSG), Denver, CO	6,896,487	40
6. G&S Business Comms., Raleigh, NC	15,149,790	87	19. APCO (incl. employees from CA to CO), Seattle, WA	6,200,000	30
7. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	13,465,212	67	20. Finn Partners, Los Angeles, CA	5,651,000	19
8. APCO, Raleigh, NC	13,000,000	49	21. Kiterocket, Phoenix, AZ	5,416,131	35
9. Moore, Inc., Tallahassee, FL	12,087,008	46	22. Scenario Communications, Los Angeles, CA	5,000,000	24
10. MP&F Strategic Comms., Nashville, TN	11,643,543	61	23. Finn Partners, San Francisco, CA	4,806,000	26
11. Edelman, Miami, FL	7,993,000	37	24. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	4,500,000	12
12. Alloy, Atlanta, GA	7,365,122	55	25. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms., Seattle, WA	3,574,238	16
13. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	7,298,564	39	26. Highwire PR, Los Angeles, CA	3,334,584	15
14. Sachs Media, Tallahassee, FL	7,212,544	40	27. Finn Partners, San Diego, CA	3,230,000	9
15. Otter PR, St. Petersburg, FL	5,468,946	39	28. Edelman, Sacramento, CA	2,848,000	11
16. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	3,772,057	18	29. Infinite Global, San Francisco, CA	2,781,374	13
17. Boardroom Comms., Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL	3,600,000	19	30. Perry Comms. Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,726,139	11
18. Zapwater Communications, Miami, FL	1,912,756	6	31. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,057,000	6
19. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,603,845	17	32. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,015,222	23
20. Hemsworth, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,426,693	16	33. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	2,006,318	14
21. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	1,038,810	9	34. Finn Partners, Seattle, WA	1,852,000	4
22. Reya Communications, Doral, FL	677,420	2	35. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	1,810,000	7
LOS ANGELES			36. Lavidge, Phoenix, AZ	1,798,324	65
1. Edelman (includes Beverly Hills)	\$56,952,000	241	37. Infinite Global, Los Angeles, CA	855,807	4
2. Davies Public Affairs, Santa Barbara, CA	11,975,000	34	38. Zapwater Communications, Los Angeles, CA	847,816	5
3. Lee Andrews Group	10,773,989	51	39. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	740,000	7
4. Fiona Hutton & Associates, Inc.	9,711,727	25	40. Finn Partners, Denver, CO	617,000	7
5. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	8,344,836	17	HAWAII		
6. MMGY Wagstaff	7,888,608	54	1. Finn Partners, Honolulu, HI	\$10,839,000	83
7. Finn Partners	5,651,000	19			
8. Scenario Communications	5,000,000	24			
9. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	4,500,000	12			
10. Highwire PR	3,334,584	15			
11. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	2,006,318	14			
12. Firecracker PR, Brea, CA	1,810,000	7			
13. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	1,395,800	8			

Remembering the human element

In tech public relations and beyond, we must remember to put people front and center.

By Gerard LaFond

The world of B2B tech public relations mirrors that of the tech industry itself: ever-changing, forward-thinking and obsessed with innovation.

What often gets lost in this industry, however, is something our agency takes very seriously: The human element. Regardless of company, industry or corner of the globe, humans are the ones doing the work that keeps the world spinning.

But from where we sit, we seem caught in a cycle: A new piece of technology is released. The hype cycle whirs up. Pros and cons are discussed. The product does—or more often doesn't!—change the world in some way. We move on. Rinse and repeat.

But what about the people who tirelessly worked to make that product? The people who put in overtime research to get the technology made? The people who worked weekends to get it sold once it was created? On and on, there are humans at every critical step in the creation of technology and business processes.

At Hoffman, we take pride in storytelling; we're a communications agency, after all. And nearly every story has one singular element in common: The human experience. Without that, who's going to read and relate to your story? More importantly, when we shift focus away from humans, we lose our humanity. If I want to earnestly tell my 18-year-old daughter that yes, technology can improve the world, humans need to be front and center for that to be true. We're seeing this with the AI explosion and related concerns: Are we moving toward a future where we entrust non-humans to be in the driver's seat? And what does this huge shift in our society mean for the future?

In the quest for technological innovation, we need to remember humans are behind it all and their compelling stories should be told.

Human-centric PR in cybersecurity

In our work in tech public relations, we run up against this dynamic often: The client has a cool piece of technology or a new product and wants the media to talk about it. Great! We'd love to help. But the tech media landscape is crowded with "check out this latest product" stories. Unless you're Google/Apple/Meta/Amazon, you're going to be fighting against a sea of similar companies, selling similar-sounding stories to the media.

We've worked hard to elevate the human element when it comes to storytelling. The people at the company making the product are what's unique, more so than the product itself. And we've found these "human stories" are what media want and create better outcomes for clients.

An example of this can be found with a client of ours, Trellix, a cybersecurity company resulting from the merger of FireEye and McAfee. Trellix has a large customer base, legacy name recognition, and many other benefits when mapping out a communications strategy. But there were challenges, as there always are, and Trellix was looking for a way to stand out from the competition.

One of the biggest issues facing the security industry is the talent gap. According to industry nonprofit ISC2, there are more than three million unfilled jobs in the industry in the U.S., a problem that has persisted for years. Most security companies want to talk about this problem but don't know how to (or what they are saying is not interesting, unique, or a score of other "well, but" caveats).

Working alongside Trellix, we executed a campaign called "Soulful Work" to gather several ideas on addressing the industry talent gap. This effort encompassed diversity, hiring and talent initiatives, internal training and many other initiatives, both internal- and external-facing. Instead of simply saying "We want to talk about the talent gap," Trellix decided to do something about it. By highlighting its employees internally and driving discussions around the talent gap externally, Trellix created a mini movement. It's this type of thinking that drives continued results and elevates our clients from chasing the "news of the day" or touting the latest product to saying something meaningful.

We were particularly proud of the splash we made outside of traditional media coverage. We collected more than 200 stories centered on "soulful work" at a Trellix event in Las Vegas, our social team leveraged those stories—alongside custom video and other assets—as part of a resource-packed webpage to amplify the mission, all of which led to multiple placements on industry award lists at the end of 2023. Today, the work of PR goes beyond chasing media placements. We can make a dent

in the conversation when we focus on the message and the people, using a blend of traditional PR tactics, as well as social media and other new forms of communication. The reason social media works in today's world is it thrives on humans interacting with one another. It's called "social" media for a reason.

By focusing on the people, Trellix was able to see results. About 100 interns and more than 1,000 new employees from diverse backgrounds joined the company in 2022 and roughly 265 instances of media coverage—and about 120 social media posts—were placed under the Soulful Work umbrella.

Stories tie us together

The above example is just one of many that tell the story of how we try to put people first, regardless of client or technology or the specific goals of a project. We try to look at the entire business ecosystem: from CEOs and founders to engineers, developers, end users and everyone in between. These are people with lived experiences and reaching them—reaching anyone—is about relating to each other and finding that shared humanity.

That's storytelling. Everything else is just noise.

As we face an uncertain future—where the ramifications of the technology we're creating are unclear and constantly changing—we can lean on one of the oldest forms of human communication: storytelling. And every story—from fables and myths to sci-fi epics and stand-up comedy bits—is a human one, a way to connect with one another and say "Hey, you're not alone." I don't see AI replacing that anytime soon.

The next time you find yourself struggling with a spokesperson or an interpersonal problem or maybe even just trying to get to know someone, try asking, "So what's your story?" How someone interprets and answers will tell you more than any other bit of small talk. Humans are natural storytellers and when we embrace that, wonderful things happen.

Gerard LaFond is Managing Director, North America, at The Hoffman Agency. ○



Gerard LaFond

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Why I love public relations

Just a few reasons why the public relations industry is the place to be.

By Art Stevens

I've been in the public relations industry for many years. I won't tell you exactly how many, but my lunch last week with Woodrow Wilson was excellent.

In the dynamic world of communication and connection, few professions offer the exhilarating blend of creativity, strategy and human interaction quite like public relations. As someone deeply entrenched in this field, I find myself continually captivated by its multifaceted nature and the endless opportunities it presents. I had the privilege of founding a public relations agency called LobsenzStevens. My experience there contributed to the realization that there was nothing that could match the practice of public relations as a career. Here are some of the reasons why I absolutely love having been a part of the public relations industry.

First and foremost, PR allowed me to be a storyteller. Every brand, every organization and every individual has a unique narrative waiting to be shared with the world. And PR professionals have the privilege of shaping and amplifying these stories, whether it's crafting compelling press releases, designing engaging social media campaigns or organizing memorable events. It's incredibly rewarding to see how a well-told narrative can resonate with audiences, evoke emotions and, ultimately, influence perceptions.

Furthermore, PR is all about building and nurturing relationships. In an age where authentic connections are more

valuable than ever, the ability to establish trust and rapport is indispensable. Forging partnerships with media outlets, collaborating with influencers and engaging with stakeholders all present opportunities to cultivate meaningful connections that drive mutual benefit. These relationships not only enhance the success of PR initiatives but also contribute to a rich tapestry of professional and personal connections that enrich my life.

Another aspect of PR that I adore is its fast-paced and ever-evolving nature. In this field, no two days are alike, and no challenge is insurmountable. From crisis management to trendspotting, PR professionals are constantly on their toes, adapting to changes in the media landscape and devising innovative strategies to stay ahead of the curve. The exhilarating rush of working under pressure and the satisfaction of overcoming obstacles fuel my passion for this dynamic industry.

Moreover, PR offers a platform for creativity and innovation to thrive, be it brainstorming bold publicity stunts, designing eye-catching visual assets or crafting compelling messaging. PR professionals have the freedom to unleash their creativity in countless ways. This blend of artistry and strategy allows them to flex their creative muscles while delivering tangible results that make a real impact.

Beyond the thrill of creativity, PR also provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment. At its core, PR is about shaping percep-

tions, driving positive change and making a difference in the world. It doesn't matter if it's promoting worthy causes, advocating for social justice or championing sustainability initiatives, PR professionals have the power to amplify voices and effect meaningful change. Knowing that my work has contributed to causes that deeply matter to me fills me with a profound sense of purpose and drives me to push boundaries and exceed expectations.

Last—but certainly not least—PR is a profession that thrives on collaboration and camaraderie. In an industry where teamwork is paramount, the bonds forged with colleagues, clients and industry peers are invaluable. Whether it's celebrating successes, navigating challenges or simply bouncing ideas off one another, the sense of camaraderie within the PR community is unparalleled. These relationships not only enhance the quality of work but also make every day in the office or home a joyous and fulfilling experience.

The public relations industry is a vibrant tapestry woven with threads of creativity, connection and purpose. As someone who has found their passion in this dynamic field, I'm continually inspired by the opportunities it presents and the impact it enables me to make. From crafting captivating stories to forging meaningful relationships, PR offers a unique blend of challenges and rewards that make every day an adventure worth embracing.

Art Stevens is Managing Partner of The Stevens Group. ○



Art Stevens

NYC PR firms largest slice of O'Dwyer's rankings

By John O'Dwyer

New York City PR firms make up the largest slice of O'Dwyer's 147 firm overall ranking with 32 of 39 in the New York/New Jersey area either calling Manhattan their home or having a presence there.

Edelman (\$241.5 million) takes Gotham's top spot followed by 5W PR (\$61.6 million) and Finn Partners (\$60.5 million).

PAN Communications (\$28.9 million) edged out Inkhouse (\$26.9 million) in Boston metro area with Matter Communications (\$23.5 million) coming in third out of 12.

D.C. area's top dog is Edelman (\$93.2 million) followed by newcomer to the

rankings Avog (\$89.3), Spectrum (\$80 million) and 14 more hailing from Alexandria and Arlington, VA across the Potomac River to Silver Spring and Annapolis, MD and up to Baltimore.

Twenty-two firms cover the Southeast from North Carolina down to Florida. French|West|Vaughan (\$40.1 million), which makes Raleigh, NC its home, continues multi-year reign at the top of this ranking followed by Jackson Spalding (\$34.7 million) and Edelman in Atlanta (\$25.8).

Midwest ranking shows 29 total with 14 in Chicago, including chart-topper Edelman (\$100.9 million). Columbus, Ohio-

based Fahlgren Mortine (\$39.2 million) and APCO's Chicago office (\$28.6 million) round out the top three Midwest firms.

Tinseltown's top star is Edelman's LA office (\$56.9 million) followed by Davies (\$11.9 million) in Santa Barbara and Lee Andrews (\$10.7 million) leading the 16 firms in the Los Angeles area.

Up the coast in San Francisco Edelman's office (\$37.3 million), Highwire (\$35.7 million) and The Hoffman Agency in San Jose make up the top three among 12 area firms.

Forty firms with locations in cities throughout California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Colorado and Arizona make up the western cities ranking. ○



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Since 2003, New York City-based 5W Public Relations (5WPR) has worked with widely known and emerging brands, corporations, and high-profile individuals. Our practice areas include Consumer Products & Brands, Food & Beverage, Health & Wellness, Beauty, Apparel & Accessories, Home & Housewares, Travel & Hospitality, Entertainment & Sports, Corpo-

rate, Financial Communications, Technology, Public Affairs & Government Relations, Nonprofit, Crisis Communications, Events, and Digital & Social Media. We have a 360-degree approach to PR, social media, branding, and digital marketing that delivers game-changing results to our clients. Our 250+ tenacious and creative communications practitioners develop and execute creative campaigns that connect our clients with their target audiences in memorable ways. Every aspect of programming is designed to impact our clients' bottom lines, bringing leading businesses a resourceful, bold, and results-driven approach to communication.

5WPR's notable clients include GNC Holdings, G-SHOCK, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Axiom Space, Cirrus Nexus, L'Oreal, The Pioneer Woman, iDEAL Semiconductor, Integral Ad Science, Samsung SmartThings, Zeta Global, and Ethique. We were recognized as a Top Places to Work in Communications 2024 by Ragan's and named to the 2024 DigiDay WorkLife Employer of the Year list; and our innovative

work has been awarded Female Executive of the Year; Consumer Product PR Campaign of the Year; Business-to-Business Campaign of the Year; and Travel & Tourism Campaign of the Year.

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Avoq (uh-VOKE), born of the 2023 merger of Subject Matter and Kivvit, offers strategic communications, issue advocacy and creative content from one insights-driven firm. Our integrated company embraces an ethos of creative advocacy—informed thinking, fresh perspectives and unique solutions—to drive outcomes. Each company brought decades of experience and unique strengths to form a complementary business. We've further enhanced our service offerings and created more value for clients by integrating Subject Matter's government relations work and creative advocacy mission with Kivvit's digital, data and communications resources. The result is a well-rounded and robust firm capable of landing front-page stories, producing Su-



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per Bowl ads and driving policy change at all levels of government.

With unrivaled insight into our audience and their behavior, we’re able to draw on our expertise in helping clients break through the noise and achieve results—spanning advertising, public affairs, strategic communications, media relations, government relations, digital strategy, narrative building, website and app development, research and data analysis.

As we’ve grown, we have prioritized a boutique experience for clients so that they stay close to our senior leadership while getting the benefits of a full-service firm. Our staff includes former press secretaries, chief of staffs, chief marketing officers, journalists and even published authors. Our talent leverages these experiences to inform the most successful approaches for our clients.

THE BLISS GROUP

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Janine Savarese, CEO, NextTech Communications, a Bliss Group company
Gloria Vanderham, CEO, Bliss Bio Health, a Bliss Group company

The Bliss Group is a marketing communications agency that blends data science with the art of storytelling to target priority audi-

ences with precision, empathy, and purpose. We discover the insights that bring change to life for organizations across the healthcare, financial, technology, business and professional sectors. Our work is about building value that echoes in the minds of stakeholders and the marketplace. With each narrative and every strategy, we employ deep intelligence, rich industry experience and an unwavering commitment to excellence to transform brands into beacons of influence and impact. Clients include some of the most respected names in the industries we serve: BDO, BILL, CFP Board, CVS Health and Aetna, DaVita, Exponent Women, Ford Foundation, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, KeyCorp, Korn Ferry, Kotter, Morgan Stanley, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, Nationwide, NFP, RapidRatings, Stanley, Black & Decker and West Monroe. Want to learn more? Contact us at dstapleton@TheBlissGrp.com.

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Boardroom Communications (BoardroomPR) is a full-service public relations and integrated marketing agency, leveraging the skills of our staff of journalists, PR and marketing professionals and multi-media specialists to provide visibility across numerous platforms. Our creative solutions increase awareness and understanding, establish credibility and ultimately improve business.

BoardroomPR bridges traditional and new media, combining print, television and radio media with excellent digital expertise in website development, social media management and email campaigns. We incorporate research, search engine optimization, pay-per-click and online reputation management, video production and offer branding capabilities, consisting of logo, graphic design, copywriting and video production.

Representative clients: Alper JCC, Associated Builders and Contractors East Florida, BTT Corp., Concord Wilshire, Crane Tech, Development Specialists, Easton Group, Ecowize USA, Encore Capital Management, Fiske & Co. CPAs, Florida’s Childrens First, Florida East Coast Realty, Florida Peninsula Insurance Co., Geis, Gloria Gates Care, Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Illustrated Properties, IStar Financial, J.M. Family, JAFCO, KW Property Management, Klotz Group, The Keyes Company, Lynd Companies, Marshall Dennehey, Miller Construction, Minto Communities, Nason Yeager, Pebb Enterprises, Plantation Walk, Pulte Group, RKW Residential, Rivergate Companies, Rentyl Resorts, SSRGA, Salato, Senolytix, Shutts, South Motors, South Florida Manufacturers Assoc., SRF Ventures, Standard Cos., Summit Broadband, Forman Capital, Tricera Capital, Tropical Financial Credit Union, U.S. Construction, Wexford Real Estate and Yacht Haven.

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— Continued on page 64

BOSPAR

Continued from page 63

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**Chris Boehlke, Curtis Sparrer,
Tom Carpenter, Principals**

Tired of reading the same basic agency descriptions over and over? Us too.

Let's talk about what really matters: results.

Bospar is the only agency named one of *Fortune's* Most Innovative Companies.

Fast Company included us in its "Brands That Matter" list.

Financial Times says we're one of the 500 Fastest-Growing Companies in the Americas.

PRWeek awarded us for "Best Consumer Launch" and "Best Promotional Event."

PRNews placed us among its "Elite Top 100 Agencies" for 2024.

And yes, we're one of *O'Dwyer's* Top 50 in Tech PR!

Why Bospar? Because we know what it takes to secure transformative coverage. We know how to craft and deliver stories that matter—right now—and how to be "politely pushy" to ensure those stories are seen, heard and read by the right audiences.

We've also been all-remote since before it was cool—a model that enabled Bospar to build the most strategic, responsive and delightful team of media, social and content experts in the industry.

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Cognito is a specialist communications & marketing agency working at the intersection of finance, technology and the climate transi-



Based in midtown Manhattan, Cognito's management team includes (L-R) Sam Barber, Taylor Fenske, Andrew Marshall, Jade Bestley, Angela Byrne and Doug Hesney.

tion. With 85+ consultants deeply connected in markets across North America, Europe, DACH & APAC, we collaborate with targeted media, influencers, clients, academics and partners.

Client partners rely on Cognito to help manage different levels of reputations, handle heavy issues, become industry disrupters and build true value in complex and competitive markets. As an agency, our strength is our diversity in client specialization. Clients trust our deep knowledge of financial markets and technology—a strength that is supported by our differences. We bring together perspectives from across generations, geographies and channels. Across our team we have worked as seasoned communications professionals and agency leaders, as well as bankers, journalists or social media influencers.

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Founded in 1991, Coyne PR is a leading independent public relations firm in the United States, thriving in the global communications landscape. Our firm is committed to excellence and innovation and delivers impactful strategies and creative solutions for some of the world's most prestigious brands. Our team of more than 150 professionals, based in vibrant New York and New Jersey offices, collaborates across a network spanning 115 cities, 49 countries, and six continents, thanks to our partnership with The Worldcom Public Relations Group. At Coyne PR, we pride ourselves on navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving media environment, ensuring our clients achieve their communication goals with precision and flair. Our work, recognized with over 1,000 industry awards, reflects our dedication to creativity, strategic planning, and exceptional service.

To discover how Coyne PR can elevate your brand's message and connect with global audiences, visit www.coynepr.com.

Clients Include: AbsoluteCare, American Petroleum Institute, Arla Foods, ASPCA, Bausch Health, Bayer Healthcare, Bimbo Bakeries USA, BMW of North America, Casio America, Chiquita Brands, Colonial Pipeline, Community Coffee, Covanta, Del Monte Foods, Edible Brands, Eggland's Best, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Geneo, GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare, Haply Robotics, HelloFresh, Hemmings, Hilton, Holcim Building Envelope, Horizon Group USA, Humana, Indeed, International Code Council, Jerome Alexander, Just Born Quality Confections, KISS, Kobrand Corp., Kura Sushi, L'Oreal USA, Labcorp, LIV Golf, MDLive, Merchants Fleet, Midea, Mindreader, Mohegan Sun, Naterra International, Ollie's, Orangetheory Fitness, Otsuka Pharmaceuticals, Outrigger Hospitality Group, Owens Corning, Pacira BioSciences, Perrigo, Prestige Brands, PXG Golf, Scenic, Shell Oil Company, Signature Wafers, Signify, Spin Master, StarKist, Stellantis, Stryker Orthopaedics, Truckstop, TYR Sport, Ubenwa Health, University of Virginia, V Foundation and VTech.

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The Crosby team is passionate about helping clients Inspire Actions That Matter™—actions that positively impact people’s lives and contribute to the greater good.

Now in its 50th year, Crosby helps clients make powerful connections with their customers, constituents, and communities to shape attitudes, inspire behavior change, and motivate action. The firm’s award-winning campaigns, which integrate paid, earned, shared and owned media, have touched the lives of virtually everyone in America.

The firm has specialized practices in Healthcare, Government, Non-profits and Causes, and Military and Veterans. Clients include the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), Dept. of Defense/Military OneSource, Kaiser Permanente, OrganDonor.gov, Peace Corps, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Social Security Administration, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, USAA Educational Foundation, and The Wallace Foundation.

Crosby is a Google Premier Partner, #22 on *O’Dwyer’s* national ranking of PR firms and #10 for healthcare PR, and a member of the PR Council, American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As), and Diversity Action Alliance. The firm has offices in Maryland’s state capital of Annapolis and in Washington, D.C. To see case studies and capabilities, visit www.crosbymarketing.com.

EDELMAN

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Crosby’s leadership team includes (L to R): Anna Zawislanski, EVP, Government Practice Leader; Pam Atkinson, EVP, Director of Connection Planning; David Butler, EVP, Multimedia Production; Denise Aube, EVP, Healthcare Practice Leader; Raymond Crosby, President & CEO; Amy Hitt, EVP, Director of Operations; Suresh John, EVP, Digital Strategy & Analytics; and Rob Schnapp, Executive Creative Director.

www.edelman.com

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

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Fahlgren Mortine is an integrated communications company helping brands engage in ways that are precise and meaningful. Locations include Columbus (headquarters), Cleveland and Dayton, Ohio; Boise, Idaho; Denver, Colo. and New York City.

The agency is a member of the global IPREX network.

Industry expertise includes B2B, building products, CPG, economic development, energy, healthcare, higher education, manufacturing, logistics, retail, technology and tourism.

Fahlgren Mortine helps brands get to precisely what matters using a powerful combination of data, design and creativity. Doing work that dares to make a difference and remaining accountable for getting measurable results is one of the many reasons clients choose to stay with the company at a tenure 182% longer than industry average.

Fahlgren Mortine regularly earns Best Place to Work and Agency of the Year honors from various trade organizations, as well as industry-specific recognition for campaign excellence.

TURNER, a travel, tourism and active lifestyle public relations agency, is a Fahlgren Mortine company.

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When Peter Finn founded FINN Partners more than a decade ago, his vision was to build a world-class, best-place-to-work agency with a heart and conscience, that any major client around the world would be proud to have as a partner. 12 years later, in the wake of seismic changes across business, culture and society, Peter’s original vision has not only been realized; it has accelerated. Thanks to the agency’s values-driven culture, category-leading expertise, and independent model, FINN is a trusted partner to clients in a shifting world, achieving record growth and global powerhouse status as one of Fast Company’s 2024 Most Innovative Companies.

FINN’s values-centric culture has been rocket fuel for the agency’s

growth: serving as a magnet for clients in need of trusted counsel, employees in search of upward career mobility and meaning, and a haven for entrepreneurs eager to tap into the agency's financial stability and global scale.

High growth practice areas included health, consumer, travel, purpose/CSR, technology, financial services, employee engagement and integrated marketing.

With more than 1,400 professionals in the Americas, Europe and Asia, the agency acts as ONE FINN, united by a shared vision, unwavering values, and a relentless commitment to driving positive change.

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

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's largest 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 Global or National Agency of the Year honors over the past 27 years.

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

Prix Productions (L.A.). 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.

In addition to its National Agency of the Year honors, FWV has amassed more than 1,600 PR, advertising and digital marketing awards on behalf of its global roster of blue-chip clients, which includes Wrangler, ABB, Proximo, Melitta, Teen Cancer America, Mitsubishi Electric, N.A. and the N.C. Department of Transportation, among others. It is the most-decorated agency in the history of the Southeastern U.S.

G&S BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

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G&S is an integrated marketing communications agency. We are a team of media strategists, storytellers, marketers, analysts, and creatives who engage audiences and inspire action, resulting in business growth. Our clients are *Fortune* 500, mid-market companies and innovative start-ups that fuel transformation across six key industries. This includes: Advanced Manufacturing & Energy; Agribusiness; Healthcare & Wellness; Home & Building; Landscaping & Outdoor

Living; and, Professional & Financial Services. We offer a range of specialized services including: Strategy & Insights; Branding; Public Relations; Social Media; Marketing & Analytics; Content; Advertising; and, Digital Experience.

We are proudly independent and midsized. This keeps us nimble and able to provide the senior counsel our clients need. We are a hybrid operation with three main offices in Chicago, Raleigh, and our headquarters in New York City. As a decades-long partner in PROI Worldwide, we also offer our clients a global network of in-language and in-time zone support across 60 countries and 165 major cities including London, Hong Kong, Frankfurt, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo.

Contact us at www.gscommunications.com to learn how we help innovative companies change the world.

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Celebrating a decade of inno-

vation 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 travel/tourism, food, wine and spirits, franchising and lifestyle sectors 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.

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Emily Borders, **Kathleen Gratehouse** and **Carol Carrubba**, Principals

Highwire is an inclusive strategic communications and digital marketing partner designed for category leaders and challengers across the technology and healthcare sectors. Highwire's client portfolio includes leaders in enterprise and B2B technology, healthcare, AI, cybersecurity, energy and financial services. In healthcare, clients span MedTech, diagnostics, primary care, behavioral health, remote care platforms and more. Highwire's team is composed of veteran communicators, marketers and former journalists with deep technical expertise paired with expansive industry knowledge.

Highwire's fully integrated programs leverage digital and social media channels, earned media, and editorial and creative services to drive businesses forward.

The agency continues to lead in the communications and marketing sectors by providing innovative, integrated, and high-impact public



Highwire at its 2024 all-agency Kickoff.

Continued on page 68



Better Together! We believe the real magic happens when we work together and build on each other's passions. Among our growing agency team, we foster an environment of community, collaboration and creativity.

HIGHWIRE

Continued from page 67

relations and marketing programs, while maintaining a sustainable and energizing environment for its team members. Highwire is a signatory with the Diversity Action Alliance (DAA) and is committed to expanding diverse representation in our agency and our industry while fostering an inclusive agency environment, where every employee can be seen, heard, and valued.

In 2022, Highwire secured a strategic investment from Shamrock Capital, a Los Angeles-based investment firm specializing in media, entertainment, communications and related sectors to fuel the growth of its integrated communications and digital marketing services. This partnership will enable Highwire to evaluate strategic additions to its healthcare practice as well as further develop its digital marketing services, data analytics, public affairs and corporate communications capabilities.

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Defining communications broadly to include thought leadership, digital marketing, and paid media as well as traditional PR, The Hoffman Agency knows how to differentiate brands and drive sales. With a heritage in the technology sector, the firm's work today cuts across a range of industries.

While campaigns vary by client and industry, all share one theme: the creation of content that reflects the tenets of storytelling. This means developing narratives that prompt journalists to write and target audiences to read—a far cry from the “corporate speak” that satisfies internal stakeholders. The firm applies this same mentality to its talent acquisition and marketing services. The firm is increasingly helping non-tech companies tell tech-led stories.

For clients with global needs, the company operates in Asia Pacific, Europe and the United States. Unlike traditional agencies handicapped by its silo structure, The Hoffman Agency embraces a collaborative approach to implementing multi-country campaigns (don't worship individual office P/L). This leverage of content and thinking across geographies ultimately generates better results.

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Hotwire is a tech PR, communications, and marketing consultancy. Globally, top technology brands partner with us for expert consultancy to scale and support their businesses. Found at the intersection of technology and humanity, our 400+ people in 11 countries weave global experience and local

expertise to define, measure, and repeat success across reputation, relationship, and revenue campaigns.

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HUNTER is an award-winning consumer marketing communications firm frequently celebrated 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. Beginning with research-driven insights, HUNTER executes strategic, integrated programs that build brand equity, increase engagement, and drive measurable business results. 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 to earn valuable positive attention. We are proud to create, place, share and amplify brand narratives for some of the world's best known and most beloved companies.

Founded in 1989 with a specialization in food and nutrition, HUNTER has expanded organically into adjacent categories as our clients moved on to new sectors and took us with them. In addition to Food + Beverage, leading practice areas now include Technology, Retail, Health + Wellness, Beauty + Personal Care, Wine + Spirits, Home + Travel, and Lifestyle Brands. Our motto is “we earn it,” and at HUNTER we focus on doing so in three key areas: earning consumer attention, earning client relationships, and earning staff dedication. Our creative approach, client service-orientation and val-

ues-driven culture has led to one of the longest average staff tenures in the business and some of the most enduring client relationships including TABASCO® Pepper Sauce, our first client 35 years ago and still a client today.

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Established in 1998, ICR partners with public and private companies to execute strategic communications and advisory programs, and manage complex transactions and corporate events to enhance long-term enterprise value and corporate reputation. The firm's highly-differentiated service model, which pairs capital markets veterans with senior communications professionals, brings deep sector knowledge and relationships to hundreds of clients across more than 20 industry groups. With more

than 400 team members, ICR is one of the largest and most experienced independent communications and advisory firms, maintaining offices in New York, Connecticut, Boston, Baltimore, San Jose, London, and Beijing. Learn more at icrinc.com. Follow us on LinkedIn and on X at @ICRPR.

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Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington,
D.C. and London

Jamie Diaferia, Founder & CEO
Zach Olsen, President
Isabel Podda, COO

Infinite Global is an award-winning strategic communications agency advising a wide range of domestic and international clients facing difficult scenarios in which reputational, legal and commercial risk is high.

We advise organizations and individuals, providing counsel and tactical support to mitigate risk and protect reputations when it matters most. We have broad sector experience managing our clients' reputational risk, often involving active litigation, regulatory and political pressure, media attention and heightened public scrutiny. Infinite has an established data breach response practice that helps clients across a range of industries—including financial and legal services, education and healthcare—mitigate, prepare for and respond to the risks endemic to housing sensitive data.

Our work spans each phase of the crisis lifecycle: from pre-crisis preparation and planning, to rapid crisis response and post-crisis reputational repair.

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JPA Health is a full-service, integrated marketing communications agency that is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in New York, Boston and London. We work exclusively in the health sector with a team that is laser focused on helping people live healthier lives. Our passion can be summed up in one word: Connect'ability, a term that JPA coined to reflect how we "bring it together" for our clients.

In 2023, JPA Health introduced its One Health practice group, backed by subject matter experts who understand the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. We now offer clients a comprehensive suite of marcomm services, including stakeholder engagement, advocacy, leadership development, and risk preparedness.

In September 2023, JPA acquired True North Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in commercial, clinical, and medical affairs. With expertise in digital acceleration and customized predictive analytics, as well as solutions powered by AI and natural language processing, True North is now fully integrated into the JPA Health team, offering our clients end-to-end research, marketing, and commercialization solutions.

Clients Include: ACOG, American Assn. of Clinical Endocrinology, American Assn. of Immunologists, American Gastroenterological Assn., American Kidney Fund, Amicus Therapeutics, Anxiety UK, Applied Therapeutics Inc., Arvinas, Ascendis Pharma Endocrinology, Assn. of Physicians of Great Britain and Ireland, Astrazeneca Pharmaceutical, Astria Therapeutics, Inc., Ayla Pharmaceuticals, Be The Match, BioMendics, LLC, Blue Circle Health, BlueWind Medical, Cardurion Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (FMO), Checkpoint Surgical, CND Life Sciences, College of American Pathologists, Community Catalyst, Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation, Edelman, Eli Lilly and Company Limited, FirstRespondersFirst, Fors Marsh Group, Foundation for Podiatric Education, Glaukos Corporation, Global Allergy and Airways Patient Platform, GSK, Hendall Inc.,

ICF Incorporated, LLC, IDEXX Laboratories, Inc., IgGenix, Intuitive Surgical, Kroger Health, Leadiant Bioscience, Leapfrog Group, Living Beyond Breast Cancer, LUGPA, LUNgevity Foundation, Mass General Brigham Incorporated, Medicines360, Merck Sharp and Dohme, Milestone Pharmaceuticals, National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA), Nobelpharma America, LLC, O'Neill Institute for National & Global Health Law (Georgetown University), Orexo US, Inc., Public Health Accreditation Board, Rhythm Pharmaceuticals, Sage Therapeutics, Inc., SAMHSA, Sanofi Genzyme, SIGA Technologies, Society for Women's Health Research, Takeda, The George Washington University—Workplace Change Collaborative, The Physicians Foundation, The Sheri & Les Biller Family Foundation, University of Maryland College Park, US Pharmacopeia, Vibrant and Wondros.

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Named America's #1 PR Agency (Small Firm) (Ragan's), the #1 Healthcare PR Agency in America (Ragan's) and the firm PRSA San Francisco named "Agency of the Year," San Francisco-based Landis Communications Inc. is celebrating 33 years in business. Landis also is a two-time Gold Quill IABC Award winner, a PRSA Silver Anvil national award winner and has been named a top U.S. Social Media, Reputation Management and Media Relations Agency by TopPRAgencies.com.

Landis is an integrated public relations, digital/social media and marketing communications agency with clients in health care, technology, sustainability/environmental science and consumer goods and services. Landis' services include: public relations, marketing, content marketing, social media, digital marketing, advertising, email marketing, video production, crisis

Continued on page 70

LANDIS COMMUNICATIONS

Continued from page 69

communications, media and presentation training and more. Clients include AEye, Altas Health, Align Surgical Associates, Amgen, Centre for Neuro Skills, Stanford Blood Center, UCSF, Global Alzheimer's Platform Foundation, Save the Redwoods League, Peninsula Open Space Trust, Sonoma Land Trust, Together Bay Area, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Graton Casino Resort, SF Travel, London & Partners and more.

LCI is a certified member of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, is an official Corporate Diversity Supplier and is certified as a Small Business Enterprise by the City of San Francisco. LCI is the San Francisco member agency of the Public Relations Global Network, with 50+ affiliate agencies worldwide.

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Mike Schroeder, Senior VP, New Clients + Frontier Tech Lead

LaunchSquad is an award-winning PR and creative communications agency with a talent-rich team across the US, specializing in crafting stories for innovative, fast-growing, change-the-world companies.



The Landis team.

For 24 years, LaunchSquad has helped clients raise billions in funding, fueled IPOs/exits, and accelerated countless upstarts from unknown brands to market leaders. Their expertise spans consumer-facing and B2B clients in various industries, including climate/energy, AI, healthcare, transportation, consumer and enterprise technology, entertainment/media, e-commerce, finance, retail and more.

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Norah Lawlor, Founder, Principal & CEO

Lawlor Media Group is a full-service, luxury lifestyle Public Relations and Marketing Agency with over 20 years experience in successfully meeting the needs of clients in diverse arenas including Beauty, Health & Wellness, Charity Philanthropy & Not-for-Profit, Entertainment and the Arts, Technology, Fashion, FMCG, Commercial and Residential Real Estate development, Travel hospitality and night life.

Lawlor Media Group's expertise covers the entire spectrum of strategic Public Relations and marketing development—from branding, marketing, buzz building, crisis

management, investor relations through political communications.

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Lou Rena Hammond, Founder
Stephen Hammond, CEO

Lou Hammond Group (LHG) is an award-winning firm specializing in the key industries of travel, economic development, destinations, culinary/spirits, real estate, lifestyle, and technology. With offices in New York, Atlanta, Charleston, Denver, Houston, Miami, and Tampa, the agency has 45 employees offering brand development, public relations, digital strategy, social media management and analysis, creative programming, and marketing strategy.

Celebrating 40 years, LHG is an industry leader providing superior, results-driven services to clients globally. Founded by industry trailblazer Lou Hammond, the agency takes pride in remaining fiercely independent and departing from business-as-usual. With quality and trust as guiding principles, LHG has developed a proven yet agile and strategic approach earning it recognition as one of the nation's most award-winning marketing and communications firms.

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Lowe Group celebrated 20 years serving asset managers, ETFs and mutual funds, RIAs and financial advisory firms, private equity and other alternative-investment managers, fintechs, ESG/sustainable and impact investment firms. Our financial PR services include media outreach, content marketing, reputation management, crisis communications and media training. LG Digital services include web strategy and consulting, SEO, advertising, email and marketing automation, sales enablement and analytics.

Lowe Group helps investment organizations reach their target audiences—with high-impact PR and digital marketing. We help clients grow awareness of products, services and leaders and build and maintain credibility and visibility. Proving the measurable benefits of the impact of our work is our specialty. Our experienced financial professionals hail from investment management firms, hedge funds and financial journalism.

Subscribe to the Low Down Blog for weekly commentary on timely investment PR and digital marketing trends. And our Insider's List of Investment Podcast is regularly updated with recommended financial podcasts.

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Results start with us. MediaSource is a certified women-owned health care communications agency that helps organizations meet business goals by combining storytelling with strategy. With a 25-year history of elevating healthcare brands across the U.S., our team understands the realities of the healthcare industry with proven results that drive patients, recruitment, reputation and business. That's right; Campaigns that actually drive business to your healthcare organization! There's a reason why we were named Best Healthcare Agency by Ragan Communications for an unprecedented four years in a row. We know health care. Our award-winning collection of veteran public relations experts, producers and strategic analysts



MediaSource President and Founder, Lisa Arledge Powell.

have the expertise to take your projects to the next level. Working as true partners, our team is known to quickly align with internal teams for collaboration that moves the needle for respected organizations.

You've probably seen many of our clients' stories in the news, including work for The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Nationwide Children's Health, Orlando Health, National Jewish Health, El Camino Health, Northwell Health and many more.

Let's get to work discovering and creating stories that will help you reach your goals. To learn about our PR, thought leadership content,

video storytelling and other specialties, visit mediasourcetv.com.

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As one of the leading indepen-

dent communications agencies in the nation, Moore's team of 50+ accomplished marketers, designers, advertisers and business strategists works with for-profit, non-profit and government organizations across the U.S. to build trusted influence, deliver impactful results and achieve goals. Headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida with market hubs in West Palm Beach, Miami, Denver and New Orleans, Moore is consistently ranked among the nation's top 50 and the world's top 200 PR firms.

Moore's focused practice areas include public relations, marketing communications, digital, paid media, data strategy, crisis communications and multicultural communications. Moore represents top brands in a variety of sectors such as Ford Motor Company, Takeda, the City of West Palm Beach, the National Association of Workforce Boards, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, Florida Department of Agriculture, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation and more.

With 30+ years in business, Moore's 97% client retention rate among current clients and 79% revenue growth over the past five years are contributing factors to Moore's success. With a continued focus on corporate culture, talent acquisition and talent development, Moore has garnered an impressive 92% employee retention rate. In fact, nearly 25% of Moore team members have been with the agency for 10 years or more.



Moore consistently ranks among the top 50 agencies in the U.S. and top 200 in the world, and recently added a Webby to its trophy case of industry awards. But leaders, team members and clients say it's Moore's workplace culture that truly sets the agency apart.

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Matt Kucharski, President

Padilla is a full-service agency that transforms brands and organizations through strategically creative communications. Our work across a range of industry sectors is consistently recognized by the *PRWeek* Awards, *PRovoke* IN2 *SABRE* Awards and *PRSA Anvil* Awards, among others. Padilla operates in seven cities in the U.S. through its family of brands, which includes *SHIFT* (performance communications), *FoodMinds* (food and nutrition affairs) and *Joe Smith* (brand strategy). As an *AVENIR GLOBAL* company and a founding member of the *Worldcom* Public Relations Group, the agency provides services to clients through 155 offices worldwide. Transform with purpose at *PadillaCo.com*.

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Gary Torpey, Chief Financial Officer
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Nia Evans, Managing Dir., UK

PAN is the brand-to-demand agency that empowers possibility for B2B tech and healthcare companies worldwide. Forged from PR, we are storytellers at heart with deep industry experience and a strategic, data-driven mindset. We move ideas across media, people to action, campaigns to results, and brands to the next stage of their journey. Our special sauce is a mix of dedicated senior leaders, creative makers, everyday superstars, and analytical minds that turn data intelligence into key insights.

After nearly 30 years in business, we are specialists in the art

of telling brand stories, and experts in the science of marketing and driving demand. Recognized as a 2x Tech Agency of the Year and recent Data-Driven Agency of the Year, we thrive at the forefront of disruption and help mid- to late-stage brands navigate their most critical transformational moments.

Come see what's possible.

Clients Include: Algolia, Amdocs, Apptio, athenahealth, Aurora Solar, Bitdefender, Booz Allen, Botify, Brightside Health, CivicPlus, ClosedLoop AI, Clarify Health, Commure, DISCO, iCIMS, LeanTaaS, Loyal Health, Nuance, OMI, One Stream Software, Powin, Salucro Healthcare Solutions, Thales, atX, Toshiba/Americas and UPS Capital.

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Prosek Partners builds—and protects—the top brands in business. We are a certified Woman-Owned Business and among the largest independent, integrated communications and marketing firms globally.

Specializing in providing a full range of communications solutions to financial and professional services companies, Prosek delivers business impact through an unexpected level of passion, creativity and marketing savvy. Services include media relations, thought leadership, social and digital media, public affairs, investor relations, financial communications, transaction services, crisis communications and issues management, content creation, conference support, publishing, media training and more.

Prosek's strategic branding and integrated marketing arm—*Prophecy* by Prosek—offers brand strategy, award-winning design, digital and advertising capabilities.

Prosek has been named *PRovoke Media's* "Global and North American Financial Agency of the Year" and a top-five global M&A and shareholder activism agency.

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Pugh & Tiller PR helps B2B businesses and organizations reach, engage, and influence the right audiences in order to achieve their communications and business objectives.

Staffing accounts with senior-level executives, we have developed a lasting reputation for getting results by using an integrated approach to communications throughout our 15-year history. Our services include branding and identity development, media and analyst relations, social media, crisis communications, integrated and digital marketing services—all anchored by strategic communications planning.

Industry focuses include: commercial real estate, healthcare, insurance and employee benefits, professional services, cybersecurity and technology. We also specialize in helping international companies establish and maintain brand visibility and awareness in the U.S. market, as well as developing and executing communications plans to support M&A activity.

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The communications landscape is in constant flux, rife with challenges—and opportunities—for brands. Racepoint Global (RPG) is an independent integrated communications agency that helps

tech-forward clients succeed by shaping and leading the conversations that matter.

RPG crafts customer-centric narratives and creates multi-channel communications strategies that influence, engage, and reach target audiences in authentic ways. For 20+ years, RPG's work has established competitive differentiation and driven business impact.

RPG delivers a range of services, including foundational brand development work, earned media and traditional PR services, employee communications, content development and events, executive visibility and thought leadership, and paid media. RPG creates award-winning client work and is consistently ranked among the top technology agencies.

To learn more about how we can help you shape conversations that matter, visit racepointglobal.com.

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Ruder Finn is one of the world's largest independent global communications and integrated marketing agencies. Founded in 1948, Ruder Finn has defined and redefined PR for over 75 years, shaping communications that moves industry-defining brands, companies, and leaders from what's now to what's next. Ruder Finn provides clients with bold strategies based on a global perspective and localized market knowledge that redefine leadership, reimagine the marketplace, and rethink customer experiences. The agency is organized around five core areas of expertise—Healthcare, Technology, Consumer, Leadership and Workplace—with innovative tech incubator *RF TechLab* providing cutting-edge predictive analytics, AI-powered creative hub *RF Studio53* offering breakthrough creative, and specialized teams delivering customer-focused digital engagement. Ruder Finn has offices across four continents including the U.S., Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Wholly owned agencies and offerings within Ruder Finn Group include: Ruder Finn Inc., RF Stu-



Slide Nine co-Owners (L to R): Somerville, Parker and Mulvany.

dio53, RF Engage, Touchdown, Peppercomm, RF Comunicad, RF Relate, Mantis, jacobstahl, Flightpath, Atteline, Pandan Social and RF Bloom. For more information visit www.ruderfinn.com.

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Whitney Somerville, co-Owner and CXO

Slide Nine is a modern integrated marketing and communications agency that's 100% women-owned. We bring brands and audiences closer through storytelling and problem solving. Our team is committed to delivering outstanding results and an unmatched client experience. With a core focus on brands that propel our economy, we have deep experience in energy, healthcare, agriculture,

The July issue of *O'Dwyer's* will profile Travel & Tourism PR firms. If you would like to be profiled, contact Editor Steve Barnes at 646/843-2089 or steve@odwyerpr.com

technology, manufacturing, professional services and more. For more information, visit www.slidenine.com

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Spectrum Science is an independent, integrated healthcare and

scientific marketing, communications, media and strategic services firm focused on the pharmaceutical, biotech and broader life science industry. Purposefully structured to incentivize collaboration over silos, Spectrum's strategy-first, interwoven model paired with an unmatched depth of scientific expertise ensures every client's challenge is met with smart solutions that yield powerful results.

Following the receipt of strategic investment from Knox Lane to kick off 2023, Spectrum went on to increase its active client roster by 20%, bolstering work across all areas of expertise, including product and corporate communications, advertising, clinical trial experience and medical communications.

The acquisition of CrowdPharm and Hot Iron Health in late November 2023 solidified Spectrum's growing work in promotional engagement and advertising, and formally established the company's strategic advertising and consulting pillar. Their February 2024 acquisition of Continuum Clinical further amplified their patient recruitment capabilities, adding to the company's strategic pillars of services—all designed to meet evolving client needs and demands of our industry. These pillars include:

- Scientific Communications, providing public relations, corporate communications, social media, issues management, advocacy engagement, paid media, earned me-

dia and medical communications.

- Clinical Trial Experience, focused on patient engagement, recruitment and retention, paid media and social media.

- Advertising & Consulting, providing advertising, brand marketing and strategic advisory services
- Spectrum Science Europe, based in London, providing integrated communications solutions, including public relations, corporate communications, patient advocacy engagement and more.

Structuring their business in pillars reinforces their depth of expertise in these areas, helps clients to better understand what they offer and allows their staff to shine in their respective specialty, all while still benefiting from shared points of connectivity across strategy, creativity and innovation under their single P&L.

Not limited by geography, Spectrum works seamlessly across offices in DC, New York and Chicago—with global reach through Global Health Marketing & Communications (GHMC), the largest independent health and science communications agency partnership worldwide.

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Suzanne Parsonage Miller, President & Founder

SPM is an award-winning PR, media relations, influencer, social, franchise development and crisis management agency that creates impactful campaigns and meaningful results. Our proactive, innovative approach is rooted in strategic thinking, data and trends to provide game-changing support for our clients' businesses.

Celebrating 25 years in business this year, SPM helps build and protect food, restaurant, retail, franchise and lifestyle brands. 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.

Continued on page 74

SPM COMMUNICATIONS

Continued from page 73

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.

Our "No Jerks" philosophy fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect among company leaders, team members and clients that fosters creativity, productivity and strong, long-term relationships.

Clients Include: Alive + Well, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas (pro bono), Calloway's, Camp Bow Wow, Chuck E. Cheese, Goldfish Swim School, Gold's Gym, Huffines Auto Dealerships, Karbach Brewing Co., Kirkland's, La Madeleine, Miller's Ale House, Modern Market, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Peter Piper Pizza, Philz Coffee, Pollo Campero, Shipley Do-Nuts and Utz.

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Stanton provides strategic public relations and integrated communications to clients across a spectrum of industry sectors and sizes, from global firms to mid-size leaders and entrepreneurial enterprises. Clients find a valued, expandable home at our firm because we deliver a unique blend of smart strategy, strong relationships, innovative thinking and first-class execution that produces business-changing results.

With active teams in New York and California and a global network, we support our clients across a variety of communications disciplines including media relations, brand messaging, content development and market-



Co-headquartered in Boston and Chicago, Tier One Partners is an award-winning women-owned full-service PR, content, and digital marketing agency.

ing, executive visibility, thought leadership, digital marketing and social media, reputation & crisis management, and creative and design services. Our deep understanding of the business/financial world and the media covering it allows us to position clients effectively within a broader context.

Stanton's "practitioner model" where our senior professionals spend the vast majority of their time on client work and where teams are custom-built to remove barriers to service makes us flexible and responsive. We ask tough questions, challenge assumptions, and implement bold solutions.

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Stanton Communications, Inc., is a strategic public relations firm providing counsel and program implementation to clients across

the globe. We are fully independent and wholly dedicated to advancing our clients' business goals through creative communication.

For more than 35 years, the firm has enjoyed a reputation for combining serious strategic thinking with service excellence, and for blending insightful strategy with tremendous agility. We build our teams with a balance of talent so clients benefit from the best we have to offer.

Among our clients are some of the world's most successful organizations in multiple industry sectors including energy, technology, hospitality and lifestyle, professional societies and industry associations. We provide a range of services from issue communication and public affairs to strategic communication planning, reputation enhancement, media relations and thought leadership, crisis mitigation and spokesperson preparation.

On behalf of our clients, Stanton Communications has won more than 50 industry awards including multiple Silver Anvils, the public relations profession's highest honor. We are consistently named among the Agency Elite Top 100 in PR News' listing and have been named the Best Small Agency in America by *The Holmes Report*, in addition to multiple citations as one of the Best Places to Work by the *Washington Business Journal*.

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Now in our 20th year, Tier One Partners is an award-winning women-owned full-service PR, content, and digital marketing agency. We work with innovators in B2B and B2C technology, digital health, financial services, energy tech, and manufacturing. From day one, we're committed to earning our clients' trust and executing creative, data-informed programs that catapult them to the forefront of their industries.

The Tier One team is composed of curious self-starters who think beyond the obvious, overcome obstacles, and make communications magic happen. Our agency differentiator is our Agile Insights & Analytics practice, which tracks changing issues and trends. Through daily immersion in news and culture, we uncover

Continued on page 76

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

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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

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

—Robert L. Dilenschneider, The Dilenschneider Group

“A phenomenal job-seeking aid.”

—Marie Raperto, CIMSearch

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

—Henry P. Feintuch, Feintuch Communications

TIER ONE PARTNERS

Continued from page 74

connections and commonalities to authentically position our clients within the business and cultural dialogue. This helps them stay relevant, seize opportunities swiftly, and elevate their brand visibility.

Our clients include innovative organizations such as 24M, fifty-five, 3Pillar Global, Ally Financial, Altair, GHX, CAP Index, and Tango Analytics. Tier One is also a HubSpot certified agency.

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Genna Keller, Founder & co-CEO
404/214-0722 X105

Trevelino/Keller, a growth PR+Mkt firm, delivers a Reputation Marketing [RM] platform that leverages its three core offerings—public relations, growth marketing and creative services. With a balanced client base of emerging, middle market and national companies, it positions itself as an outcome-driven agency with an “agency-earned philosophy”—no long-term contracts, mark-ups, minimum fee requirements and inflation-based fees.

Recognized for having the industry’s best staff retention, having lost two people to agencies in 20 years, it is ranked in the Top 10 in the Southeast as well as #3 among Atlanta-based firms. It operates on Atlanta’s progressive, urban westside along with a presence at Atlanta Tech Village. The firm’s Growth Marketing Division offers a Reputation Marketing-Funnel that differentiates itself in the market, integrating public relations into digital marketing, content marketing and brand marketing capabilities. Its Creative Services Division is sought after for great, but financially approachable brand development, web development, material design, animation and broadcast services.

With eight nationally ranked practice [specialty areas], it’s seeing increased demand in AI-driven technology companies looking

to establish a thought leadership position within market segments like retail, security, crm and more. Innovative environmental startups have also increased in the last year in part as a response to the Climate Solutions Investment Bill. And while the franchise industry continues to manage through increased wages and fickle consumers, the agency is seeing increased demand by fresh, young concepts as well as long-standing brands eager to pivot.

While an independent firm, Trevelino/Keller is recognized, in part, for the dynamic networks it creates to serve clients in a rapidly changing environment. Networks today include: Atlas Alliance, a global network of like-minded boutique firms that deliver in country services in Europe, Asia-Pacific, South America and the Middle East; WheelhouseTK, a consultant network that offers white label services, including video production, research and media planning; and Winepreneurs, an organization that brings entrepreneurs, investors and influencers together to prosper through collaboration.

As part of its ongoing work with Atlanta’s technology ecosystem, Trevelino/Keller continues to manage relationships with organizations supporting startups, including Atlanta Tech Village, Atlanta Tech Angels, Raise Forum, TechAlpharetta as well as the Buckhead Coalition.

Expanding its commitment to small businesses, the firm launched T/K SmallBiz—tksmallbiz.com—to offer creative services to more traditional small businesses. Since 2020, it has served more than 120 small businesses as the preferred marketing provider of Invest Atlanta.

In celebration of its 20th Anniversary, the firm introduced two new staff reward programs—Wild Blue Yonder and Niners. Wild Blue Yonder offers staff a chance at travel around the world, while Niners offers a similar curated travel program for every nine years of service with the firm. Trips taken to date include Puerto Vallarta, Panama, Belize, Lucia, Italy, Napa Valley and Playa Del Carmen with new trips being scheduled somewhere in the wild blue yonder.

TURNER

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Christine Turner, President
Melanie Dennig, EVP
Deb Park, **Malcolm Griffiths**,
Adel Grobler & Naureen Kazi,
Senior Vice Presidents

TURNER represents the world’s best luxury resorts, destinations, spirits, wellness, and outdoor brands. Our tenured teams in New York, Chicago, Denver, Charleston, Portland, and Miami, have unmatched industry experience and deliver nimble, innovative marketing communications strategies, helping brands connect and engage in a smarter, more relevant manner.

We operate with a mindset that prioritizes personalized service within our specialty industries, leveraging resources typically associated with larger agencies and infinitely nimble to problem-solve in unexpected ways. Our coast-to-coast footprint integrates seamlessly with global brands, whether it’s an international hotel launch, an undiscovered destination, or an established outdoor brand looking for its next generation. We craft iconic ideas for heritage brands, emotional experiences for travel destinations, and unexpected stories in the wellness ecosystem. We know when to push the envelope, while ensuring brand priorities are at the forefront. We value our team above all else; we are consistently ranked as a “best place to work”, diversity and inclusivity are our strengths, and giving back is in our DNA.

VIRGO PR

5 W. 20th St., 3rd Flr.
New York, NY 10011
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Kyle Porter, Exec. VP, Mng. Dir.

Virgo PR is a fast-growing, integrated communications firm designed to propel our clients working in emerging industries into the mainstream. We are passionate storytellers whose main objective is to ensure your story gets heard! We accomplish this through a strategic mix of content-driven divisions that work in tandem to

deliver your message to the world through traditional and digital channels. Our team has experience working with organizations of all sizes, from start-ups to public unicorns, and consistently shows our value through delivering for our clients, every time.

ZAPWATER COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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David Zapata, CEO & Founder
Mayra Bacik, CFO
Jenn Lake, Chief Strategy Officer
Amanda ReCupido, COO
Jennifer Barry, Managing Dir.,
Los Angeles
Holly Zawyer, Managing Dir.,
Miami
Stephanie Poquette, SVP, Social
Media & Influencer Mktg.

Zapwater is a creative, award-winning integrated marketing communications agency dedicated to storytelling that connects people and brands throughout the world. Zapwater’s team of passionate professionals develops award-winning communications strategies for both emerging and established brands that exceed expectations. To date, Zapwater has earned over 300 awards, showcasing our expertise in media relations, social media and influencer marketing. In 2023, Zapwater launched CHISPA, its bilingual services division for Latin American clients. Zapwater was named by PProvoke Media as a 2023 North America Best Agency to Work for (Boutique Agency) for the 11th year in a row, and shortlisted for *PRWeek’s* 2023 Outstanding Boutique Agency, PProvoke Media’s Digital Agency of the Year and to the prestigious 2023 PR Net 100 list. Zapwater is also a founding member of the Travel Lifestyle Network, an international network of independent, like-minded marketing communications agencies. For more information, visit zapwater.com, and follow us on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. ●

Intel vet Anderson tapped for Burson tech

Laura Anderson, who rose to VP/GM of Global Communications and Events in a nearly 20-year stint at Intel, will take on the Americas Technology Chair at Burson following the completion of the BCW and H+K merger on July 1. She joined BCW on April 22.



Laura Anderson

At Intel, Anderson was responsible for strategy, content, analyst relations and positioning the company beyond its PC orientation.

She also spent two years at DeepMind AI organization as Senior Communications Advisor and acting Head of Communications.

Anderson was in charge of PR strategy, reputation management and advancing DeepMind's efforts in the life sciences, mathematics, fusion and scientific fields.

She will have the same title at Burson, a WPP unit. ○

Racepoint recruits Palladino as EVP

Racepoint Global has brought on Amy Palladino to oversee its newly launched RPG Prism employee communications and change management services as EVP, Strategic Services.



Amy Palladino

Palladino joins RPG from management consulting company Gartner, where she served as VP, Communications-Research & Advisory. She was previously Managing Director, People & Change at FTI Consulting and Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Heineken. In her new role, Palladino will work to help C-suite executives, human resources and communications leaders handle a rapidly changing workplace. ○

DCI Group hires Feuer for NYC expansion

Washington-based DCI Group has hired *Wall Street Journal* reporter Will Feuer to gain a presence in the New York market.

He covered financial news for the WSJ and also worked as business reporter for the *New York Post* and breaking news at CNBC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The move into the Big Apple is a "natural progression of our extensive experience in effectively representing investors, law firms, and clients in the financial services sector," according to DCI Managing Partners Brian McCabe and Justin Peterson.

DCI in November moved into the Florida market by recruiting AT&T veteran Juan Flores in Tallahassee. He did a 12-year run at AT&T, including a stint as VP-Global Public Affairs. ○

BCW's Guiterman returns to Edelman

Aaron Guiterman will rejoin Edelman's government and PA unit as Head of U.S. Public Affairs on April 29.

Most recently, he served as BCW's Executive VP & Market leader for its Washington office.

During his nine-year stint at Edelman, Guiterman was in charge of energy and industrial policy and chief innovation officer in the firm's government and PA practice.

He also headed digital PA, and was Group Director of Strategy and Planning at Edelman.

Before joining Edelman, Guiterman worked at DDC Advocacy, Glover Park Group, McCann Erickson and Young & Rubicam. ○

Kellanova's Cook drives to GM

George Cook, who was Senior Director of State Government Affairs at Kellanova, has joined General Motors as Midwest Regional Director of State & Local Public Policy.

Prior to Kellanova, the snacks, international cereal and frozen breakfast foods company spun off from Kellogg Co, Cook was Director of Legislative Affairs for Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer.



Will Feuer

Earlier, he did a nine-year stint and exited from Toyota North America as Senior Manager-General Affairs and a three-year run at the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

At GM, Cook reports to VP State and Local Public Policy Kia Floyd. ○



George Cook

Baretz+Brunelle hires ex-Dentons U.S. CEO

Mike McNamara, the former U.S. CEO of Dentons, has joined Baretz+Brunelle, which serves the legal economy, as its first CEO.

He will work aside B&B co-Founders Spencer Baretz and Cari Brunelle.

McNamara spent about 22 years at Dentons, which includes a five-year stint at the helm. He also served on the global management committee and board of directors.

As Dentons' Partner for more than 20 years, McNamara helped guide the firm from its Midwest roots to become the largest global law firm with operations in 80-plus countries.

B+B serves Am Law 100 & 200 law firms, legal boutiques, alternative legal services providers, tech companies, information & analytics operations and private equity firms. ○



Mike McNamara

Citigroup adds Blackrock's Craddock

Citigroup has brought on Blackrock Global CMO Alex Craddock as Chief Marketing and Content Officer, a newly created role, effective in May.

Before coming on board at Blackrock, Craddock was Global CMO, Personal Systems at HP; Head of Global Brand and Product Marketing at Visa; and Group Head of Brand and Marketing at Xerox. ○



Alex Craddock

When the inmates run the asylum

By Fraser Seitel

It's 2024, and everything is cockeyed. Beyoncé, of all people, is topping the country music charts. Hyper-annoying Stephen A. Smith is the highest-paid on-air talent at ESPN. And Donald Trump, Lord help us, is the odds-on favorite to be our next President. The world has gone bananas.



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*.

Which brings us to the hottest question in public relations: Should employees be given a voice in running the organization?

In the old days—before social media and the Internet and Silicon Valley work/life balance companies—the answer was a resounding “no.” You got paid for doing your job, and management got paid for making decisions. Period. Today, it's not that simple.

In the aftermath of COVID remote work, companies have faced pushback from employees about returning full-time to the office. Amazon headquarters employees in Seattle walked out when CEO Andy Jassy had the temerity to ask them to return to the office three days a week. Eager to avoid similar internal dissension, firms from Google to JPMorgan Chase to Skadden have had to compromise on employee attendance.

Adding to newfound employee muscle is the societal push for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) that encourages internal voices to be heard in organizational matters, large and small, from time-off policies to healthy food in breakrooms and vending machines to environmental/social/governance requisites of customers.

While “enlightened”—i.e. timid—management might publicly proclaim the virtues of greater employee participation in corporate decision-making, the truth is that the democratic empowerment of staff signals potential danger for any organization. Here are three reasons why.

Here are three reasons why.

First, NBC

A month ago, NBCUniversal's News Group Chairman Cesar Conde was pleased to announce that NBC had landed Ronna McDaniel, the former head of the Republican Party, as a special contributor.

Ms. McDaniel, an early supporter of Donald Trump's complaint of an unfair election, would, according to Mr. Conde, add a unique, insider's perspective on the Republican Party. Or so she would have, had the prima donna, left-leaning employees at NBC not thrown a hissy fit at the new Republican in their midst.

First, Chuck Todd, appearing as a guest on the “Meet the Press” show from which he was reportedly ushered out as host, registered his objection to the new hire. Former Republican “Morning Joe” Scarborough was next to protest the hiring of the “anti-democratic” McDaniel. From there, a parade of fellow NBC and MSNBC on-air personalities added their two cents to the anti-McDaniel chorus.

And predictably, two days after he had triumphantly announced his signing coup, a chastened Conde, his proverbial tail tucked firmly between his proverbial legs, let it be known that Ms. McDaniel would not, after all, be joining NBC News.

In terms of employee empowerment: Should Conde, whose future with NBC is now likely limited, have consulted his more cantankerous employees in advance about the plans to hire McDaniel? Sure. But should NBC have capitulated so immediately and completely to the demands of its employees, triggering a likely multi-million dollar lawsuit and expense, not to mention abject embarrassment to the network? No way.

Second, NPR

National Public Radio, meanwhile, was rattled as the result of a blog post by Uri Berliner, a 25-year NPR editor, who accused the network of having lost its credibility by overemphasizing DEI in its internal culture as well as race and identity politics in its external news coverage.

The long-time editor's denunciation of his employer's non-journalistic bias triggered a strong rebuke from NPR management, which understandably claimed that its news coverage was fair and unbiased. NPR's editor-in-chief insisted that “inclusion among our staff, with our sourcing and in our overall coverage is critical to telling the nuanced stories of this country and our world.”

Perhaps. But Mr. Berliner's story did point out specific examples of how NPR was increasingly elevating the importance within the organization of certain issues and employee groups. Among them:

- NPR journalists were required to ask everyone they interviewed their race, gender and ethnicity and had to enter it into a centralized tracking system.

- A growing DEI staff offered regular meetings imploring staff members to “start talking about race.”

- Bolstered by a \$1 million grant from the NPR Foundation, a burgeoning number of employee affinity groups began meeting and speaking up. These included MGIPOC (Marginalized Genders and Intersex People of Color); Mi Gente (Latinx employees); NPR Noir (Black employees); Ummah (Muslim-identifying employees); Women, Gender-Expansive, and Transgender People in Technology Throughout Public Media; Khevre (Jewish heritage and culture); and NPR Pride (LGBTQIA employees).

In light of the hornet's nest Berliner has exposed, it's difficult to see how he continues his tenure at NPR. Even more difficult is how NPR wrestles back its control of journalistic standards now that employees have experienced such internal influence.

Third, Google

Of all the companies that have dealt with the complexities of increased employee empowerment, few offer the lessons that Google has to share.

From its founding three decades ago, the search engine colossus has been a model of employee inclusion and concern. From offering on-site gyms, screening rooms, nap pods, free gourmet meals and dozens of other amenities, Google, in many ways, is an employee paradise.

Yet as it has grown and prospered, Google has been wracked by recurring episodes of internal discord. Among them:

- In 2018, after the company awarded a lavish exit package to a manager charged with sexual misconduct, 20,000 Google employees staged a walkout to protest the payout and other workplace issues.

- In 2020, Google employees formed a union to push back against “unethical” decisions like signing a contract with the U.S. Department of Defense on artificial intelligence. No matter that the DOD contract meant billions of dollars of revenue for the company, the DOD was “evil.”

- Last year, when Google management asked workers to return to the office three days a week, employees took to internal message channels and external news sources to voice their disapproval.

By 2024, the world's most benevolent employer had had enough. Last month, Google summarily fired an engineer who interrupted a corporate presentation of the company's work with the Israeli military. This month, Google announced plans to

— Continued on next page

How the top firms stay at the top

By Dominic Rovano and Kelsey Campbell

Cracking *O'Dwyer's* list of top PR firms takes more than just creative brilliance. Financial acumen also plays a critical role. The *O'Dwyer's* rankings is full of accomplished PR firms that have prioritized being strategic partners to their clients, excelling in finding, creating and distributing newsworthy content and building strong relationships. All are foundational elements of great firms. The one key element that keeps a PR firm at the top of the list year after year is FP&A (financial planning and analysis). Our goal is to let everyone in on some of these tips and tricks to keep your firm at the top of the rankings.

Key financial metrics for PR firms

The key to having a growing business is to understand your financials and to use that information to make smart decisions and plan for the future. Here are a few key metrics to focus on while reviewing your financial statements:

Client profitability. Are the clients you serve profitable for your company? Sometimes smaller clients can require more time and more labor therefore making them less profitable. A focus on increasing the size of your average client may help to increase profitability.

Project profitability. Tracking project profitability alongside client profitability is important to identify any mishaps when scoping or pricing individual projects.

Profit margin. Does your business have a healthy profit margin? What is a healthy profit margin for your business?

Operating expenses as a percentage of gross profit. Are you maintaining a healthy margin when comparing your operating expenses against gross profit? The Agency Management Institute recommends a 55–25–20 rule: 55 percent of your gross prof-

it should be spent on payroll and related costs, 25 percent of your gross profit should be spent on overhead expenses and the remaining 20 percent is left for profits. This is a good metric to report against and see how you measure up.

Accounts receivable (“A/R”). At least every month—we recommend weekly—business owners and account executives should be reviewing their clients’ accounts receivable with your accounting and finance team. Are clients being slow payers? Are you waiting on a big payment from a client to help cash flow next month? Business owners and team members being aware of A/R balances helps for better accountability on their client portfolios and better cash flow for businesses, it’s a win-win!

Accounts payable (“A/P”). Review your accounts payable as often as you review your accounts receivable report. Are you able to pay for all of your outstanding bills? Are you being strategic when it comes to terms with vendors?

FTE. Being a top agency isn’t all about the number of employees. A good number of the top 30 firms listed in *O'Dwyer's* have fewer than 400 employees and still make more than \$26 million a year. It’s not always about the size of your employee pool, but the quality of the team members that you do have. An effective way to quantify the appropriate number of FTEs is by calculating the amount of gross profit by the number of FTEs and comparing that to the total cost of payroll and related costs by the number of FTEs.

The importance of cash flow management

One of the most effective exercises we perform for our clients is a simple net working capital calculation. We look at our current cash balance and any upcoming A/P, and upcoming A/R. Then we take that total and divide it by our average operating expenses—this gives us a quick and effective way to look at client’s run rates for cash planning. When explaining to clients, we let them know that if their business were to close today, here is the position they would be in after collecting all remaining A/R and paying off all related A/P.

Cash flow management is key to running any business so looking at it on a weekly basis is pertinent for remaining at the top.

Diversification of clients and services

Another key component for staying at the top is having a diverse pool of clients and a diverse pool of offerings. Bloomberg mentioned that diversification of offerings “keeps marketing agencies at the top of their client’s minds by closing the loop

and becoming a comprehensive solution to their client’s needs.”

This is an important consideration for agencies and PR firms—more offerings allow for clients to think of you when anything PR, marketing or advertising-related comes up.

Additionally, more service offerings allow for more clients and recognition in the industry.

In addition to service diversification, another key metric is client diversification. One of the biggest risks for professional service firms is too much concentration on one client or project. This means that if a client were to get new leadership, or if a client were to close their doors, it would drastically impact your business. If one client makes up 40 percent of your client revenue and that client ends up parting ways with you, it’s a huge loss, but if it only makes up 5–10 percent of your client revenue, that makes it much easier to replace.

Forecast the future

Finally, having a good forecast and plan for your business is key to maintaining a top firm. This allows you to make key strategic decisions for your business like investing in technology, new people, or business development. It also allows you to really analyze what expenses are necessary for your business to move forward. It considers all of the KPIs already discussed as well as client diversification. One of the best benefits of a good financial forecast is it lets you test scenarios and adjust throughout the year based upon your firm’s events—the gain or loss of a client or key employee.

A public relations firm gets recognized for helping its clients navigate their communications. Understanding your business and finances is key to staying at the top.

Congratulations to all of the firms that made *O'Dwyer's* list this year; it’s incredibly well-deserved! ●

WHEN INMATES RUN THE ASYLUM

— Continued from page 78

tone down a 14-year-old internal message board that allowed employees to question sensitive client-related issues like the war in Gaza. When Google also recently announced hundreds of layoffs, its union protested the cuts were “needless” and vowed it wouldn’t “stop fighting until our jobs are safe!”

Google, it seemed, had learned the hard way that while employee inclusion and two-way communication remain important values for any organization, it’s never a good idea to let the inmates run the asylum. ●

Ex-Clinton press sec advises CLP Strategies

Jennifer Hanley, who was Press Secretary for Senator Hillary Clinton and the Hillary for President campaign, has signed on as a Senior Advisor at CLP Strategies, business communications shop.

During Clinton's run for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2028, Hanley helped develop communications strategies; oversaw national media outreach and coverage; and traveled with the candidate to prepare her for media interviews and press conferences.

Post-Clinton, Hanley was Managing Director responsible for JP Morgan's 120-member communications and marketing team, and Global Head of Communications and Corporate Engagement at Kohlberg Kravis Roberts.

She currently runs Boston's Ridge Hill Group, advising clients on M&A situations, IPOs, investor relations, capital formation, product launches and crisis communications.

Brian Cattell, Partner at Maitland (now H/Advisors); and Pen Pendelton, Senior VP at Abernathy MacGregor (now H/Advisors Abernathy) launched CLP in 2014.

CLP has offices in London and New York. ○



Jennifer Hanley



An Earth Day protest is slated for Shein's LA facility, where demonstrators will hold signs that read "I'd Rather Go Naked Than Wear Shein."

Missy Farren, a former Aide to Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran, launched her D.C. shop 14 years ago.

She also served as Development and Finance Director for the Republican Senatorial Committee and a Senior VP at Omnicom's Washington Group. ○

Cornerstone adds GOP vet Planning

Cornerstone Government Affairs has added David Planning, who was Floor Director for House Majority Whip Tom Emmer, to its federal government lobbying team.

The Minnesota Congressman Emmer jumped into last year's race to succeed Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House, but withdrew from the contest after receiving an "un-endorsement" from Donald Trump.

Working for one of the narrowest majorities in House history, Planning worked with Democrats to win passage of key legislation such as the National Defense Authorization Act and the Fiscal Responsibility Act.

Besides Emmer, Planning worked for Majority Whip Steve Scalise, Chief Deputy Whit Patrick McHenry, for Speaker Paul Ryan. He also did a stint in the Trump White House as Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs.

Geoff Gonella, Cornerstone CEO, said Planning brings a "wealth of knowledge, experience and relationship as well as a well-earned excellent bipartisan and bicameral reputation" to the D.C.-based firm. ○



David Planning

FH veteran Slatin moves to Husch Blackwell

Husch Blackwell Strategies has added FleishmanHillard alum Michael Slatin as a Principal in its public affairs group.

The 27-year veteran of FH has run PA campaigns in the US, Europe and Asia for Walt Disney Co., AT&T, Emerson, Eastman Kodak, UPS and Caterpillar.

HBS launched its PA offering in January.

Marianna Deal, a 28-year FH veteran, chairs the unit.

Kirsty McDonald, who held communications posts at Cigna, Centene, Peabody Energy and EY, serves as President of the St. Louis-based PA operation. ○



Michael Slatin

Missy Edwards speaks for Shein

Missy Edwards Strategies represents Shein Technology Group, the Los Angeles arm of the embattled Singapore-based "instant fashion" retailer.

The firm is to run a general education push regarding Shein's presence, operating footprint and economic impact in the U.S., as well as handling regulatory, trade and online retailing matters.

The Harvard Business Review reports that Shein uses algorithms to "trawl social media sites and online shopping sites" and then its 250 in-house designers and independent factories develop ideas "based on trending items." The clothing is produced in small factories in China.

Shein came under fire for allegedly procuring cotton from China's Xinjiang region in violation of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act and sourcing from factories dependent on forced labor. The factories been charged with creating environmental havoc.

GOP veteran Cooper joins Teneo

Rory Cooper, a veteran Republican operative and policy specialist, has joined Teneo's Washington office as Senior Managing Director in its Strategy & Communications Practice.

He moves to the global CEO advisory firm from Purple Strategies, where Cooper rose to Partner during a 10-year stint.

Earlier, he was Communications Director for House Majority Leader Eric Cantor and Director of Communications for The Heritage Foundation. Cooper served in the Bush/Cheney as Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, and played a role in the creation of the Dept. of Homeland Security in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. ○



Rory Cooper

Ex-ambassador Sondland reps Ukraine

Gordon Sondland, who was U.S. ambassador to the European Union under Donald Trump, registered as a representative of Ukraine's cabinet and ministers on March 21.

His job is to meet with members of Congress, European Bank and top Ukrainian officials to secure funding for its war with Russia.

Sondland also will visit front-line Ukrainian troops to build support for the military, according to his Justice Dept. filing.

He does not have a formal contract for the advocacy work and he is working as a volunteer.

Sondland, who is Founder and Chairman of Provenance Hotels, famously testified against Trump during his first impeachment proceedings.

He claimed that Trump pressured Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate the Biden family's business dealings in his country in return for a White House meeting.

After he refused to resign, Trump fired Sondland. ○

APCO promotes Saudi Arabia tourism

APCO has signed on to promote this month's visit of Ahmed Al Khateeb, head of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism, to the U.S.

The Ministry hosted a ceremony in Riyadh on April 3 to announce that 100 million tourists have visited the Kingdom.

That achievement was achieved seven years ahead of the tourism goal set in the Vision 2030 economic transformation program.

Al Khateeb said that the Ministry will now seek to attract 150 million tourists by 2030. "We persistently endeavor to position

tourism as a pivotal sector in our economy, a wellspring of employment opportunities, and a magnet for sustainable investments and global tourists," he said.

APCO's Sharron Silvers, Senior Director; Kelsey Glover, Director; Remi Lederman, Associate Director; and Jenny Muchnikoff, Senior Consultant; represent the Saudi business. ○

Weber Shandwick lands Morocco tourism

Weber Shandwick is providing PR and marketing communications services to the Moroccan National Tourist Office in New York.

The work includes handling U.S. events such as the "Taste of Morocco Tourism" sessions slated for Miami Beach (April 15), DC (April 16), and New York (April 18).

Potential attendees are invited to learn about what awaits travelers in the "Kingdom of Light." The invitations include a complimentary Uber voucher to and from the events.

Weber Shandwick's contract informs the client that it cannot guarantee that the media will either use material that it distributes, or accurately report about it.

It also can't "guarantee specific or overall results or returns from public relations, publicity, research or any other activity performed by the agency."

Weber Shandwick's Morocco team includes Danielle Karachi, Caitlin Musch, Yuna Komiyana, and Elizabeth Rodman.

The firm reports to Siham Fettouhi, Executive VP-North America at the tourist office. ○

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.

Aether Group LLC, Los Altos, Calif., **registered March 22, 2024 for RoPower Nuclear SA**, Bucharest, Romania, concerning delivering business strategy opinions in conversation, written and presentation form.

Dion Anglin, Naperville, Ill., **registered March 28, 2024 for Xerotech Limited**, Galway, Ireland, regarding engaging U.S. companies and organizations to discuss Xerotech's product line to generate sales for Xerotech's products in the U.S.

Tiber Creek Group, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered April 2, 2024 for Embassy of Japan**, Washington, D.C., concerning advising the Embassy on legislation in the U.S. Congress, actions and policies of the Executive Branch, and U.S. Government agencies of interest to the embassy.

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.

Boundary Stone Partners, Washington, D.C., **registered April 16, 2024 for JetZero**, Long Beach, Calif., regarding transportation and industrial decarbonization issues.

Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies, Washington, D.C., **registered April 18, 2024 for Association of American Railroads**, Washington, D.C., regarding transportation policy.

Squire Patton Boggs, Washington, D.C., **registered April 10, 2024 for Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation**, St. Croix, USVI, regarding funding for clean energy transition.

Stewart Strategies and Solutions, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered April 8, 2024 for Target Corporation**, Washington, D.C., concerning issues related to corporate tax policy among other issues.

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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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