



#### THE TECHNOLOGY ISSUE

The Internet Bill of Rights: what it means for tech

Ethical, functional: what tech consumers want

Why every company is now a tech company

Will native content fall victim to fake news?

Combating 'tech product fatigue'

Artificial Intelligence: friend or foe?

Where have all the tech storytellers gone?

Why PR is needed for tech's continued growth

November 2018

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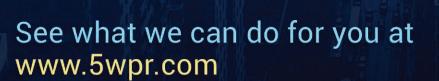
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EDITORIAL 6	WILL NATIVE CONTENT FALL VICTIM TO FAKE NEWS? Skepticism in the media impacts
CONSUMERS WANT ETHICAL AND FUNCTIONAL TECH Convenience is still a big draw, but so is corporate responsibility.	the rules for native advertising.  COMMUNICATING GROWTH TAKES MULTIPLE CHANNELS Using earned, owned and paid
#METOO HAS IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE	channels to tell the growth story.  WHERE HAVE ALL THE TECH
HOW COMPANIES CAN FIGHT 'TECH PRODUCT FATIGUE' Cutting through the clutter to	STORYTELLERS GONE? By serving as educators, PR can build trust and connections.
make new products stand out.  EVERY COMPANY IS A TECH COMPANY Embracing the tech imperative in	WHEN IS A TECH BRAND NOT JUST A TECH BRAND? Best practices for companies selling into complex vertical industries.
every aspect of a business.  WHAT THE INTERNET BILL OF RIGHTS MEANS FOR TECH	HYPER-GLOBALIZATION AND PR'S CRITICAL ROLE PR has gone from adding value to being a survival skill.
How to reconcile free markets, innovation and digital privacy.	29 COMMUNICATING THE TECHEFFECT
BRANDS MUST INNOVATE OR DISINTEGRATE A brand's innovation story must	the art of counseling clients.
be part of its marketing strategy.  PR IS PARAMOUNT FOR TECH'S CONTINUED GROWTH	PR FIRMS BOOST BILLING RATES Firms billed more in 2017 than in the previous year, according to a new survey.
Knowing how high-tech companies work is key to helping them grow.	PROFILES OF TECHNOLOGY PR FIRMS
MOVING BEYOND THE RFP To RPF or not RFP usually isn't the question. Maybe it should be.	RANKINGS OF TOP TECH PR FIRMS
PR AFTER THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION Tech sector leaders need to focus on privacy and authenticity.	44 WASHINGTON REPORT
	COLUMNS
AI, FRIEND OR FOE? Communicators play a role in the debate on artificial intelligence.	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Fraser P. Seitel
TECH PR AND SMEs: COLLABORATE OR COLLIDE Getting tech PR pros and subject matter experts to work together.	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT Richard Goldstein





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January: Crisis Comms. / Buyer's Guide
February: Environmental & P.A.
March: Food & Beverage
April: Broadcast & Social Media
May: PR Firm Rankings
June: Global & Multicultural
July: Travel & Tourism
August: Financial/I.R.
September: Beauty & Fashion
October: Healthcare & Medical
November: High-Tech
December: Entertainment & Sports

ADVERTISERS		
5W Public Relations	3	Karbo Communications8
BerlinRosen	13	Omega World Travel33
Edelman	INSIDE COVER & 25	Padilla19
The Hoffman Agency	7	PANCommunications5
Hotwire	11	PeppercommBACKCOVER
\ICR	27	Racepoint Global15



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#### The price of bad information

et's reminisce back to when the Internet debuted. If you'll remember, we were sold a bill of Boomer idealism that we were on the cusp of an informational awakening, in the doorway of a brave new frontier, where data and a global network of interconnected minds would break down cultural and informational barriers to improve our lives in virtually every way.

Fast-forward twenty some years. Hate crimes in the U.S. have been on the rise for the fourth year in a row. Surveys reveal than a third of Americans don't believe in evolution. Nearly one in five are convinced that vaccines cause autism. Impossibly, two percent hold the belief that the PUBLISHER world is flat. Donald Trump is President.

So much for the "wisdom of crowds." If knowledge is truly the golden egg here, an easy case could be made that the Internet has been a grand failure. I'm guessing the early web's most ardent supporters didn't foresee the possibility that we wouldn't use this infinite library to learn about our world nearly insomuch as we'd rely on it to seek ideological echo chambers parroting our worldviews. Or that a majority of Americans wouldn't be able to distinguish statements of fact from opinion, according to recent Pew Research findings. Or that free content, much of it poorly written and offering superficial (if not outright deceptive) assessments of world events would shutter newsrooms and render a career in journalism a novelty on par with steam locomotive Steve Barnes conductors. Or that a majority of Americans, now equipped with a device in our pockets containing the sum of world history, wouldn't be able to pass a U.S. citizenship test, or even name a single Supreme Court Justice.

It seems the only thing the Internet is good at, aside from providing a platform for those who least deserve one, is the fact that everyone now has a forum where they can pick and choose the evidence they want to arrive at explanations supporting their confirmation biases.

The role misinformation played in the last presidential election — where Cambridge Analytica EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS and Russia-funded troll farms and social media campaigns fed propaganda to U.S. voters in the months leading up to the 2016 race — has been discussed ad nauseam in the past two years, and needs no further analysis here. Besides, as we've seen in the headlines recently, bad information Melissa Webell has now moved beyond politics and down a far more dangerous path.

Cesar Sayoc, the suspect who mailed more than a dozen pipe bombs to prominent Democrats and other high-profile critics of President Trump, had been indoctrinated by a diet of fake news, and regularly shared conspiracy theories published by fringe sites on his Facebook and Twitter accounts. Robert Bowers, the gunman accused of killing 11 in an anti-Semitic attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue, regularly used social media platform Gab to express his hatred toward Jews and HIAS, the humanitarian nonprofit that, in Bower's words, "likes to bring invaders in that kill 0'Dwyer's is published monthly for \$60.00 our people."

In both cases, conspiracy theories were motivating factors behind what these men did. A quick glance at any number of Internet outlets will confirm that, sadly, their beliefs are a lot more common than you'd think. The real questions should be why the Internet is cultivating lunatics, and why, with so much information at our disposal, we still turn to storytelling and rumor over science, facts, data, common sense.

People love conspiracy theories because they carry the thrill of hidden knowledge. They provide the satisfaction of feeling as though we've peeled back some curtain to uncover an intricate OTHER PUBLICATIONS: web of lies and deceit, an ability to decode the "truth" behind any event. It isn't a coincidence that the conspiracy theorist's information is typically culled from hyper-partisan sites or places like YouTube, not exactly top-level security clearance sources. It also isn't a coincidence that people who believe in one conspiracy theory are usually wont to indulge in many other unrelated conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories are a comfort mechanism. They provide us with the delusion that we possess some insight into how the world actually operates instead of the far more humbling, anxiety-inducing notion that coincidences happen, that we're not always right, that sometimes we aren't in control.

Conspiracy theories also have the effect of always conveniently affirming our preexisting beliefs. You'll never hear a conspiracy theorist admit they've stumbled upon a new piece of information that proved them wrong. That just isn't how tribal ideas are expressed. Conspiracy theories exhibit an airtight construction; any evidence working against their beliefs, no matter how compelling, simply proves another conspiracy is afoot. Indeed, even before Sayoc's arrest, conspiracy theorists were aflutter with evidence-free claims that he was a Manchurian candidate used as a pawn in a "false flag" plot to paint Democrats as victims in the weeks leading up to the midterms. You can't make this stuff up. Oh wait, yes you can.

Mark Twain said, "Never argue with an idiot. They will drag you down to their level and beat you with experience." We've had more than 20 years to navigate this informational playground. If we've collectively decided that truth doesn't matter, if our personalized, partisan accounts of reality are greater rewards than the prospect of using this tool to become informed, morally contentious people, can we really be surprised when bad ideas shape bad people? O

– Jon Gingerich



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## Consumers want tech to be ethical and functional

High-tech developments that make life easier are in demand, but people also expect the companies behind the technology to behave ethically and responsibly, according to a new survey. **By Steve Barnes** 

eople increasingly welcome the technological developments that are making their lives better, but they are also making ever greater demands that companies exercise ethics and responsibilities when employing technology, according to a survey by WE Communications.

"Brands in Motion" polled approximately 27,000 consumers and B2B decision makers in eight countries, asking them to rate brands according to what WE terms "emotional drivers" and "rational drivers." The brands rated covered topics including health & wellness, automotive, food & beverage, finance & banking, business tech solutions and smart home.

The survey founding a waning level of enthusiasm for computer devices and tech B2B. "The tech halo is strong," the study's authors say, "but fear over disruptive technologies may be stronger."

Surprisingly, despite security concerns, the smart home category was a big winner, making the biggest year-to-year jump of any brand category.

Overall, the survey respondents were bullish on the likelihood of further technological advances over the next few years. Over half of the respondents (52 percent) said that they expect more brands to allow consumers to assess products or brands online. Almost as many said they expect companies to develop new products or services (49 percent) or to give them the opportunity to "do more amazing things in less time" (48 percent).

But the downside of the tech wave was noted as well, with 84 percent of the respondents saying they were fearful that their personal data is not secure. In addition, 80 percent voiced concerns that they or their families could be compromised online and 77 percent thought it was possible that hackers could shut down the power grid.

Who should be addressing the anxieties about tech? Nearly all the respondents (97 percent) say that brands are responsible for their own ethical use of technology. In the absence of a sufficient response from brands, 94 percent of respondents said the government should step in.

But consumer belief in tech remains strong. Eighty-three percent of respondents said that brands have the capacity to provide stability, with 74 percent adding that they expect brands to take a stand on important issues. O

#### **#MeToo impacts** bottom line

By Steve Barnes

usinesses with a MeToo problem can expect to see those allegations have an effect on profits, according to a new study from FTI Consulting and Mine the Gap.

About half (49 percent) of the 4,764 professional women surveyed said they'd be less likely to make a purchase from a company facing MeToo allegations. In addition, 50 percent said they'd be less likely to purchase stock in a company with a public MeToo issue.

A sizeable, but smaller, number of men also said a company facing MeToo charges is one that they would be less likely to purchase from (38 percent) or invest in (43

When it comes to attracting new employees, MeToo is also making its presence known. About 55 percent of the women surveyed said they'd be less inclined to apply for a job at a company facing allegations, with 42 percent of men in agreement.

Despite those reactions, the study's respondents say that sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and unwanted physical contact are still a frequent occurrence. More than one in four of the women surveyed said they've experienced or witnessed unwanted physical contact in the workplace in the past year, with 19 percent saying they've personally experienced such an incident.

When those incidents occurred, 43 percent say they didn't report it, citing concern for negative career impact or fear of retribution as reasons. The study also found that while 45 percent of white women in senior-level positions report that they've witnessed or experienced sexual harassment or misconduct, that number rises to 58 percent for women of color. O



# How tech companies can fight 'tech product fatigue'

As more gadgets hit the market, consumer technology companies need to work harder to stand out and build a newer PR playbook to develop stronger product coverage.

By Shruti Sehgal and Dan Levitan

arhad Manjoo caused a small uproar two years ago when he announced that the age of exciting new consumer technology — the so-called "gadget era" — was over. But is it really?

Americans will still spend more than a record \$377 billion on new consumer technology this year. Over 20,000 consumer electronics products are launched at the International Consumer Electronics Show in January each year. Despite the tech crisis we keep reading about, we've seen neither a slowing of sales nor a reduced number of product launches. In fact, nearly one in five Americans owns a smart home speaker in 2018, a year that saw the rise of artificial intelligence, voice-enabled technology and the beginnings of 5G, Jetson-level innovations, some might say. So, what gives?

New consumer technology isn't dead, not to average consumers like me and you, anyway. But writing about it is becoming boring to the people who have to constantly write about it. With the speed of new technology comes the speed of competition. More and more products are trying to reach the same consumers. And while more choices for consumers is a good thing, it should come as little surprise that one of the most common refrains we heard from reporters this past year was that they were tired of covering more of the same types of products.

Whether you're a startup or a publicly traded company, you have likely experienced the challenge of trying to get your products to stand out. Culled from our experience with the clients, partners and reporters we've worked with over the past year, below are a few insights from BerlinRosen's consumer technology and innovation practice on how to cut through the clutter.

#### Make your launch exciting

Tech companies have long relied on presentations in the form of press conferences and trade show keynote addresses to unveil their products. These presentations tend to follow a very similar format. But, as Business Insider's Dave Smith points out, "The fact is, if you follow the news at all in 2018, it's rare to witness a tech presentation that features legitimate surprises. And if there are no surprises, what's the point of the presentation?" To build more media excitement around a product launch, consider surprises that will build consumer mo-

mentum, like unexpected product news, promotions and deals or partnerships.

It's also important to give as much thought to how you debut your product on YouTube and Instagram: 57 percent of consumers say they first heard about the products they buy on social media. YouTube, in particular, makes up a third of all internet viewership and is second only to Google as the most popular search engine.

#### **Embrace the competition**

Consumer electronics remain one of — if not the most — highly researched product categories. People do their homework. That's why tech reviewers cut right to the chase: Why and how is your product better or different than the competition? Often, tech companies, especially startups, are reluctant to talk about their products in the context of their competitors, considering their own product a whole new category or disruptor. While recategorization might sound persuasive in an investor pitch, it is far less persuasive when trying to land a strong product review. Reviewers want to make product comparison shopping easier for their readers and viewers. It's their job. And most prospective customers won't buy your product because you re-invented the sleep mask, but they will buy it if it works better than all of the other sleep masks out there. If you don't want to be directly quoted acknowledging your competition, which is a fair point we often hear, at the very least be prepared to explain to your reviewer how your product stacks up directly against your competitors. Make them a cheat sheet on how your product compares to competitors to help them save a step.

#### **Demonstrate impact**

Your product is best understood through everyday examples that are easy to explain, demonstrate and prove. If these examples are easily replicable, say in a video that can be widely shared on social media, even better.

Tech companies sometimes have a misconception that consumers (and reporters) care most about product specifications, whether that's the amount of RAM in a laptop, the processor speed of a smartphone or the megapixels in a camera. But in our experience, the strongest product endorsements come from tech reporters and reviewers who can easily show their readers or viewers how the product helped them solve a real pain point in their own lives. In

other words, how do these increased specs make a difference for people or help solve a common problem? Answering either of these questions may not always require the most cutting-edge technology or innova-

tion. One of the best examples we've heard from a reporter was how a simple function in a new camera made it easier for her to show her new apartment to her mom living across the country.

#### Prove you're popular

Media fatigue poses a unique problem during the holiday season when companies have already launched their products and reporters have already covered them. But when it comes to sales, getting the word out about your products matters a lot more in the fourth quarter — still the largest



Shruti Sehgal



Dan Levitan

than at any other point during the year. Tech companies often struggle to sustain media coverage around their products after they have been launched because they lack new product information to share. But that's not entirely true. Tech marketing teams know the value of strong customer reviews. Studies have shown that one customer review can boost sales up by 10 percent and 50 reviews can increase sales by up to 30 percent. Sharing your customer reviews with reporters can help get your product included in listicles and roundups, which are valuable to have placements in, especially online as more consumers look for quick resources to inform their holiday gift purchase decisions. Softer news moments - like consumer promotions and deals or where and how to take advantage of them — are also more likely to get air time or earned media coverage at the end of the year as reporters look for

sales moment for consumer electronics —

Shruti Sehgal is Vice President and Dan Levitan is Senior Vice President at BerlinRosen. •

new holiday shopping content, making it

easier for PR to supplement your holiday

marketing plans.

# **Every company is a tech company**

Companies should embrace the technology imperative in every aspect of their business to propel their brands forward and elevate customer experiences.

By Larry Weber

ne of the key strategic themes in my latest book, Authentic Marketing: How to Capture Hearts and Minds through the Power of Purpose (to be released in January 2019) is the notion that today every company, in every industry from footwear to agriculture - must view itself as a technology company. As Marc Andreessen rightly said, "Software is eating the world." Today's technologies are as ubiquitous as the air we breathe, powering a new class of customer experience that includes more convenient services, enhanced utility, personalized interactions and richer, more immersive engagements with brands. As such, companies must identify and act on this technology imperative to transform how customers experience their brand and to drive their business forward.

Artificial intelligence is one of the key technologies enabling this transformation, through applications like chatbots, speech recognition, recommendation engines, virtual assistants and decision management. Others like virtual reality, the Internet of Things and big data analytics also play a crucial role, providing sensory brand experiences, new convenience-driven functionality and more targeted, customized

Ironically, of the brands currently operating against this concept, the technology they employ has actually helped to "humanize" their customer experience. Amazon, for example, has set the standard for using technology to create the optimal online shopping experience. A known AI powerhouse, Amazon has led the way in its use of machine learning to deliver personalized recommendations to its customers. The algorithm-driven prompts, "You May Also Like," "Recommended for You," or "Frequently Bought Together," offer products tailored to users' tastes based on their searches and buying preferences. Netflix also uses these technologies to suggest what shows we should watch based on our viewing habits. And these recommendations have now shifted from "nice to have" to a requirement in the online browsing expe-

You might be saying, sure, Amazon and Netflix are both companies whose services depend on technology, so it's an easy play for them. But the fact of the matter is that customers now demand that level of guidance, service and utility within all categories. Here's a sampling of companies using technology in unexpected ways to elevate their customer experience across a spectrum of industries and scales:

**Sephora.** The beauty and makeup giant tapped facial recognition technology for their Virtual Artist makeup app, enabling customers to try on products from anywhere for a virtual makeover.

Audi. The car manufacturer is using virtual reality for customer consultations at select dealerships worldwide, enabling customers to immerse themselves in and get a realistic experience of their customized vehicle.

**LEGO.** The toy company was one of the first in its category to integrate an AI-powered chatbot into its customers' holiday shopping experience. This helped guide customers through the process of finding the perfect gift quickly and effectively, enhancing the brand experience.

StubHub. The online ticket exchange company launched an augmented reality feature on its mobile app that enabled ticket buyers to see a virtual 3D model of the stadium for Super Bowl LII, as well as nearby parking garages and concession stands. This allowed customers to visualize the locations of various seats before purchasing, helping them make a more informed decision.

Without a doubt, these technology-driven approaches have raised the bar for consumer expectations today. To meet those needs, companies must weave technology into the fabric of how they operate across every aspect of their business — from marketing to sales to human resources.

If you are ready to dive in and begin developing your technology strategy, below are a few questions that will help kickstart the conversation:

What's your vision for your technology imperative? Is there something in the DNA of your organization that could con-

Think about what your brand stands for, its values and its vision. Is there something within those that can serve as the inspiration for your technology imperative?

What areas of your business could be enhanced by technology to better engage and serve your customers?

Think about how customers communicate with your business, interact with your products/services, and experience and use various functions of your products/services, etc. How could technology elevate those experiences?

#### What types of innovations would fit vour customer base best?

Consider the demographics of your customer base and what types of offerings would work for them. Are they savvy with technology? Are they likely to embrace in-

novative new ways of doing things and new methods of interacting with your brand?

Are there companies (both competitors and organizations in other industries) that are using technology in ways you admire or want to emulate?



Think about experiences you've had where a brand has provided enhanced support and service, and you became fully immersed in that brand as a result.

#### How will your technology imperative drive your industry forward?

Can you identify a path to be a "first mover," offering an innovative use of technology that establishes a leadership position and changes the game in your market?

Once you determine your technology strategy, make this effort a central theme in your communications efforts, as this will serve to differentiate your brand, establish leadership, and position your organization as an innovator.

Below are several core elements to consider when building out communications plans against your technology imperative:

Align on a vision. Determine how your technology vision will bring your customers' experience to a new level and drive your industry forward.

Define leadership positioning. Craft leadership positioning around your technology strategy, highlighting how it connects back to your DNA.

Map stakeholders. Connect this positioning to your stakeholders' needs and expectations, ensuring communications are customized and relevant to each audience.

Build a campaign strategy. Craft an integrated communications plan to connect with targets where they live and are in the mindset of being influenced.

Develop cross-channel content. Communicate your story in a variety of ways, testing it to ensure it resonates across multiple channels.

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# Internet Bill of Rights: what it means for the tech world

When it comes to reconciling free markets, technological innovation and personal digital privacy, it's clear that Wall Street, Silicon Valley and Capitol Hill have a long way to go. For PR practitioners, it can be a rocky and sometimes challenging landscape to navigate. One thing we can agree on is the need for more transparency among all parties.

t was over two decades ago that the Internet was in its infancy. Since then, it has had a significant impact on the way we live. It's brought sweeping changes to how we communicate, work, shop, date, and travel. In those early days, especially after the first dot-com bust, no one could truly envision what was to come. And as such, tech companies had a fairly open playing field. Relatively little regulation actually paved the way for innovation, and tech companies thrived. Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and Microsoft aren't called the "Big Five" for nothing. However, many of these technological and lifestyle shifts have come at a cost.

#### Significant innovation at a price?

Fast forward to today, where millions of us have willingly traded our privacy for free access to social networking platforms and other content. We carry around smartphones that we rely on for much more than phone calls. Data breaches and wide scale hacking are everyday occupational hazards for banks, social networks, entertainment companies and governments, to name a few. More than ever, it's important for us to speak the same language in order to formulate solutions that enable investment and innovation that benefit the individual.

We're now witnessing a reckoning among elected officials, Wall Street bankers and Silicon Valley entrepreneurs to better understand each other. One example is the recent testimony given by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerburg on Capitol Hill. Utah Senator Orrin Hatch asked Zuckerburg, "How do you sustain a business model in which users don't pay for your service?" To which Zuckerberg replied. "Senator, we run ads." Tempting as it may be to look down at lawmakers' confusion about Facebook's business model, it's also not entirely off the mark. Plenty of consumers have a limited idea of how Facebook's business works, what happens to their personal data, and what they can do to tighten control over their privacy. Not just on Facebook, but across the various touchpoints we all make daily with the Internet.

Clearly there is still a disconnect. But increasing regulations means grappling with complicated questions. Namely, how do you balance the free thinking that has

fueled the internet's success with laws that also rein it in? As PR professionals, we know the importance of communication and this situation is no different. There needs to be constant, open dialogue between all parties to agree on a set of regulations that will protect us but also continue to encourage the innovation which spurred the Internet in the first place.

The Internet Bill of Rights is proposing exactly that. It's a set of principles that gives users more control of their online lives while creating a better Internet economy. Representative Ro Khanna from California recently unveiled a list of 10 points he hopes will guide data privacy laws to protect U.S. citizens in today's digital age. It calls for, among other things, consumers' right to Internet service without the unnecessary data collection, notification in a timely manner if a company holding personal data has a security breach, opt-in permission for data collection and greater transparency in the collection of data and what it's used for by companies.

This is even more important because of what's at stake today. The Internet and data usage goes far beyond fake accounts on Twitter or cloned accounts on Facebook. There's more real-life implications we face. In the not too distant future, technological advances such as autonomous vehicles, remote surgery and augmented reality will demand even greater performance from the internet. With no predictable rules for how the Internet works, it would be very challenging to meet the requirements of these new technology advancements.

Bearing all this in mind, what does this mean for us as communications professionals? After the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica data breach in March, Facebook rolled out an ad campaign that harkens back to its roots and promises to do more to keep consumers safe and protect our privacy. Uber also released a campaign showcasing its new CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, and his renewed commitment to Uber customers in an attempt to salvage its reputation after the former CEO was ousted.

The backlash these companies faced brought to light not only how influential big tech has become — the Big Five in particular - but how much sway they've gained with the public. Does this decline in brand reputation signify a shift in consumer confidence? Because customer privacy data is a

major competitive edge of these big tech companies, it means the level of risk and uncertainty has increased. And in the wake of this decline, transcommunicaparent tions remains crucial. Companies regardless of size need to do the right thing by their us-



ers and develop and maintain a strong and consistent accompanying message.

Consumer consensus is that it's long past time to see something like the Internet Bill of Rights put in place. And while historically, tech companies had opposed any sort of regulation, experts say that some kind of federal data privacy law is inevitable and more recently the tech industry seems to be on board. In September, executives from Amazon, Apple and others testified before the Senate Commerce Committee about concerns that lawmakers had over privacy and publicly declared support for a new federal privacy law. So, progress is being made. But lawmakers and tech companies will need to come together to answer the very important question of how we protect consumer privacy without stunting Internet innovation.

This Internet Bill of Rights is coming at a critical time. It's sparking much needed conversation between lawmakers, tech companies and consumers. We have a responsibility to protect the Internet and should want to uphold a just Internet because it's in our best interests to do so not just to avoid a fine or persecution. As I mentioned, no one could have ever predicted what the Internet would become, and it's hard to imagine now where it will be in another 20 years. But one thing everyone can agree on from Capitol Hill to Wall Street to Silicon Valley: we all have a responsibility to communicate openly amongst each other to protect and uphold one of the most impactful creations ever

Bo Park is Partner and Head of Technology PR at ICR, Inc. O



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# Innovate or disintegrate: how brands can stay relevant

No matter which industry your organization operates in, sharing your innovation story should play a crucial role in your brand's overall marketing strategy.

By Heather Kernahan

ccording to an Accenture survey of global C-suite executives published learlier this year, 68 percent of respondents expect their industry to be significantly disrupted within the next three years by technological innovation. The remaining 32 percent, I'm tempted to argue, will simply be caught napping.

It used to be that only tech companies had tech stories to tell. Today that couldn't be further from the truth.

The breathtaking pace of digital transformation is impacting every industry, every sector. No organization is immune. Those that choose not to invest in innovation are

While for the majority smart enough to heed the writing on the wall — actually, let's revise that to, "read the text on a screen" the challenge is to develop and implement an effective innovation strategy. And to make sure it's properly communicated.

If you're a CMO or communications chief at a non-tech company, you may not fully appreciate the scale and breadth of impact a well-told innovation story can deliver. There's a growing and credible body of evidence linking a compelling innovation story with an increase in corporate valuation. In other words, talking tech frequently leads to a bigger market cap.

Positioning yourself as an innovative company is also a powerful weapon in the war for talent. You won't attract the right caliber of people with the necessary technological skills if they don't perceive your organization as a place where innovation is considered critical to success.

Let me share a few examples of non-tech companies that have boosted their standing by communicating a business strategy which has technology at its core.

Bakery-café chain Panera Bread responded to the threat of disruption in its sector with a strategic decision in 2014 to put technology at the heart of its business. Shrewd investment in digital platforms, including in-store kiosks, meant that by 2017 it was taking 1.2 million digital orders a week (via mobile, web or the in-store kiosks). This represented over a quarter of all sales, translating into more than \$1 billion in annual revenue.

This tech-driven success caught the eye of European investment firm JAB, which in April 2017 snapped up Panera for \$7.5 billion. Clearly, a well-told tech story has an important role to play in building business valuation.

As Fortune reported in the wake of the acquisition: "Panera Bread - along with Starbucks and Domino's Pizza — is viewed as one of early adopters to start leaning on technology as American diners increasingly want mobile apps to place orders or get food seamlessly delivered to their homes. Online ordering has become so pervasive that those types of orders now exceed the quantity placed verbally over the phone."

Fortune refers to Domino's with good reason. A decade ago its share price languished at \$2.83. Both consumers and investors were underwhelmed by what the business

As I write this, Domino's stock trades at over \$250 a share and the company's market cap stands above \$11 billion.

It's not as if America's pizza consumption has shot up a hundred-fold in 10 years. Although steadfastly still in the pizza business, what's changed is that today Domino's calls itself a tech company. A Harvard Business Review piece exploring how the company reinvented itself pointed out that of the 800 people working at Domino's headquarters, fully 400 work in software and analytics.

What's more, Domino's tells the world that it's a tech company, and makes it clear in every touchpoint of its brand experience.

Upmarket jeweler Tiffany & Co, long perceived as classy but perhaps a little stodgy, is also looking to revitalize its brand by telling an innovation story, after coming under investor pressure to modernize following lackluster sales performance. Giving greater sparkle to Tiffany's image includes promotion of its revamped design and innovation workshop in Manhattan where the process for developing jewelry collections has been speeded up, in part due to investment in five 3D printers that make wax or resin models for rings.

We're seeing this trend play out internationally, too. UK company Ocado started out presenting itself as a supermarket delivery service. Then it pivoted to positioning itself as a technology provider.

The result? A dramatic uplift in company

The change allowed Ocado to secure lucrative international tie-ups with major partners including US grocery chain Kroger, one of the world's biggest retailers.

Here's an eye-catching fact. Ocado now

boasts a larger market capitalization than one of the most illustrious names in British retailing: Marks and Spencer.

My advice to in-house communications teams at businesses starting to make moves of this kind is to revisit your corporate narrative with the new business strategy in mind. You'll have to work more closely with HR to assist in getting the best tech talent through the door and with your technolo-

gy teams to understand the evolution of your product and services roadmap. You'll need to adjust your communications strategy to position company innovation as core to your message.



Even a business as Heather Kernahan

mainstream as Walmart

now has an innovation lab focused on reimagining retail. As a communications practitioner, it's vital to keep up to speed with the technology advances your business is making and then work these into your company's story.

Almost every communications person I talk to is concerned with presenting their company as a thought leader. No matter what industry you're in, a strong innovation and technology message helps you differentiate and position against competitors.

Nevertheless, CMOs face big challenges. Oftentimes, there is a significant lag between companies adopting a new technology-led business strategy and taking steps to externalize messages about this by updating the company narrative.

There is certainly a need for CMOs to work more closely with their CIOs. One key aspect of this is nailing down the whole tech and innovation strategy — and making sure marketing fits in, so that it does not

Sometimes it's complicated to get right. But there's no reason to despair. Look to communications professionals who have history working with companies to tell their innovation story.

Over the past two years we've worked with more consumer, industrial, construction and retail leaders who are shifting their strategy and wanting to understand the tech ecosystem and how to become involved. We envision doing a whole lot more of this with companies from outside the traditional tech world over the next couple of years. This industry shift is not a trend but a next phase of business transformation.

Heather Kernahan is President, North America at Hotwire. O

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# PR is paramount for tech's continued growth

Communications professionals working in the technology sector should understand how high-growth tech companies today work. Similarly, it's important for communicators to educate tech leaders on how PR articulates their vision, elevates awareness and drives growth opportunities. By Nikki Parker

ubbles, booms and unicorns, we've seen them all. The indisputable dominance of technology and the radical transformation it's had on the way we live, work, socialize and relax appears to be at an all-time high. If you're not a "tech" company in today's day and age, you're likely to be disrupted by one. For a growing number of industries, it's not a matter of if — it's when.

With the increased adoption of Software as a Service products in the workplace, the proliferation of social platforms, the emergence of voice-controlled connected devices in our homes and the rapid acceleration of direct-to-consumer E-commerce businesses, the pace of technological disruption is unprecedented. If you don't believe me — or your own audit of your daily IT habits — believe the markets. According to renowned VC and technology oracle Mary Meeker, tech companies are becoming a larger part of U.S. businesses, accounting for 25 percent of U.S. market capitalization in April of this year. They're also transforming legacy industries, taking a growing share of corporate R&D and capital spending.

As communications professionals working in an industry with an increasing number of clients building, selling or being impacted by technology, it's critical that we understand how high-growth technology companies operate, the pressures and opportunities that shape them and, most importantly, how to communicate what it is they're doing. Which is not an easy task! I've often joked that my career in-house at high-growth tech companies running growth, performance marketing, investor relations and communications can be summed up in one sentence: I translate nerd into human.

#### Why does PR matter for high-growth technology companies?

Working alongside some exceptionally brilliant entrepreneurs building the marketing communications functions within businesses experiencing rapid internal and external growth, I've navigated the various stages of a high-growth company's lifecycle. From ideation and go-to-market expansion through to the seismic shifts in strategy that an acquisition, IPO or capital injection create, the role of public relations at each stage is nuanced and vital.

A successful technology company does

one thing: it offers a real solution to real problems faced by real-life people. Once an entrepreneur has identified a pain point and created the product or service that addresses it, their primary focus turns to growth. Whether your tech client is a startup or rapidly approaching an IPO, they're chasing a specific medium-term growth goal and hoping to achieve their long-term goal, which for many remains that billion-dollar status.

No doubt, many tech and PR professionals have at some point had the argument with a founder or CEO about the value of PR for a tech company. So, it's important to educate tech execs on how PR supports growth, and most importantly, sustains

PR legitimizes a company. A profile of a company, a spotlight feature on their technology or a news cycle surrounding a funding announcement do more than just populate the pages of Google, they bring credibility and begin building a sphere of influence for a company and its executives. PR helps tech companies articulate their vision, a thing which for a high-growth business looking to recruit or attract investment, needs to be clearly — and loudly established across all communications channels. Having raised significant capital, I can't stress enough how valuable a piece of coverage in a reputable outlet can be to the process. As opposed to just saying "believe me," you can point to the words of a respected reporter instead.

PR is an important piece of the growth function. Taking a growth hacking approach to marketing is essential for highgrowth companies, but it doesn't mean that PR should fall by the wayside. PR lets you talk directly to customers, analysts and influencers who play a critical role in shaping buying behavior. It also provides your growth marketers and salesforce with powerful content to put dollars and effort behind leveraging the article's SEO value and external validation factor, while ensuring more eyeballs see it. PR is a paramount component of a holistic growth strategy that should not be overlooked.

PR is what will build a brand. As Sir Richard Branson said, a good PR story is infinitely more effective than a front-page ad. When you're working within a tech company laser-focused on growth, the pressures to achieve that euphoric hockey stick growth graph are intense, often meaning that many marketing strategies are focused on short-term gains, not long-term brand building. Brands that have failed to clearly articulate what value they offer, haven't

created a relationship with their customers or positioned themselves in the market as a leader may hit their shortterm numbers but will fail to stand the test of time. A brand tells a story that's bigger than the product or service that it sells, and



to build that brand, publicity is absolutely

Run your PR practice like a tech company. A PR team, whether in-house or agency, should be an extension of the business. It should have the same organizational operating norms, to remove points of friction, it should drink from the same Kool-Aid and it should anticipate the pressures and opportunities that lay ahead. Having moved to an agency environment after more than a decade running the Mar-Coms function in-house, this transition has re-emphasized to me how important it is for a tech PR team to think and operate like a tech company.

Lean and agile aren't just buzzwords engineers use, they're an important business approach that works for PR. These methodologies aim to shorten the time needed for product development cycles, so that changes to a product or business model are rolled out in an iterative fashion, giving a business time to quickly assess if they positively or negatively impact the growth of the business and pivot accordingly. Plan, test, iterate, validate and build: this approach should apply to building a communications program. Pitching bite-sized, sharp and actionable stories gets rapid results that all ladder up to the overarching business narrative. When a tech company is moving in two-week sprints and seeing rapid growth, they expect the same energy and cadence of results from their PR team.

Solve a pain point. If this is touted as the most important piece of a successful tech company's DNA, then why isn't it the

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# Moving beyond the RFP

To RFP or not to RFP, that usually isn't the question. But maybe it should be.

By Steve Burkhart

've seen them all: the good, the bad and the in-betweens. The ones that were fair and respectful. The ones that were exploitive and thinly-veiled attempts to get free work from many agencies.

RFPs seem to be a fact of life for anyone in the agency business. They are the crucible that must be fully embraced to grow and thrive. But there could be another way.

Recently, I had a would-be client for a very sizable global company tell me he simply didn't believe in RFPs. I'm not sure if he used words such as "charade, circus or dog 'n pony," but clearly he neither liked them nor believed they led to the best choice of an agency.

To him, it was about the team you put on the floor, the team's true level of commitment, not the one you talked about. It's about the actual experience of said team, not the slightly disingenuous approach of referencing a lot of case studies across a global network.

I found a lot of agreement with him.

We in the agency world know RFPs are what all PR firms eagerly anticipate and dread at the same time. While we know they can be nothing but a requirement for the procurement department, we also

know they can be the only pathway to the

But what if RFPs were abolished? How would the selection process happen? Here are three ideas.

Start with in-person meetings. Chemistry is such a big part of picking an agency. Why not start there? Meet with three agencies you believe have the capabilities to meet your goals and then schedule 90-minute meetings with each. Don't allow any PowerPoints, notes or other props. It's just you and them, and the agencies will be completely naked, in a manner of speaking, without the bullet points or rehearsals to back them up. Ask all of the questions about capabilities, proprietary approaches, experiences and personal backgrounds. You'll get more authentic answers than through the crafty writing skills of the agency partners.

Ask for the real deal case studies. Ask for case studies, but only ask for case studies the proposed team actually delivered. It's so easy for the big global firms to pull case studies from across their networks and their many specialty practice areas. But did the proposed team actually work on those successes? Often times, the answer is no. Case studies should be a true reflection of the experience you're buying.

Schedule another in-person meeting. Test the observations, insights and concerns you had from the first meeting. Invite new persons to the meeting to see if their observations align with yours. Allow a PowerPoint at the second meeting, but request no more than 10 slides. Can your proposed agency be concise, insightful and

strategic for your entire business? Did they even bring the same team as the first meeting?

Get a topline proposal of what's included and for what price. Make sure your agencies package this with KPIs.

Then



Steve Burkhart

make choice. It could be the best one you've ever made.

Steve Burkhart is the President of North America for the Hoffman Agency. He leads new business and client strategy for the agency and has seen every stripe, color and flavor of RFPs over the past 20+ years he has been in agency life. Before coming to Hoffman, he worked at Edelman and Weber Shandwick. O

your

#### PR PARAMOUNT FOR TECH GROWTH

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most important piece of your PR program? When pitching media, the impact of the product or service you are touting should shine through with every story angle. You must learn how to quickly and clearly make every person reading your pitch, no matter their knowledge level, know what your client's value-add is.

**Transparency** — a.k.a. no B.S. — is key when communicating with an entrepreneur. Don't PR your clients. Work together to set clear expectations from the start. While they live, breathe and believe in their technology, as PR professionals, we know that often it requires a lot of education, creative positioning and persistence to land coverage. Don't be afraid to be real with your client; push back when necessary, but always offer alternative solutions to get results. Also, if a particular program isn't working, let them know early and piv-

Get \$h!t done. I have this sign lit up in my office and it's a way of life for tech com-

panies. Labeled by BOX CEO and Founder Aaron Levie as one of their core values, high-growth tech companies "take risks and fail fast," allowing them to run at the pace needed to scale rapidly. PR people need to keep up. To run a successful tech PR agency, it's critical to operate at the same velocity as our clients.

Working alongside entrepreneurs, engineers and businesspeople to help articulate their vision makes the tech sector one of the most exciting and rewarding areas for marketing and communications pros to work in. The PR adage that "no day is the same" couldn't be truer when working with hyper-growth companies, as the business they are today may be drastically different from the business they'll be in a month's time. And when you start working with a unicorn, strap yourself in and enjoy the ride, because you're about to water ski behind an aircraft carrier.

Nikki Parker is VP of Technology and Corporate Communications at 5WPR. O

#### EVERY COMPANY IS A TECH COMPANY

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Engage Influencers. Build your profile with influencers to gain validation and endorsement. Leverage influencers to build stakeholder confidence in your brand's innovative core.

Establishing your technology imperative holds the promise of elevating your customer experience and transforming your brand. It can infuse new life into existing products, deliver new levels of service, and enable your audiences to immerse themselves in your brand in entirely new ways. The technology world moves at the speed of sound, so be sure to keep pace with new innovations as they emerge, stay on top of how other organizations are using them, and find applications that best fit your brand's values and your audiences' needs. Organizations taking this approach will propel their brands and businesses forward by proving that their audiences' needs and experiences come first.

Larry Weber is Chairman and CEO of Racepoint Global. O

# **Communications after the Fourth Industrial Revolution**

Leaders in the technology sector must address data privacy concerns and be transparent and authentic in how they operate if they want to maintain trust and help consumers understand how emerging technologies are impacting society. **By Sanjay Nair** 

echnological innovations are fundamentally changing society as we know it, affecting both our work and personal lives.

In fact, artificial intelligence, long confined to advanced tech projects, is increasingly prevalent in objects as mundane as household appliances and as ubiquitous as smart phones. Google's Pixel 3 phone, for example, has AI capabilities that auto-adjust the camera to capture the best picture, as well as predictive texting and machine-learning enabled call screening, offering a preview into the coming Fourth Industrial Revolution.

That revolution is well underway, and is seeing technological breakthroughs in a wide range of fields, including robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, the Internet of Things, fifth-generation wireless technologies and additive manufacturing/3D printing, among many others.

As the First Industrial Revolution used steam power to replace people in manufacturing, the Second replaced steam power with electric power, allowing for mass production. The Third utilized electronics and information technology to automate production. This so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution will combine aspects of each of these previous revolutions by blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres.

The result is a transformation of technological speed, impact, adoption and relevance that has no historical precedent.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution's exponential pace is not only disrupting nearly every industry globally, but also fundamentally transforming entire systems of production, management and governance.

To put it bluntly, we're living in a world where technology is evolving faster than we are, and we cannot predict the long-term societal impact these advancements will have.

As anxiety increases from the risks of AI, driverless cars and robotic automation, it's our job as communications professionals to help people understand these emerging technologies and their impact — both good and bad — in a proactive way. In effect, we must help facilitate the long-term exponential thinking necessary to develop a system for technology to augment and complement humans.

A key component of this is ensuring that those responsible for the Fourth Industrial

Revolution — technology companies — are taking the right actions to build and maintain society's trust.

In the 2018 Edelman Trust in Technology supplement, we examined the societal and economic concerns in relation to technology of people around the globe. We found that even in this climate of distrust, technology is still the most trusted of all business sectors — meaning that technology companies have a license to lead.

The technology sector has evolved to a point where it isn't about speeds-and-feeds; everything is now fast, and what's important is how your tech can improve lives and provide positive change. Companies need the public to trust their technology if they want widespread adoption and those that haven't built trust will pay a steep price in such an environment.

While tech is the most trusted business sector, troubling concerns around their societal value and impact are bubbling, and if disregarded could lead to further tech backlash. In our trust in technology supplement, three-quarters of respondents believe tech companies need to improve societal issues broadly, while 79 percent want tech companies to play a larger role in educating the future workforce to keep pace with emerging skills.

Organizations need to act with purpose and take a stand on issues that speak to their values. Leading with transparency and ethics both internally with employees and externally with stakeholders at large will have a positive impact on society and business, an impact that is welcomed by the general public.

This includes doing more to help regular people affected by emerging technologies, such as automation, in their day-to-day lives.

Our client, Infosys, partnered with the Rhode Island school of Design to train the future workforce with the necessary tech tools. Over the next two years, Infosys will train 1,000 designers across the globe, and has chosen to partner with RISD to contribute to this goal because of the institution's ability to guide an immersive learning experience steeped in both studio practice and the liberal arts.

Beginning with an eight-week pilot this summer, Infosys will partner with RISD to develop a curriculum to build the skills of these designers, helping them acquire design- and human-centric skills in technologies used to address challenges facing Infosys' global clients. Infosys will focus on hiring designers with these specialized design skills as part of its commitment to hire 500 American workers in Rhode Island over the next five years.

Companies must also set an example for inclusion and ethics. Pay-Pal, for example, canceled plans to build a headquarters in North Carolina over equality concerns regarding the 2016 "Bathroom Bill." The company chose to speak out against laws



they saw as at odds with their company values. Both Adobe and HP have taken affirmative actions towards diversity and inclusion efforts. For example, HP has committed to diversity internally and externally with its suppliers and partners. Recently, Apple's Tim Cook waded into the conversation around the separation of immigrant families and children.

Being open is crucial to building trust in tech. Only 53 percent of global respondents believe that tech companies are transparent and authentic in how they operate. For example, the recent backlash against social media tech giants related to privacy and transparency is making consumers increasingly wary of tech practices.

Technology companies must act to address data privacy concerns and join forces with regulators, platforms and consumers to restore and maintain trust. Silence is not an option.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is being shaped on pillars of human curiosity as much as greed. We can't afford to blindly pursue one, or be consumed by the other, without considering the eventual consequences. In short, how we act today as a global community will shape our collective

We are living in interesting times, with advances coming at a rapid-fire pace. AI and other emerging next-generation technologies are impacting how we work, live and play. Organizations today must take the human impact into consideration to be competitive in the business world of tomorrow.

Sanjay Nair is Global Chair of Edelman's *Technology Sector.* **O** 



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# AI, friend or foe?

Communicators in the tech sector are uniquely positioned to contribute to the current debate surrounding artificial intelligence.

By Sophie Scott

he AI battle lines have been drawn. On one side, you have evangelists who see artificial intelligence as progressive, positive and problem solving. To this group, AI is the secret weapon that's going to boost our economies and make society more productive, efficient and, well, better.

The other side, though, is deeply skeptical about its potential, wary of AI leading to a big brother society and convinced it will change the way we interact with each other - for the worse.

Of course, as with all things tech, the debate is complex. There will of course be both benefits and issues and problems along the way, as AI becomes more pervasive in our lives. As communicators in the tech sector, we're already pretty well-versed in this debate.

But one of the most important aspects of AI — its reputational impact — still doesn't get the same level of attention or scrutiny. And it should.

We recently took a deeper look at the way organizations in every industry are thinking about AI and communicating around it. The report — "Artificial Intelligence & Communications: The Fads. The Fears. The Future." — surveyed U.S. and UK consumers on their attitudes towards AI, and assembled a group of 25 experts to offer opinions on how and where the technology will make the greatest impact over the coming years.

The report reveals that the levels of hype around AI have influenced consumers' views, leading to a disconnect between the popular understanding of AI and what it means in reality. It's undeniable that we need much more education on the issue: 53 percent of global consumers believe there's not enough education about the role of AI in society and more than a quarter (26 percent) say they have poor or no understanding of what AI is.

And regardless of age group, all agreed that the responsibility for educating the public about AI should be shared between key stakeholders in business, government and academia, with 61 percent of all those surveyed sharing this view.

This lack of understanding and desire for knowledge provides vital context to communicators looking ahead to the coming months and years. We must make sure brands are aware of all of AI's potential consequences and how these could be interpreted (or misinterpreted) by their audiences. Here are a few that are particularly important:

#### The bias problem

Humans have inherent biases and, because we effectively "teach" AI via the algorithms we develop, we pass many of those biases on in the process. With these inherited biases, AI becomes far less effective in enforcing its decisions fairly. And, because there's an expectation that AI is neutral and treats everyone fairly, evidence of bias will prove disastrous for any associated brand.

In the future, our clients that use AI will have to be active in defending the integrity of their algorithms against accusations of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. You might think this will concern only Silicon Valley tech brands, but government institutions that use AI to vet applications will have to be proactive in disproving any sense of bias. Likewise, if a bank uses an AI tool to assess the creditworthiness of mortgage applicants, will its algorithms treat people from different socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds equally?

#### It's still imperfect

AI in 2018 is by no means finished. Human language and interaction is full of subtlety and nuance, refined over centuries. Likewise, every image or picture comes loaded with symbolism and meaning. If human beings can regularly get these signals and social cues wrong, we can similarly expect AI to make mistake after mistake along the way.

Communicators will need to understand the nuances of the AI technology used in their businesses. It can't be something that the communications side of an organization just leaves to the techies; it's vital that they are completely on top of the technology's potential public impact.

They also need to be able to defend the integrity of AI's decision making. Communications teams will have to work with the public to build trust and goodwill. For example, how can the public help organizations build better technology?

#### **Acting ethically**

The data privacy and ethics issues aren't going away, and it's tied closely to the whole question of AI's role in society. If

you look at the rollout of GDPR in Europe this year, the tightening of privacy legislation worldwide and the impact of privacy breaches at tech and non-tech brands alike, the issue will continue to consume communicators' time. Data is the lifeblood of AI;



Sophie Scott

the more data it can access, the better it can perform. Communicators must ensure our clients have the permission to use this data, and provide clarity and transparency over how data is obtained and used.

So, what can organizations do right now to start preparing for AI? Internal audits to determine how AI is being used in the business and how it will be deployed in the future can give communications teams proper oversight. Following this thorough assessment, they'll have a far better idea of what customers, employees and partners need to know. Then they can develop a full communications plan, where an organization can set out how to communicate the benefits AI will deliver to key audiences.

At the same time, consider a risk-assessment program to work out everything from the potential impact of AI on employees to the consequences of a data breach.

AI will undoubtedly become more of a focus for communicators as society's shift to automation gains pace. And it's already clear that PR and communications will be critical in managing through the issues and mitigating the reputational risk, while telling the positive story of AI's potential, too.

Our industry is uniquely positioned to do this. Our commitment to authenticity and transparency will help businesses build goodwill and understanding amongst audiences, deepen relationships in this grey area of new technology, and earn our place in the AI conversation that's just getting started.

Sophie Scott is Global Managing Director for Technology at FleishmanHillard. O

#### Tech PR and SMEs: collaborate or collide

Tech PR pros and subject matter experts and work well together, but cooperation often fails when one party often doesn't know the role the other is supposed to play. Bv Dan Garza

ubject matter experts and technology PR pros should be inextricably intertwined. And in most cases, they are or can be. In other cases, they're not, and it's not generally due to personality clashes, although sometimes that occurs too.

Largely, one simply doesn't know the role the other is supposed to play. That issue is further aggravated by the fact that not all SMEs are created equal.

SMEs are important personas for the PR pro to achieve goals. Most often, the SME in a product marketing organization provides the necessary information used to create new product announcements. But for the heavier stuff, the big artillery, technical SMEs are in great demand to provide detailed content. That big artillery includes byline articles, white papers, eBooks, technical conference papers, and other major PR assets.

Tech SMEs fall into an array of categories, each one with specific traits the PR pro must clearly spot and understand to be successful, move ahead, and accomplish his or her objectives.

A cooperative, technology-knowledgeable and easy-going SME with no axe to grind is the best of all worlds. When you get this type of SME, you're more productive and get the job done well and on time. Plus, this SME articulates a topic to the point the marketing asset the PR pro is sourcing is verbally written with little editing necessary.

Generally, this particular SME accounts for about 99 percent of all the good SMEs. But that other one percent is troublesome. To put it mildly, SMEs with certain undesirable traits hand the PR pro some challenges. A PR pro may at first have some trepidation and doubts about dealing with them. However, those difficulties can eventually be overcome by fully understanding the duties you're responsible for as a PR pro and content marketing writer and what the responsibilities are for the SME.

The PR pro/content marketing writer can confront a variety of SME types. There are major categories. However, a host of others exist sharing many of the same characteristics. The one commonality is this one percent hands the PR pro some level of difficulty. In most instances, it's based on a strong aversion to cooperation for any number of reasons.

Let's start with the engineer SME, who focuses more on questioning whether you're technical and worthy enough to be his/her byline article ghostwriter. Nothing positive is coming out of this big ego SME's mouth. This one takes considerable objectivity, patience and several sessions to convince him/her that productive collaboration and gathering his/her content will produce good results.

Then, there's the VP of Marketing SME. He has a promotional bent and no understanding of content marketing versus advertising writing. Instructions coming from this SME are to write about a product's uniqueness and features and nothing else.

You can say this one is set in his/her ways. It's the marketing manager SME, who only knows how to communicate with the PR pro via "marketing speak." This is akin to promotional talk, but lacks substantive technical content that conveys solutions that customers are looking for.

Another troublesome engineer SME dislikes the conventional, generally-accepted Associated Press Style of writing and complains he can do a better job of writing in his "funny and quirky" writing style. Unfortunately, this SME doesn't know or want to understand editorial requirements.

Troublesome SMEs are even in the upper echelons. This is the CEO SME, who wants someone to write an op ed column for him. But he doesn't have the time or inclination to meet for 20 minutes with the PR pro/content marketing writer to discuss what he wants to say. The PR pro then gathers background materials and tries his/ her best to write the CEO's op ed, in effect, second-guessing the CEO. After spending hours reading half a dozen or more drafts, the CEO still isn't pleased with what has been written for him. Spending 20 minutes at the outset to nail down this CEO's thought process would have proven more productive.

Finally, there's the nice, but disorganized company president SME. He or she fully cooperates with the PR pro/content marketing writer. They meet for 30 to 45 minutes, discussing all the salient points. The downside is this SME's discussed topics aren't in sequential order. His or her discussion covers a bunch of subjects, none of them linked together. Here, the PR pro must be a master of puzzles, carefully edit the SME's original

content, and expertly piece together a rational article or other marketing asset.

#### PR pro/content writer responsibilities

Some tech companies expect the PR pro/ content writer to fully understand their technologies and be able to write in depth about them. That's an absurd assumption, and it's hard to convince some people of your main roles.

Those roles include understanding the

target audience. You must also have a basic understanding of the technical subject you're writing about. Depending on the marketing asset you're writing, you have to understand the correct and proper structure to get the highest possible customer readership. It



Dan Garza

you're ghostwriting a byline article, understand the target publication's and editor's requirements. Also, you should understand the marketing message and unique selling proposition to be embedded in the marketing content.

#### **SMEs' responsibilities**

On the other hand, the SME must understand that team work is essential for effectively producing sound marketing content. Further, it's critical to fully understand the technology subject being covered and to ensure it's being communicated clearly and fully. If the SME isn't able for whatever reason to provide certain technical details, then he/she should recommend a secondary SME who can provide that specific con-

Time is of the essence. An SME must agree to at least a total of two hours per project with that time divided over time into smaller time increments for the purpose of (1) discussing the subject with the PR pro/marketing content writer, (2) reviewing a proposed project outline and (3) reviewing a first cut of the marketing content asset the PR pro writes and making necessary changes/additions to make the content technically accurate.

The basic rule of thumb for the PR pro is to confidently take command of content marketing. He or she must clearly explain the separate roles the PR pro and SME play. Then, the PR pro must take the lead and steadily, effectively move through each step of the content gathering process to achieve that PR goal.

Dan Garza is a marketing PR professional and veteran observer of Silicon Valley PR. O

#### Will native content fall victim to fake news?

Skepticism in the media is at an all-time high. How should brands treat native advertising today?

By Julie Karbo

ative ads have overtaken display as the most popular form of digital advertising, but the gaming of social channels and the mistrust of media based on cries of fake news threaten to usurp its value.

In general terms, a native ad is any paid content that mimics the design of the press-generated content available on the channel on which it appears. It can be a paid editorial that subtly weaves a brand's value into the article. It can be a hashtag that a brand promotes to spur user engagement.

When done well, native ads can be informative and persuade the reader without violating their trust.

In the era of fake news, growing consumer confusion and mistrust, it's more important than ever that native advertising content be true to this mission.

#### **Fake versus real content**

Americans have been hearing a lot about "fake news" over the last four years. The term was actually coined by Buzzfeed editor Craig Silverman, who defined it as "completely false information that was created and spread for profit."

The noise around fake news first reached a crescendo during the 2016 presidential election, when it dominated airwaves and altered the way some people perceived the mainstream media.

It's still used in today's tribal political warfare, which inaccurately calls out quality news content developed by respected news outlets as false. This misrepresentation can bleed over into mistrust of brandbased content. Consumers are struggling to distinguish between factual and manipulative content, as it can be hard to tell the difference between an outright lie intended to provoke a reaction and a sincere sponsored article designed to mimic objective content. Brands are struggling to walk the line between persuasion and transparency.

#### How has the relationship between consumers and brands changed?

We live in an era of values-based consumerism. In fact, a recent Forrester report found that seven in ten Millennials consider a company's values when making a purchase — nearly 40 percent higher than the adult population as a whole.

Even among older generations, it's becoming increasingly important for brands to declare — and act on — clearly defined corporate values. Customers today want authenticity from their favorite brands —

whether it's a declaration of corporate values or a shift toward more user-generated

Going forward, it will be increasingly common to see native ads that rely on user-generated content such as reviews and pain points. These ads will still match the channel's form and function, but the content will be perceived as less advertorial and more authentic.

#### Why are native ads so effective?

As digital consumers, we've developed a remarkable ability to tune out unwanted information. Just look at the way browsing habits on Google have evolved. Five years ago, people started reading at the top of a search results page. Today, people have learned to start reading about a quarter of the way down, skipping over the paid ads and starting with organic results.

One of the reasons native ads are so effective is their ability to manifest as content developed by a credible third party instead of an advertorial.

According to a recent study by CMO. com, consumers are 25 percent more likely to look at a native ad than at a banner. These same consumers check out a native ad 4.7 times per session on average, versus 2.7 times for banners.

Native ads also have a significant impact on conversions and brand affinity. According to research published by Digital Relevance, native ads have been found to increase purchase intent by 18 percent and brand affinity by nine percent, when compared to traditional banner ads.

Brands are taking notice. According to Business Insider, native advertising will drive 74 percent of all ad revenue by 2021.

#### Where does public relations fit in?

PR practitioners have a responsibility to serve as brand stewards, helping companies define — and protect — their reputation. They also work closely with the media, leading to coverage that factually informs consumers of the benefits provided by their companies or clients. While it appears the PR person serves several masters, these roles can and should be balanced.

This becomes especially important when external factors such as fear mongering threaten to undermine credible content. PR must straddle the line between increasing brand awareness and affinity and producing honest content, both paid and earned.

When it comes to native ads, the following tips will help you develop a paid media strategy that's positive and reflects well on your brand.

Lead with quality. While it seems obvious, it's easy to find brands that don't start with this commitment. Content must address a need, be written in a journalistic tone, adhere to the style of the publication and be non-promotional. Of course, depending on the content and publication,

humor and creativity can be effective tools.

Educate on the value of transparency. Consumer trust is inherently fragile and, once lost, difficult to regain. PR professionals can help brands understand the value of transparency and honesty across every channel, including advertising.



Julie Karbo

Find the right mix of native ads and earned media. There is no denying the effectiveness of native ads, but a well-rounded outreach strategy will always yield better results. Earned media carries special value, whether it's a contributed article or a high-impact feature story. It's a little harder to earn coverage than cut a check, but the impact is worth the effort and will boost the efficacy of native efforts.

Craft ads that won't leave your customers feeling deceived. Not all native ads are created alike. Some are virtually indistinguishable from editorial content; others are clearly marked as sponsored content. If a native ad feels promotional on any level, it can be interpreted as deceitful on every level.

#### What's the future of native advertising?

Marketers and brands alike are extremely bullish on native advertising. When looking at the numbers, it's easy to see why. Native is having a tremendous impact on the advertising and PR worlds, with one forecast by eMarketer projecting 40 percent annual growth over the next few years.

Publications are equally reliant on native ads. For example, these ads are responsible for three-quarters of *The Atlantic's* annual ad revenue.

With so much money driving native content, it's important for PR professionals to get a handle on how best to navigate what can be a gray area and ensure that ethical and quality standards are maintained. Native's long-term health and success will ultimately depend on providing value to the

Julie Karbo is Founder and CEO of Karbo Communications. O

# Communicating growth demands multiple channels

Sustaining growth marketing success can be achieved with an integrated approach that weaves a story across a mix of earned, owned and paid channels.

**By Adam Cormier** 

usinesses today are leaning on marketing departments to deliver more than a 30-second television ad. Elevating brand awareness and influencing the customer experience, all while being held accountable for net new revenue, is today's expectation of marketing departments.

These needs can be fulfilled with the art and science of storytelling.

Helping define the term "story," Robert McKee and Thomas Gerace, co-authors of Storynomics, Story-Driven Marketing in the Post-Advertising World, surmise that, "the essential core event in all stories ever told in the history of humanity can be expressed in just three words: conflict changes life."

Today, screens of all sizes are bombarded with messages striving to propel the audience to action. Messages that aren't tied to the brand's story fail. If there's no brand story, the message had no shot from the get-go.

Unfortunately, in conference rooms around the world, "story" is used interchangeably with things that are not a story, like narratives, journeys and, worst of all, use cases. These things are important to incorporate through the different stages of story to integrate the voice of a customer, but to equate them with the story itself is an unfortunate malpractice.

Human evolution drives us to desire stories. There's both a physiological and psychological reaction to a well-told story. Naturally, we identify with an empathetic protagonist and go as far as to mirror emotions and actions. Most importantly, we use our storage bank of stories to inform our action/reaction to present and future situations. Stories, regardless of fact or fiction, give us a frame of reference that is the basis for making decisions. In other words, a good brand story naturally compels a trusted buying decision.

#### How to tell a good brand story?

As brand storytellers, we live in a world of ever-shifting forces. On one side, there is the changing and fractured mix of channels with which to communicate the elements of story. Combining this flux of channels with shrinking time and space demands that we are data-driven, creative and disciplined.

#### There's drama in data

Understanding the intended audience requires a deep and ongoing review of data. An effective story touches the needs and desires of the audience. To convert from

audience to prospect, the target personas created within the marketing organization must detail not just demographics, but also a rich understanding of the motivations, pressures and objects of desire. As time passes, the trustworthiness of channels ebbs and flows, so data analysis is an always-on commitment. Consistent evaluation of data will help drive the channel mix as it relates to the different stages of the story. From social channels to landing pages to blogs, each and every channel presents an opportunity for content — earned, owned and paid — to be integrated into a storyboard that brings the audience through each story stage.

#### Creativity differs by channel, audience

A story-driven model ultimately tests the marketing department to break away from a feature/benefit/award theme and think bigger about the brand and its place in the minds of employees, customers, prospects and the community. The challenge posed to the marketing team is to develop an empathetic protagonist out of a thing, not a person. Understanding that audiences are more cynical today than ever before, thanks to years of mistrustful actions from corporations and executives, a story's power comes from positive emotional ties. With this, creative "character" development is required to achieve a connection. Giving "life" to an inanimate object involves well-crafted words and dynamic imagery. Instead of the 30-second television ad as the primary channel, today's marketer has the creative freedom to reach audiences with a near infinite mix of pairing words and imagery by communications channel. A marketer today can take an idea, integrate it within the brand story, and deliver a truly customized message to a specific target where, when and how the target desires to receive that message.

#### Disciplined to keep the story vision

Science and the history of humankind proves that a story is a foundational element to how we react and respond to the actions and environment around us. Changing to a story-driven model is a cultural shift within an organization, but the benefit is a sustained emotional connection with customers and employees. This requires discipline among marketing, sales and leadership to stay the course. Like great TV shows that keep audiences engaged season to season, a disciplined team keeps the story vision through the many arcs, twists and turns as the business evolves.

The most compelling success stories in business are aptly named and connect with us on an emotional level.

To conclude with an additional passage from Storynomics, "The mind builds sto-

ries to bridge the gap between itself and the universe, between itself and the past, present, and future. Story form imposes order on chaos; it penetrates the enigma of the seems to express the cause and effect of the is; it unifies events to bring meaning out of meaninglessness.



**Adam Cormier** 

Knowledge expressed in story form gathers other human beings around its themes, uniting communities and building cultures."

For B2B marketers at technology companies, a story-driven approach solves many challenges, from product/solution adoption and awareness to customer experience. "Speeds and feeds" do not make a story. Bringing life to a brand that is empathetic, humble and understanding of the audiences' object of desire will impact results dramatically. Start with understanding your audience while taking a critical look at the protagonist (the business). Audit existing content by its core value. If it does not fit a binary problem/solution construct, it holds no value in the brand story. From here, assess the gaps, set the long-term vision and storyboard the plot twists to success.

Adam Cormier is Vice President at PAN Communications. O

#### PR news brief

#### AbMac tunes Gibson comeback

Abernathy MacGregor is handling the encore performance of legendary guitar maker Gibson Brands as it plans to emerge from Chapter 11 on Nov. 1.

The Nashville-based company today introduced its new management team led by president/CEO James "JC" Curleigh, who was formerly president of Levi jeans brand at Levi Strauss.

Curleigh, an owner of Gibson and Epiphone guitars, is joined by chief merchant officer Cesar Gueikian, a performer in several rock and heavy metal bands and founder of Melody Capital Partners, an alternative asset management firm with 1.5 billion in assets under management.

Curleigh said the reemergence from bankruptcy marks "the beginning of a new era for Gibson to build on its proven heritage and iconic status.

Gibson declared Chapter XI in May, burdened by a heavy debt load connected with a disastrous push into home entertainment and headphones.

AbMac's Kate Murray and Dan Scorpio represent

# Where have all the tech storytellers gone?

Today's new breed of technology companies have returned to the dot.com era's approaches to outreach, challenging tech communicators' relationships with the media as well as our clients. PR pros can use this opportunity to serve as educators, bringing back the stories that place trust and reputation behind our clients' products and establishing human connections as a goal for our profession. By Kathryn Walker

echnology startups of the late 90s and early 2000s were the Horatio Alger tales of their time: any company with a little bit of luck and pluck could find their way to greatness. If they didn't find greatness, they certainly found notoriety. PR professionals couldn't join the ranks fast enough to meet growing demand. There were just so many companies with stories to tell and a tremendous public appetite to hear those stories.

The key word is story.

I'm now approaching my 20-year anniversary of work in tech PR. And truthfully, I'm wondering where the stories have gone.

No, I don't mean coverage. After two decades in the industry, I fully understand the current media climate. I'm also a firm believer in the fact that while the volume of available publications may be shrinking, there are still ample opportunities to showcase your technology brand — if you tell the right story.

The tech industry, however, seems to have decided that "storytelling" is the latest buzzword to be cast aside. In many new business presentations, I can almost hear the eye roll when I start to explain my firm's storytelling philosophy. We're in an era where many in tech are reverting to product-based language and announcements are becoming catalogues of new offerings. That's certainly not true of the brand behemoths, but for those who don't have hospitals or sports arenas named after them we're flipping the playbook back to the days of "talk tech to

There's a problem with that approach.

Consolidation — of media, of industry analysts and even of technology companies themselves — means that technology on its own simply isn't enough. Sure, it's a core pillar of the story. A tech company story can't stand up without strong technology, but technology itself doesn't provide human

Simply put: software can't smile at you even if it incorporates the latest and greatest

People will look at your technology because they have a specific need, but they ultimately don't buy on specs. People buy from people. If you're looking to use PR as a means of increasing technology sales, you simply can't ignore the need to share more about you and your organization with target customers. Simply parroting details on speeds and feeds doesn't allow for trust to be placed in your organization. It doesn't answer the critical question of why someone should do business with you, or, more specifically, why they should trust you to meet their needs.

Trust is the key factor here. Much has been said about the currency of trust. Before money as we know it was introduced, if you wanted to make a trade you relied on your relationships in the community. Recommendations mattered because they came from your personal connections. Relationships were created over a period of time, solidified by information that you shared about yourself with those around you. They were based on trust.

This is where the "talk tech to me" approach falls down. It doesn't highlight rela-

tionships or create new ones. It doesn't establish

Jargon assures the audience that you know your technology, but it doesn't allow your audience to get to know you or to feel like you want to get to know them. Jargon also contributes



Kathryn Walker

to a significant missed opportunity in your communications program. Jargon-based announcements, pitches based on specs, social channels and blogs that read like user manuals simply can't cut through the noise in our ever-evolving media climate.

This product-based approach also doesn't allow for trust to be placed in us as PR practitioners working on your behalf.

Product announcements and technology updates provide a hook, but our contacts want to be assured that we're giving them information on the trends and concepts that are going to be most impactful to their readers. When we eliminate storytelling from the equation, we're simply not giving them anything to work with. We as practitioners become less reliable sources of information. This not only creates a little issue with "results" — or lack thereof — it ultimately damages our credibility.

When I talk to new technology companies about the importance of storytelling, I frequently hear "so tell me how another company my size has used this the right way." Twenty years ago, I would have had no problem answering that question. Today, I have to ask myself: where have all of the technology storytellers gone?

Don't get me wrong, the dot.com era cratered spectacularly for a reason and trust was a big part of that. Many of the stories told during that time weren't firmly based on truth. Trust was fractured and the tech industry as a whole paid the price.

Now I'm asking that we stop paying for it. Bring back the stories. Establish human connections. And, most importantly, put reputation and trust behind products again.

Kathryn Walker is SVP and Partner at Mc-*Grath/Power Public Relations.* **O** 

### Micro-influencers pick authenticity over profit

new study conducted by Social-Publi.com shines some light on the habits and engagement patterns of micro-influencers, or brand advocates with fewer than 10,000 followers, who've made a splash in the influencer segment for their ability to successfully engage audiences on smaller marketing budgets.

SocialPubli.com's study discovered that micro-influencers are uniquely prolific. More than three-quarters (77 percent) publish content on a daily basis, and nearly half (48 percent) publish at least twice a day. More than a third (37 percent) recommend products or services on a daily basis, and 84 percent do so at least once a week.

Instagram was cited as their preferred

social media network, with 61 percent citing the photo-sharing site as their favorite platform. The study also discovered that micro-influencers generate seven times more engagement with followers on Instagram than the average engagement generated by third-party spokespersons with much larger followings, such as celebrities or athletes.

Virtually all of the brand advocates polled (99 percent) said they believe in the products and services they promote. In terms of the specific traits that are most important to their engagement activities, 32 percent cited authenticity, followed by sharing quality content (27 percent). 14 percent also said a brand's values must be aligned with their own. O



# When is a tech brand not just a tech brand?

Best practices for tech companies selling into complex vertical industries.

By Amy Fisher

echnology companies are a dime a dozen these days. Brands that may once have categorized themselves simply as software, hardware or services organizations are now wedging themselves under the technology umbrella. Even companies that focus on specific markets like financial services, industrial manufacturing or healthcare are slinging the technology moniker — often because they invest in innovative digital capabilities, or they play in a complex technology-adjacent segment such as science, analytics or development.

The benefit of this approach is that "technology" is seen as the best way to solve any problem. The downside is that it's hard to differentiate your brand compared to other technology companies.

#### Understanding your purpose

I've seen brands try this broad-based technology approach. They start by saying they're a technology company, and then narrow the message down to try and explain "what kind of technology." All the while getting more and more mired in features and functions.

Brands that attempt this approach are forgetting the main purpose of their message, their "why" (a shout-out to Simon Sinek here for his mastery of articulating its importance). The "why" helps brands define what they believe in and how it impacts others. It makes a brand "relatable."

For example, a brand could state, "We believe that rural communities have the same right to high quality healthcare as urban communities. That's why we created a way for patients to connect virtually with doctors around the country that match the care they require, all without leaving home."

That's a lot more compelling than saying "We're a technology company. We make a telemedicine platform."

#### Defining target audiences

Once an organization's marketing team has figured out its "why," the next step is to understand the stakeholders they want to reach. The majority of technology brands our agency works with are trying to connect with CIOs, CTOs and VPs of IT, among others. But that's usually where they

Smart brands go one step further to define the industry where their key stakeholders exist. While this is extremely important for technology brands that target multiple verticals, it also applies to those technology brands serving just one industry. Here's why: individuals within different industries (even those with the exact same title) make technology buying decisions very differently.

A healthcare CIO buying an Internet of Things solution may be looking to improve the patient experience within the hospital, while a manufacturing CIO may be buying an IoT solution to track inventory across the supply chain. The tool they need is the same, but the outcome of that tool is unique.

Once you understand this, you realize that you can't treat all CIOs the same. You must create a story for each industry segment that aligns with their desired outcomes. This is what I call "purposeful" communication. It doesn't matter if you're selling ERP systems, eCommerce platforms, security systems, automation, mobility solutions, IoT, cloud solutions, enterprise software or any other type of technology. The key is to lead with the challenges that apply to your customer's specific business, then articulate why your technology brand is qualified to meet the needs of that segment.

#### Applying path to purchase to comms

Maintaining this mindset is of utmost importance when it comes to marketing, public relations and sales. One way to start down this path is to create personas for your different markets. Consider your buyer's end goal, unique attributes and challenges of their industry, motivations for finding a solution and the barriers they encounter along the path to purchase.

Most technology brands that participate in this persona exercise go into the process thinking they know their buyers pretty well. But often, we come across unknowns. For example, is the barrier truly price, or is it a concern about job security if they automate more processes? Who are the influencers to purchase: the CEO, the CMO or a line of business manager? Where does your buyer get the most trusted information?

To overcome these unknowns and get to a more accurate persona, you may need to conduct research. While secondary research exists for some buyers, nothing can compare to primary qualitative research when it comes to understanding your buyer. Make sure you talk to a research team that understands your goal and can develop an insights-driven approach that allows you to uncover these path-to-purchase behaviors. This data will go a long way in helping you define the positive behaviors you want to reinforce through marketing, public relations and sales messaging.

#### Storytelling and messaging

Remember, as you build your purpose statement and messages, customize them to your buyer's industry. By using your buyer's language and showing that you understand their world, you can more easily differentiate yourself from other technology vendors

vying for their attention.

This may mean that the language you use is less like that of a traditional technology brand. And that's okay! Once you start to elevate your brand's story above your product and service offer-



ings, you start to change the buyer's perception of you. You can reposition your brand into a space where you become a trusted business solutions partner — one that's indispensable to the market because of your deep, and industry-specific, problem-solving abilities.

In our highly competitive, fast-paced business 4.0 world, it's no longer enough to be just another technology brand. You must be a brand that can articulate its purpose and engage with stakeholders using customized and personalized industry vernac-

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#### PR news brief

#### Weber Shandwick opens management consultant unit

Weber Shandwick has launched United Minds, a global management consultancy specializing in transformation.

The consultancy combines Weber Shandwick's global employee engagement & change management practice with United Minds Sweden, a management consultancy within Prime Weber Shandwick.

United Minds will be led by Kate Bullinger, who was formerly head of the employee engagement & change management practice. Thomas Areskoug, previously CEO of United Minds Sweden, will lead business strategy work globally for the new consul-

The agency says that the goal of United Minds is to combine data-fueled strategy and creative communications solutions to help executives deliver positive, lasting change and engage stakeholders in each step of the process.

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# Hyper-globalization and the critical role of PR

Globalization, social media and the disruptive forces of emerging technologies have created an environment that repositions PR from simply adding value to a company to a necessary skill for survival and success.

By Takashi Inoue

usiness and social environments are always in a state of change, but early in this new century we've begun to witness radical transformation. Throughout my public relations career, which began in the 1970s and involved helping two U.S. startups by the names of Intel and Apple enter the Japan market, as well as government organizations in the telecommunication, semi-conductor and auto-parts industries, I've developed my own methodology. It's a "relationship management" concept of PR, guided by ethics, two-way communication and self-correction, as opposed to simply communications management. This approach is even more relevant today with the advent of what I call hyper-globalization.

In 2016, Harvard University economist Dani Rodrik wrote about the current high level of international trade as "simply put, we have pushed economic globalization too far — toward an impractical version that we might call 'hyperglobalization." In addition to world trade, there's another dimension of globalization created by the Internet and social media, which has interconnected almost all of humanity digitally. Geographical distance is no longer a barrier. While many don't understand big data, they're relying on creating it each time they use the Internet. Our lives are becoming increasingly integrated with our smartphones. I use "hyper-globalization" to describe this radical new environment we're living in.

#### The three forces

Once you understand the forces driving all this economic and social change, you'll realize that the critical skill to survive and thrive today is PR as stakeholder relationship management, along with a process of ethical self-correction. Economists describe globalization in terms of economic activity, but limiting it to "trade-flows" keeps us from seeing clearly the new environment of hyper-globalization, which can be simply understood as:

The economic force of expansive growth in global trade and cross-border economic integration.

Human communication via the Internet force, in which instant global communication via social media and the Internet is changing norms of human communication and blurring sociocultural barriers.

The technological disruptive force of new innovations in technology driven by the Internet of things, big data, and artificial intelligence are bringing massive economic and rapid social change.

Moreover, we face rapid technological advancements in this new environment to such a degree that great advances in technology will not take centuries to materialize, but will occur much faster. It's critical for PR professionals to see this rapid and disruptive technological change as the new

#### Coping with disruptive change

Back in 1990, when international trade had just started to rapidly accelerate, General Motors and Ford were number one and two by revenues in the Fortune 500. In that same list for 2018 these companies have fallen to positions 10 and 11, respectively. Moreover, due to technological advances in electric batteries, motors and the advent of autonomous driving, auto manufacturers now face competition from Tesla and Alphabet. The auto industry also faces massive disruption from Mobility as a Service, where drivers no longer need to own cars. In October 2018, Toyota and Softbank announced a collaboration to create their own MAAS, but in a "David and Goliath" twist, vacuum cleaner company Dyson announced its own plans to build electric vehicles. Dyson's 2017 profits were 1.1 billion, compared to 22.7 billion for Toyota. In hyper-globalization, such challenges by newcomers will likely become common.

Besides such competitive challenges, companies in this new environment are more likely to face a crisis. In September 2018, a German court heard claims from some 4,000 Volkswagen AG shareholders, claiming nine billion euros for its failure to timely warn them of a U.S. regulatory investigation that resulted in the collapse of its share price. This could bring the total cost of its diesel emissions cheating scandal to 35 billion. These kinds of things have happened in the past, but in hyper-globalization a crisis is more likely to occur due to a rapid dissemination of information as well as the advent of "fake-news."

#### **Self-Correction Model of relationship** management

While the VW crisis may be a result to events happening too quickly, it also reflects a lack of ethics. I've helped a number of large companies survive a crisis. From this experience, I developed what I call the Self-Correction Model of relationship management. The SCM is a process that successful companies will imbed in one form

or another into the organization's DNA. It's founded on a commitment to ethics in a conscious effort to maintain two-way communications, and a determination to take continuous "self-corrective action" needed for the benefit of its many stakeholders. More importantly, when there's little or no

time to think out the best response to a challenge from disruptive change or a scandal, leaders need to take quick and effective action for which the SCM, when functioning within the organization, can give them the essential confidence that they're



Takashi Inoue

taking self-corrective action and not just following their own narrow self-interest.

Companies press employees and executives to increase sales, lower costs and develop new products. While necessary to achieve results, this can exist at times in conflict with acting ethically. Moreover, we have free-will, in which to choose to act ethically or follow narrow self-interest. Because of this, the SCM uses "self-correction" rather than "adjustment" in recognition of human nature. Humans are not one-cell organisms automatically making "adjustments"; they make changes based on a sense of right and wrong. And they use what's known in philosophy and physiology as "meta-cognition," whereby a person is conscious of awareness and is able to apply a higher-order of thinking skills. Although for a company the objective is to change a product, service or business policy, it all begins with an individual changing the self. The SCM is about the individuals that form a company correcting it through a process of self-correction of the individuals within it.

Today, the three forces of hyper-globalization will multiply the external challenges that can threaten an organization's existence and allow very little time to react. Leaders that can apply the relationship management of PR, and which can embed the Self-Correction Model, will be more likely to survive the new environment and to actively contribute to a better world.

Dr. Takashi Inoue, Ph.D., is Chairman and CEO of Inoue Public Relations Inc. in Tokyo. He is also a visiting professor at Kyoto University, Akita International University, and Communications University of China. O

# **Communicating the Techeffect**

PR pros have a responsibility to understand the nuanced forces affecting today's tech landscape, and to counsel clients on how to communicate effectively during this tech revolution.

By Jodi Brooks

Technology trends are changing the way we engage in business, from AI to machine learning, IOT, blockchain, robotics and more. Our technology revolution is also disrupting our entire ecosystem, providing access where there once was no connectivity. And technology impacts all types of companies: the legacy giants who need to transform to stay relevant, the new software startups with low overhead and every traditional company that's adapting to this transformation and driving innovation in their industry.

We're in the midst of a technology transformation, which I call the Techeffect.

How do we council our clients to communicate during this Techeffect to lead and differentiate? How do we communicate authentically and accurately to the right audiences while consistently delivering a data-driven impact? Here are a few sugges-

#### Legacy technology companies

These players have set the pace for the industry and while they don't need to change their story, they need to evolve their audiences with whom they are communicating.

Their audience is no longer limited to the CIO or VP of IT. Just as every business is now a technology company, every executive — whether it's the head of marketing, finance, operations or human resources is also a technology customer.

The legacy technology companies need to start selling across the entire C-suite. They must be comfortable talking to the head of DHL, you need to embrace technology. You

HR about how technology can help them better hire, train and engage their employees. They must adjust their mindset and start telling their story in a way that resonates with each of these executive roles and personas to have the greatest success going forward.

#### The hot, cool start-ups

These companies are typically seeking one of three things: a new funding round, an acquisition by a larger company or a public offering. Without a clear story and communications strategy, none of these outcomes is possible.

Startups should never try to be all things to all people. The winning business strategy is to identify an unaddressed problem or challenge in the market and then offer a very specific solution. But once this solution is developed, it must be communicated to customers. Companies like Uber and Slack have done this exceptionally well.

Winning for these companies is to create and deliver a laser-focused communications strategy that hammers your one key differentiator and highlights exactly why you are unique in the market.

#### **Traditional non-tech companies**

The reality is that, today, every company is a tech company. Even traditional organizations that have been in business for decades or centuries are coming to the conclusion that, to remain relevant, they must transform themselves into tech businesses.

So whether you're Ford, Walgreens or

might be great at making cars or filling prescriptions or delivering packages. But you also need to be a great technology company.

This is increasingly challenging, because these companies are competing with the likes of Google and Amazon for top tech talent to continue to innovate and compete. However, traditional non-tech companies have an inherent advantage — their inno-

vation is at the edge – where the technology is truly being implemented, deployed and consumed.

The communications opportunity with traditional businesses is three-fold; continue to lead on their core business value, share the consumer facing jour-



Jodi Brooks

ney and effectively communicate the digital transformation story.

However, traditional companies have a definitive advantage: they can communicate how their technology is applied in exciting new ways to positively impact how we live, work and play.

#### Your company's Techeffect story

No matter what type of company, everyone's impacted by the Techeffect, and it's our jobs, as communicators, to have a deep level of compression of the business dynamics that impact the entire tech landscape. Those with the right story will move confidently into the future, while those that don't will inevitably get left behind.

Jodi Brooks is Managing Partner and Technology Practice Lead at Finn Partners. O

# PR firms boost billing rates

PR staff charged more for account work in 2017 than the year before, according to a recent survey.

By Jon Gingerich

R firms, on average, increased their hourly billing rates last year from 2016, according to results from an annual survey conducted by PR merger and acquisition consultancy Gould+Partners.

Average billing rates for all account staff in 2017 — from the president/CEO all the way down to the account coordinators - was \$206 per hour, compared to \$196 in 2016.

Rates for virtually every account function have gone up, but especially so among senior staff: CEOs and presidents charged \$376 per hour last year, versus \$355 in 2016; EVPs/ SVPs charged \$346 per hour, compared to

\$324; and VPs charged \$303 compared to \$273. The only outlier in this regard were account managers, who maintained a flat average rate of \$225 per hour.

Senior staff are billing more, but when it comes to account staff productivity which is measured by billable time utilization — that number was up only for staff on the bottom of the hierarchy pyramid. VPs billed out 69.3 percent of their theoretical yearly capacity of 1,700 in 2017, compared to 67.3 percent in 2016. Account managers logged 78.8 percent, versus 2016's 76.4 percent. Account coordinators revealed

productivity of 86.6 percent, compared to 2016's 81.1 percent. And account executives exhibited the highest productivity of all, billing out 87.4 percent last year.

Presidents/CEOs, on the other hand, billed out an average of only 32.6 percent of their hours (compared to 2016's 33 percent), and EVPs/SVPs billed out 53.5 percent (down from 2016's 54.7 percent).

Gould+Partners Managing Partner Rick Gould told *O'Dwyer's* that the productivity of CEOs and EVPs can't be seen as accurate benchmarks, given that much of their time is spent on new business and management.

"What I look at is trends with VPs, account managers, account execs and account coordinators. These are the staff levels that produce the majority of the billable work," Gould said. O

# O'Dwyer's guide to TECHNOLOGY COMMUNICATIONS



The 10Fold team takes a minute to celebrate tremendous growth!

#### **5W PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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Ronn D. Torossian, President & Dara Busch, Matthew Caiola, **Executive Vice Presidents** 

Since 2003, New York Citybased 5W Public Relations (5WPR) has worked with widely known and emerging brands, corporations and high-profile individuals. We have a 360-degree approach to PR, social media, branding and digital marketing that delivers game-changing results to our clients.

Our Tech Practice, whose clients range from unicorns and Fortune 50's across all verticals including FinTech, eCommerce, AdTech, HRTech, B2C and B2B SAAS, is grounded in an entrepreneurial, agile, high-octane culture, an ideal fit for technology companies seeking visibility and relevance in today's fast growing digital world.

The core of our success is our unmatched ability to distill the complexities of a client's offering and convey it in ways that are both comprehensible and compelling — creating messages that resonate with all stakeholders. We understand that the technology doesn't always drive the story and build programs that integrate corporate positioning and profiling, fundraising announcements, product launches, C-Suite visibility programs, industry and analyst communications, speaking opportunities, digital/performance marketing and issues/crisis PR management.

Clients include: The Trade Desk, Zeta Global, Xaxis, Captify, Undertone, Lippincott, Storyblocks. CareerBuilder, JazzHR, Influential, Airhelp, Avant and Payoneer.

#### 10FOLD

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Susan Thomas, CEO Angela Griffo, Senior Vice President, Infrastructure Mike Kilroy, Vice President Fran Lowe, Vice President, Big Data Ross Perich, Vice President, Bart Tillmans, Vice President, Operating Systems Gary Good, Chief Media Strategist and Lead Writer

10Fold is an award-winning agency specializing in elevating B2B technology brands through media, analyst and influencer relations, content development (including an in-house video production team), social media services, and content amplification. Headquartered in San Francisco, 10Fold has regional offices in Pleasanton, Capistrano Beach, and San Diego, CA as well as Austin, TX and Denver, CO. The 10Fold team is differentiated based on its deep

domain expertise across artificial intelligence and machine learning, Big Data, cloud, DevOps,information security, enterprise software, mobile, networking and storage industries. 10Fold builds brand value by amplifying innovation and increasing share of voice for complex technology companies. Based on an accountable Metrics Matter<sup>™</sup> methodology, 10Fold has served more than 400 companies (including a "herd of unicorns") since its inception in 1995.

#### **BATEMAN GROUP**

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Fred Bateman, CEO and Founder Bill Bourdon, Partner & President Shannon Hutto, Executive VP & General Manager Paula Cavagnaro, Syreeta Mussante, Executive VPs Elinor Mills, Senior VP of content Victoria Butler, Rachael Cassidy, Ben Friedland, Kerry Tescher, Jen Woods, VPs Jennifer Steinle, VP of Operations Caleb Bushner, VP of Digital Strategy

James Niccolai, Marc Samson, **Directors of Content** Elise Chambers, Mina Manchester, Candice Mayan, Account Directors. Shannon Osthimer, Director of Operations Katie Garagozzo, Elena Keamy, Chrissy Lee, Margaret Pack, Adam Pryor, Katie Sullivan, Danielle Stickler, Jessie Yarrow, Account Managers Laura Sweet, Manager of Finance

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Tyler Perry, Partner & General

Manager Nicole Messier Marino, Senior VP Hugh Collins, Sarah Spitz, Amy Ziari, VPs Chris Heine. Director of Content & Media Strategy Lauren Scherr, Director of Content Courtney Chennells, Grace Emery, Puneet Sandhu, Dave Struzzi, Account Directors Kelsey Donahue, Hanna Johnson, Jordyn Lee, Quincy Zhai, Account Managers. Michael Oshima, Manager of Content Stephanie Leal, Manager of Operations.



From left: Bateman Group Partner and President Bill Bourdon; Fred Bateman, CEO and Founder; and Tyler Perry, Partner and GM of New York

Bateman Group is a content-led, data-driven PR agency focused on helping technology companies at every stage make a positive impact on the way we live and work. We believe crafting these stories requires a different way of thinking about PR and an exceptional team capable of delivering on its powerful possibilities. We're distinguished by our people-first culture and progressive workplace policies, allowing us to maintain one of the highest employee retention averages in the industry — 90 percent on average since inception.

Bateman Group has a very well-defined, distinctive company culture. The agency's motto is "Invest in Team First" — in other words, to deliver exceptional client service and award-winning work, the agency first must invest in its people. While fast growth often comes at the cost of employee turnover, Bateman Group has grown an average of 33 percent for the last three years with an average employee retention rate of 90 percent — among the highest in the industry.

Client Roster: Anthemis Group, Armis, Betterment, BIG Labs, BMC Software, Breather, Chronicle, Currencycloud, D2L, Dialpad, DigitalOcean, Factual, Ginkgo Bioworks, Google, Google Advanced Protection, HackerRank, Harness, iGEM, Invoca, Kabbage, League, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, LinkedIn Sales Solutions, MongoDB, Narvar, Netskope, Optimizely, Optimove, Ping Identity, Portworx, PredictHQ, Qubole, Rainforest, Recorded Future, Scale Venture Partners, Scalyr, Segment, Semmle, Service Channel, Shape Security, SkyRyse, SnapLogic, Synthego, Tenable, ThoughtSpot, Tradeshift, Ultimate Software, United Technologies, Unusual Ventures, Urban Airship, Virtustream and Waystar.

#### BERLINROSEN

15 Maiden Lane, Suite 1600 New York, NY 10038

Jonathan Rosen, Principal and Co-Founder Valerie Berlin, Principal and Co-Founder Mike Rabinowitz, Managing Director Dan Levitan, Senior Vice President Shruti Sehgal, Vice President

BerlinRosen is an award-winning, full-service strategic communications firm with a burgeoning New York-based technology and innovation practice offering com-

munications strategy, media relations, digital, creative, advertising and public affairs services for technology clients

Since 2015, BerlinRosen's technology and innovation practice has expanded to represent some of the biggest newsmakers defining the future of technology, finance, work, education and urban innovation. With a team of nearly 20 communications professionals, our consumer and enterprise client portfolio includes leading global brands Samsung, Alphabet's Sidewalk Labs, Intersection and Citi, mission-driven organizations General Assembly and Per Scholas, brand new startups and incubators Kindur and URBAN-X and dozens of others. Drawing from our political and advocacy roots, BerlinRosen brings a unique campaign-style approach to strategic communications and public relations for clients in the technology space, combining nimble expert strategy and execution with the creativity, agility and speed of a startup.

Our technology expertise areas include:

- · Corporate strategy and narrative development
- Crisis management
- · New market entries and industry recategorization
- Executive thought leadership, speech-writing and message development
- B2C and B2B product launches
- · Conferences, Tradeshows and
- High-impact media relations across all major technology markets in the U.S.
- · Digital, creative, social and other paid media or advertising services

Our recent technology clients include: Samsung, Citi, Alphabet's Sidewalk Labs, Lyft, CornellTech, Barnard College, Intersection, General Assembly, Per Scholas, Pursuit, Kindur, EVgo, Convene, URBAN-X, Motivate, Storyful, Coord and Eaze

#### **BOSPAR**

Locations in San Francisco, LA, Orange County, Chicago and the Washington, D.C. area. 415/913-7528 success@bospar.com @BosparPR

Chris Boehlke, Curtis Sparrer, Tom Carpenter, Principals Tricia Heinrich, Chief Content

Hey — can we talk to you for a second?

Yeah — you — the person read-



Bospar's team of professionals are where you need them: San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and San Diego.

ing these descriptions.

Is it us or does this copy all seem the same?

We bet nearly every agency description says "we're award winning" and "tech blah, blah, blah" and you're left wondering: who do I pick?

Here's our advice: pick an agency that is the right size to care about you passionately with the right team to get it done.

We of course think that's us! Bospar was named PRWeek's Outstanding Boutique agency, because we offer the best of big and small.

Like a big agency, Bospar has seasoned professionals across the country, based in San Francisco, Los Ángeles, Chicago, Orange County, New York, and Washington, D.C. Its content department provides blog posts, case studies, ghost-written articles, messaging, positioning, press releases, social media content, website copy, infographics, research projects and videos.

But like a boutique, you will get attention from the most senior staff and a team of people who have worked together for years.

Bospar's staff includes journalists who know how to reverse-en-

gineer media coverage from a client's needs and provide intensive media training with an insider's perspective. Bospar supports its media efforts with analyst and influencer relations, customer and third-party relations, case histories and speaking and awards programs. The agency's specialty is driving coverage from the likes of ABC to the Wall Street Journal.

#### THE BRADFORD **GROUP**

2115 Yeaman Place, #210 Nashville, TN 37206 615/515-4888 bradfordgroup.com info@bradfordgroup.com

Jeff Bradford, CEO Gina Gallup, EVP & COO

Tech firms in the Heartland turn to the Bradford Group for public relations services. We understand the unique challenges faced by non-coastal tech firms — such as being taken seriously by national technology and business journalists and having access to "smart"

\_ Continued on page 32



Jeff Bradford, CEO of the Bradford Group.

#### THE BRADFORD GROUP

Continued from page 31

capital that understands and supports technology business models. We specialize in translating between old and new worldviews and drawing national attention to technological advances from often-ignored parts of the country. Our tech industry expertise spans bio-technology, healthcare technology, legal technology, fintech, artificial intelligence, eCommerce tools, analytics, encryption tools and more. For these clients we provide a wide range of public relations and marketing services, including publicity, thought leadership, content creation, SEO, social media, inbound marketing and more. To get the attention your tech business deserves, get the Bradford Group.

#### **CATAPULT PR**

6560 Gunpark Dr., Suite C Boulder, CO 80301 303/581-7760 Fax: 303/581-7762 tdouglas@catapultpr-ir.com www.catapultpr-ir.com

Terri Douglas, Co-Founder & Principal

Catapult PR blends strategy, industry knowledge, execution and strategic narrative building to help B-2-B technology companies drive market-leading positions. Catapult's formalized approach incorporates its proven Strategic Narrative Marketing framework, combines positioning and messaging, aggressive media and industry analyst relations, social media and content marketing into a comprehensive strategy designed to help companies become true market leaders. Its Strategic Narrative Marketing process begins with a full-day workshop, and provides tech firms with the tools to define and own new or existing market categories. The firm is expert at coordinating and executing high-impact company/product launches. Catapult has deep knowledge in all major vertical markets, including extensive experience in application development, cloud, big data, commercial wireless and enterprise platforms that disrupt market norms. Catapult's success stems from its personal and professional service, along with partner-level account involvement and strategy. It is the preferred agency for technology companies looking for both strategy and execution.

#### **CRENSHAW** COMMUNICATIONS

36 W. 20th St., 5th flr. New York, NY 10011 212/367-9700 dorothy@crenshawcomm.com www.crenshawcomm.com

Dorothy Crenshaw, CEO/Founder Chris Harihar, Partner

As a leading East Coast technology agency, Crenshaw Communications is expert at identifying what differentiates a technology brand and translating attributes into compelling benefits worthy of public attention.

We offer in-depth experience in consumer and business technology products and services; adtech and marketing technology; cybersecurity; retail and ecommerce; digital and mobile services; digcontent/media/publishing; not-for-profits and wearable tech/ therapeutics. In addition we have a particular expertise in early-stage businesses at the intersection of the arts, design, and technology.

Successful client programs include those for both established and emerging brands and companies, including Acceleration Partners, Adthena, Amagi, Arkadium, AOL Platforms (now OATH), Bizzabo, ChargeItSpot, DoubleVerify, Fractal Analytics, F-Secure, Greenhouse Software. Infosecurity North America, Lotame, MediaRadar, NHP Foundation, Remedy Health Media, Smart Communications, Syncron, Uberall and Weekly Tasting/WTSO. com.

#### **DALE CURTIS COMMUNICATIONS** LLC

1120 G Street NW, Suite 450

Washington, DC 20005 202/495-3700 www.dalecurtiscommunications.com info@dalecurtiscommunications.com Twitter com/dalecurtiscomm Facebook.com/ DaleCurtisCommunications Linkedin.com/in/dalecurtis

Dale Curtis, Founder & CEO Marsha Smith, Director of Operations

Founded in 2009, Dale Curtis Communications helps companies and causes advance their public affairs agendas through strategic, integrated communications in Washington, DC and beyond.

DCC provides public affairs-oriented PR and content services to a variety of clients in sectors including technology, telecommunications, public safety, education and training, and nonprofits. Each client benefits from a customized, integrated strategy and action plan.

Our team offers decades of experience in senior positions in Congress, the White House, Executive Branch, local government, business, nonprofits, and the media.

Specialties include strategic counsel and planning, messaging and content, news media relations, digital media, graphic design, video, and events. We also maintain a network of adjunct professionals in a variety of disciplines who can be activated as needed.

Clients have included IPC-The Electronics Association: BSA-The Software Alliance; the High-Tech Digital TV Coalition; InterDigital; LyondellBasell; NASSCOM; NE-NA-The 9-1-1 Association: SAP America; SAP National Security Services: and the Wireless Internet Service Providers Association (WISPA).

#### **EDELMAN**

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Sanjay Nair, Global Tech Chair

Edelman is a leading global communications marketing firm that partners with many of the world's largest and emerging businesses and organizations, helping them evolve, promote and protect

their brands and reputations. Edelman owns specialty firms Edelman Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, experiential), a joint venture with United Talent Agen-

#### **FAHLGREN MORTINE**

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Fahlgren Mortine is one of the nation's largest marketing and communications agencies, ranking #12 on O'Dwver's list of U.S. PR firms. Through industry-leading integration and a pledge to "think wider," the agency skill-fully blends the authenticity of a public relations firm, the creativity of an advertising agency and the accountability of a digital shop to innovate, influence and achieve as one agency for an enviable portfolio of technology and B2B clients. Our buyer-centric approach delivers impact-centered campaigns through a deep understanding of our clients and their customers, and the triggers that cause the need for client products and services. From building awareness with thought leadership, media relations and advertising to nurturing relationships via marketing automation, Fahlgren Mortine delivers the full range of services required for success in today's multi-channel world, including branding, public and analyst relations, media planning and buying, content marketing, social media strategy and management, advertising and digital development.

The December issue of O'Dwyer's will profile Entertainment & Sports PR firms. If you would like to be profiled, contact Editor Jon Gingerich at 646/843-2080 or jon@odwyerpr.com



# NYC's Premier Travel Management Company

Omega World Travel is a full service customized travel provider for businesses of all sizes. We provide you with comprehensive cost analysis, data tracking and innovative technology solutions to help you with all your logistical travel needs.

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Sailing August 18 • Star Legend

fr. \$3999 pp

Rates based on pp/dbl, & subj. to change. Gov't taxes not incl.











At CES 2018, the Feintuch team ran a press conference and worked the booth with long-term client HDMI Licensing Administrator. Pictured are (L to R) HDMI's Marketing Director Brad Bramy and Henry Feintuch.

#### **FEINTUCH** COMMUNICATIONS

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Henry Feintuch, President Richard Roher, Managing Partner Doug Wright, Senior Account Director

Feintuch Communications = Tech PR. We've been doing it for decades and all with an eye towards delivering business results.

Our senior-led team helps startups, rapidly growing firms and established enterprises to have conversations with marketplace influencers, customers and prospects about their products, services and corporate values. We do that with journalistic sensibilities and solid business experience.

Preparing to launch a breakthrough ad technology? Planning the introduction of advanced technologies for e-commerce? Looking to get industry analyst feedback on an enterprise mobile app? Or explain to shareholders or prospective investors why a security technology, biotech development,

retail tech enhancement or fintech algorithm may impact the market or change the world? Is your new green technology gearing up to challenge the status quo? Are you aiming to expand your marketing to a global stage?

We thrive on helping organizations to address their business communications challenges and position themselves to succeed in the marketplace. Our programs are

designed to deliver business ROI, not just press clippings and status reports. We welcome the opportunity to partner with you to grow your business.

#### **FINN PARTNERS**

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Jodi Brooks, Managing Partner

Global Technology Practice Brian Sinderson, Senior Partner New York/East Coast Margaret Hoerster, Senior Partner Chicago/Midwest Jeff Seedman, Senior Partner San Francisco/West Coast Flora Haslam, Managing Partner London/Europe Goel Jasper, Managing Partner Israel Yin Ching Yeap. Managing Partner Singapore/Asia Pacific

With more than 130 professionals across three continents, Finn Partners is the third largest technology agency in the world. Under the leadership of Jodi Brooks, the new head of its technology division, the firm enjoys strong global growth and thrives as the agency's largest practice area.

Our talented mix of researchers. strategists, storytellers, content specialists and media relations experts, has the ability to grasp the technology landscape and deliver data-driven business impact for technology giants seeking to stay relevant, emerging start-ups seeking to establish their market position and non-technology companies seeking to innovate in their

Navigating this ecosystem re-

quires data-driven understanding of the decision maker, experience on guiding companies to pivot from point A to point B, and deep industry knowledge. Our expertise spans across cybersecurity, marketing/ad tech, supply chain, enterprise tech, consumer tech, health tech, and emerging trends from blockchain to artificial intelligence and machine learning.

#### **FLEISHMAN** HILLARD

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Sophie Scott, Global Managing Director, Technology

FleishmanHillard's technology communications specialists work alongside experts in every business sector and communications practice, to bring fresh thinking to clients that are being impacted by, or creating, technological shifts, whatever their industries and line of business. Today, there is a growing need for companies in every sector to position themselves as innovative and digitally driven to survive and thrive. From inspiring non-tech clients to tell their stories at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), to helping brands boldly reposition their companies as software and innovation leaders, the agency's deep experience is helping spur new ideas and thinking in tech and non-tech companies alike.

Using data-driven insights, strategic measurement and our deep knowledge of today's most effective communications channels, FleishmanHillard's tech experts



The Finn Partners team at a retreat in Hunter, NY.

bring sector expertise to bear across a wide range of industries: from consumer electronics to cloud computing, e-commerce to security, and telecoms to wearables. We innovate to create the best outcomes and solutions for our clients; doing more of what matters and what's right for their business, their audiences, and the world in which they operate.

If you'd like to learn more, please contact Sophie Scott, Global Managing Director, Technology: Sophie.Scott@fleishman.com.

#### **GREENOUGH**

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Phil Greenough, CEO Scott Bauman, EVP/GM

It's about what customers can do with technology, not the feeds and speeds. For two decades since our founding, Greenough has pioneered brand storytelling that leads with the what and why for enterprise solutions, mobile applications, IT security and robotics.

Whether it's a decision-maker within an enterprise considering technology for marketing analytics, HR or financial operations or a consumer choosing a device, it's always the story that drives the ac-

We've perfected brand journalism to deliver compelling stories across earned, owned and paid channels. As designated reporters for your brand, we bring stories to life that strongly resonate with your target tech buyer because we eschew the hype and hone in on what's relevant to buyers.

Our brand journalism "reporting" uncovers standalone stories and perspectives that are routine-



Greenough teammates collaborate on strategies for success in the tech marketplace.

ly featured in CIO, TechTarget, VentureBeat and other technology trades as well as vertical outlets. Our continuous vetting of "sources" identifies and prepares experts who can regularly comment on technology stories across business media, from national outlets such as the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal to local news outlets and hyperlocal media.

Our campaigns target earned, owned and paid media simultaneously, delivering your unique technology value proposition, often tailored to unique vertical markets. From thought leadership through contributed articles to "newsjacking" our clients into breaking feature stories, we ensure that your brand stories are well-told across relevant channels and help drive marketing qualified leads and new

#### HIGHWIRE PR

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Kathleen Gratehouse, Emily Borders, Carol Carrubba, Principals

Established in 2008, Highwire PR is a tech communications agency built on the promise of delivering creative, results-oriented communications programs for companies ranging from Fortune-50 corporations to mid-size tech leaders and innovative startups. Our team, which now includes Inner Circle Labs, is composed of veteran communicators and former journalists with technology industry knowledge spanning enterprise, consumer, digital health, financial technology and security across

offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Boston.

Having recently completed our 10th year, Highwire's mission has persevered: to deliver creative, results-oriented PR programs and establish a nurturing environment for individuals to grow their careers. To partner with a company, we must have a passion for the business, relevant experience in the market, and excitement for the story. We build on this strong foundation by involving senior level PR experts in everything from strategy to tactical implementation.

#### THE HOFFMAN **AGENCY**

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Defining communications broadly to include digital, content marketing, thought leadership as well as traditional PR, The Hoffman Agency knows how to differentiate brands and deliver air cover for sales. With a heritage in the tech sector, the firm's work today cuts across a range of B2B and consumer markets.

For clients with global needs, the company operates its own offices in Asia Pacific, Europe and the United States. Unlike traditional agencies handicapped by their silo structure, we apply a collaborative approach to implementing multi-country campaigns. This leverage of content and thinking



Highwire PR team, 2018.

Continued on page 36

#### THE HOFFMAN AGENCY

across geographies ultimately generates better results. And we can do this with a single-point-contact for

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. Toward this end, the firm also conducts storytelling workshops.

Even on the operations side, The Hoffman Agency walks to a different drummer. Eschewing the traditional focus on the financial side measuring account people based on their "billability" — the firm adheres to the belief that if you deliver great work to the client, financial performance will follow.

#### **HOTWIRE**

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Idea Grove Founder & CEO Scott Baradell.



Senior leaders from Hoffman's Asia, Europe and U.S. teams

Barbara Bates, Global CEO Heather Kernahan. President. North America Andy West, Group Chief **Development Officer** 

Hotwire, the global communications agency, helps CMOs better engage and connect with their customers. From Sydney to San Francisco, we operate with a borderless mind-set across 22 locations including the UK, US, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Australia, together with co-branded partners Yellow Communications in the Netherlands and Belgium, Active DMC in the Middle East and VI-ANEWS in Brazil, as well as other affiliate partners.

#### **ICR**

685 Third Ave., 2nd Flr. New York, NY 10017 646/277-1200

Bo Park, Partner & Head of Technology PR bo.park@icrinc.com www.icrinc.com

ICR provides strategic communications and advisory services that help companies drive business goals, bolster credibility and enhance long-term enterprise value. ICR, comprised of former Wall Street veterans and seasoned communications experts, brings a unique POV that helps technology companies build carefully articulated positioning and competitive advantages around their ideas, concepts and stories. The team

delivers results for clients across a range of sectors, including Artificial Intelligence, Automotive Technology and Ecommerce, Fintech, Data/Analytics, and IoT. Marrying a deep understanding of technology, capital markets, business and financial media, ICR provides a compelling value proposition for companies at various life stages, including startups seeking to raise additional capital, growth companies with IPOs on the horizon, organizations investing in M&A, businesses transforming to meet customer and market demands, and public entities looking to better tell their stories. ICR maintains offices in Boston, Connecticut, New York, San Francisco, and Beijing.

Clients: Autogravity, Cardlytics, Comdata, FLEETCOR Technologies, Forter, HARMAN International (subsidiary of Samsung Electronics), Mobileye (an Intel Company), MongoDB, ORSAM, Shopkeep and TechStyle

#### **IDEA GROVE**

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Scott Baradell, Founder & CEO Etta Goss, Senior Vice President & COO Liz Cies, Vice President Katie Long, Vice President Nate Binford, Vice President, Digital

A Dallas-based PR and marketing firm with a national roster of B2B tech clients, Idea Grove specializes in developing research-driven, precision-crafted campaigns that breathe life into your brand's story and bring purpose, focus and ROI to your brand visibility and lead-generation efforts. Idea Grove takes the time to understand your business, your competition and your buyers. We use this foundation to create PR campaigns that generate buzz, websites that attract eyeballs, and marketing programs that deliver ROI. We have experience in industries ranging from hyper-converged infrastructure to marketing technology, smart speakers to 3D printing, VoIP to IoT. This expertise has enabled us to develop a specialized offering that spans all of the things we do. We develop buyer personas specifically crafted for technology purchasers. Our PR strategies encompass analyst relations, channel programs and thought leadership. And our digital marketing strategies center on creating compelling, data-driven content that prospects just can't resist.

#### **INKHOUSE**

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Beth Monaghan, CEO & Co-Founder, beth@inkhouse.com Jason Morris, President & General Manager, West Coast, jason@ inkhouse.com Tina Cassidy, EVP & Chief Content Officer. tina@inkhouse.com Nicole Bestard, EVP & General Manager, New York, nicole@ inkhouse.com Alison Morra, EVP & General Manager, Boston, alison@ inkhouse.com

550 Montgomery Street Suite 450 San Francisco, CA 94111 415/299-6600

33 Irving Place Floor 3 New York, NY 10016 646/975-5142

InkHouse is a PR firm that offers earned media, creative content and digital marketing. We were founded in 2007 and are one of the fastest growing agencies in the country. We believe that authenticity matters, words count and trust is earned. We're creative storytellers and marketers who believe successful PR goes far beyond traditional media relations. We design integrated PR programs that weave together earned media, creative content and digital marketing elements designed to support your business goals. We tell stories powerful enough to forge relationships in the digital world and extend them into real life.

We partner with global brands, Fortune 100 enterprises, venture capital firms, and technology companies at any stage of their lifecycle. With offices in Boston, New York and San Francisco, InkHouse is well-positioned to serve both national and international clients looking for dynamic, thoughtful integrated communications campaigns.

Earned media. Creative content. Digital Marketing, inkhouse.com Client shortlist: Citi Ventures, Eaze, Grammarly, Molekule, Nutanix, Okta, Raytheon, Wolters Kluwer, TransferWise, General Catalyst, Carbon Black, Acacia Communications and Bloom.

#### **KARBO** COMMUNICATIONS

601 Fourth St., Suite 204 San Francisco, CA 94107 415/255-6510 info@karbocom.com www.karbocom.com

Julie Karbo, Founder & CEO

Karbo Communications is a top ranked technology PR and digital marketing agency that delivers sales and market leadership. With



Karbo employee Kim Lianthamani at a trade show with client TDK.

Karbo Com, you don't get bench players. You get the industry's top marketing and PR teams working with you every day, whether it's developing positioning, placing your company in top media, growing an active social media base, creating viral videos or writing influential content. We've ushered in clients across technology areas and industries, such as cloud/SaaS, mobile, the IIoT/IoT, social, data, analytics, apps, advertising tech, security, high performance computing, AI, blockchain, augmented reality and communications.

The Karbo Com team has worked extensively with both B2B and consumer tech companies, including Apple, eBay Advertising, the IoT World Conference, Equinix, Cisco, Defense.Net, NerdWallet, GoDaddy, Fox Digital apps, Digg, Oracle and Intel. Our clients range from stealth startups to billion-dollar global brands. When it's make or break, you want the best. You want a team that's seen it all, yet knows the latest and greatest trends, technologies and tools. At Karbo Com, we have a track record of delivering revenues, industry-leading stature, partners and funding.

Clients: 8th Wall, Logitech, OnScale, Penguin Computing, Pigeon, Pycom, RTI (Real-Time Innovations), TDK, TicketSocket, TIBCO

#### MCGRATH/ **POWER**

75 E. Santa Clara Street San Jose, CA 95113 408/727-0351

www.mcgrathpower.com JonathanBloom@mcgrathpower.

Jonathan Bloom, CEO and Founding Partner Kate Walker, SVP and Partner Derek James, VP and Partner

We are an integrated marketing and communications agency with a profoundly diverse history of crafting communications programs with conviction for consumer brands, B2B technology companies and many organizations-in-between. Communications today encompasses an incredible variety of services, from strategy development and traditional media relations, to social media and content marketing efforts, and as a fully integrated agency, we are prepared to help our clients with it all. Our tenacious approach is derived from more than three decades of experience working with startups and industry leaders. As the Silicon Valley partner of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, we've been able to develop and deliver highly effective global communications programs for numerous clients via our 100+ offices worldwide.

#### MERRITT GROUP. INC.

8251 Greensboro Dr., Suite 600 McLean, VA 22102 703/390-1500 Fax: 703/860-2080 info@merrittgrp.com www.merrittgrp.com

220 Montgomery St., Suite 640 San Francisco, CA 94104

415/247-1660

Alisa Valudes Whyte, Senior Partner & CEO Thomas Rice, Jayson Schkloven, John Conrad, Executive VPs & Partners Shahed Ahmed. Senior VP & Partner

Merritt Group lives at the intersection of market expertise and technical proficiency to help our clients reach their goals and dominate their markets. Our client roster includes organizations ranging from large, industry-leading enterprises to emerging, venture-backed innovators. Our philosophy starts with understanding our clients' target audiences and markets, and leads to the development of powerful messages and creative programs that drive awareness around their innovations. We pride ourselves on delivering insightful, strategic communications approaches that help the world's most inspiring companies get people talking and keep their audiences engaged.

We have built our business on the expertise of our people, procuring and developing the industry's best talent. We foster innovation and experimentation that allows our employees to develop their careers and reach their fullest potential, while delivering incredible service and value to our clients throughout the process. Merritt is dedicated to fostering a culture that employees love working in, from being recognized by Washingtonian Magazine and the Washington Business Journal, to promoting health and wellness

Continued on page 38

#### MERRITT GROUP

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among staff and giving back to the community through programs such as its "Merry Week of Giving."

Clients: Varonis, IOActive, Cylance, Mocana, PAS Global, Authentic8, CalAmp, GoodData, Northern Virginia Technology Council, Medallia, Telos, Monster Federal, MAXIMUS and Octo Consulting.

#### **PADILLA**

1101 West River Parkway Suite 400 (Headquarters) Minneapolis, MN 55415 612/455-1700 PadillaCo.com

Amy Fisher, Vice President/ Technology Lead

Padilla is an independently operated, globally resourced public relations and communication company with offices across the United States. The agency builds, grows and protects brands and reputations worldwide by creating purposeful connections with the people who matter most through public relations, advertising, digital and social marketing, investor relations and brand strategy. Padilla includes the brand consultancy of Joe Smith, the food and nutrition experts at Food-Minds, and the research authorities at SMS Research Advisors.

Padilla's Technology Practice helps complex B2B technology brands reach and influence prospective buyers and customers, partners, investors and employees through targeted, compelling brand stories. Clients include enterprise hardware, software and services, cloud, IoT, big data/analytics, mobility, blockchain, networking and security, engineering and materials science organizations. Padilla's Technology team consists of experts helping tech companies sell into verticals such as retail, hospitality and CX, health care, education, finance, marketing and HR, industrial manufacturing, supply chain and transportation.

Technology clients include 3M, Element Fleet Management, Protolabs, Rockwell Automation and Tata Consultancy.

Padilla is an AVENIR GLOBAL company and a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, a partnership of 132 independently owned partner offices in 115 cities on six continents. Connect with purpose at PadillaCo. com

#### PAN COMMUNICATIONS

255 State St., 8th Floor Boston, MA 02109 617/502-4300 info@pancomm.com www.pancommunications.com

Boston I San Francisco I New York I Orlando

Philip A. Nardone, Pres. & CEO Mark Nardone, Executive VP Elizabeth Famiglietti, EVP, **Human Resources** Phil Carpenter, EVP & Managing Director Gary Torpey, EVP Finance Lisa Astor, Senior Vice President, Co-Lead Client relations Darlene Doyle, Senior Vice President, Co-Lead Client Relations Gene Carozza, Senior VP Dan Martin, Senior Vice President Nikki Festa O'Brien. Senior VP Megan Kessler, Senior VP

PAN Communications is a data-driven integrated marketing & PR agency servicing B2B technology and healthcare brands. With offices in Boston, San Francisco, New York and Orlando, we move ideas by creating compelling stories, driving intent and influencing markets across all forms of media. We currently work with several leading and emerging brands nationally and globally including SAP, Radial, MediaMath, Cogito, Sift Science, Maestro Health and UpWell, to name a few.

With a staff of 140+ professionals, PAN offers the agility and personalized service of a mid-size agency while leveraging national and international relationships to manage large scale communications programs. An award-winning firm experiencing impressive growth, we thrive to help today's modern marketers by integrating a combination of services to better engage with your audiences and move markets.

Connected Content — Creative Storytelling — Results that Matter!

#### PEPPERCOMM, INC.

470 Park Ave. South, 4th Floor N. New York, NY 10016 212/931-6100 hello@peppercomm.com www.peppercomm.com

Steve Cody, CEO and Founder Ann Barlow, President, West Coast Deborah Brown, Chief Marketing Officer Jacqueline Kolek, General Manager, New York Office Maggie O'Neill, Chief Client

Peppercomm is an award-winning strategic, integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York City with offices in San Francisco and London. The firm connects brands. messages and people through data-driven insights, cross-channel communications and customer experience. Employing an omni-channel approach, the company uses customer insights to determine the right mix of tools and platforms to help clients reach, engage and influence customers along their path to purchase.

Founded in 1995, Peppercomm has received numerous accolades, including The Holmes Report's North American Corporate/B2B Agency of the Year and Bulldog Reporter's Midsized Agency of the Year. The agency has been listed as one of Fortune's 10 Best Workplaces in Advertising and Marketing, 100 Best Workplaces for Women, 50 Best Small and Medium Workplaces and 50 Best Workplaces for New College Grads.

Services include Branding, Content Strategy & Development, Creative Services, Crisis Management, Digital Solutions, Experiential, Insights & Strategy, Licensing, Public Relations & Social Media and Research & Measurement

For more information, visit www.peppercomm.com

#### **RACEPOINT GLOBAL**

53 State St., 4th flr. Boston, MA 02109 617/624-3200 Fax: 617/624-4199 gludwig@racepointglobal.com www.racepointglobal.com

Larry Weber, Chairman & CEO Peter Shanley, Co-COO and CFO Karen Bouchard, Co-COO and CHRO

RJ Bardsley, Chief Strategist, Global Technology Practice & EVP Anne Potts, Managing Director & **FVP** 

Dan Carter, Managing Director &

Andrew Laxton, Managing Director & EVP Ginger Ludwig, VP Global Marketing and Business Development (gludwig@racepointglobal.com; 617/624-3253)

Olivia Yang, Manager, Global Marketing & Business Development (oyang@racepointglobal.com; 617/624-3434)

Founded in 2003, Racepoint is a global communications company with technology thinking woven into its DNA. The agency uniquely understands how the use and "humanization" of technology impacts how audiences perceive and experience brands today. Whether an emerging company or enterprise brand, clients in the technology, healthcare, consumer, professional services and public affairs sectors partner with Racepoint for its strategic, earned-first approach to engaging constituents in a way that is both authentic to the brand and meaningful to the audience. At a time when customer experience expectations have never been higher, Racepoint creates technology-driven communications strategies that help earn attention and move brands and businesses

#### **RASKY PARTNERS**

70 Franklin St., 3rd flr. Boston, MA 02110 617/443-9933

555 11th Street, NW, Suite 401 Washington, DC 20004 202/530-7700

Larry Rasky, Chairman & CEO Ron Walker, COO George Cronin, Managing Director Justine Griffin, Managing Director

Rasky Partners is a nationally recognized public and government relations firm with nearly three decades of experience providing exceptional client service to technology companies that operate at the intersection of business, politics and media

With offices in Boston and Washington, D.C., Rasky Partners offers a comprehensive range of services including media strategy and public relations, government relations, reputation management, crisis communication and digital media to tech clients looking to launch new technologies, grow market share and manage the considerable regulatory challenges they encounter along the way.

As an independent firm, Rasky Partners has the flexibility and resources to address complex com-

Continued on page 40

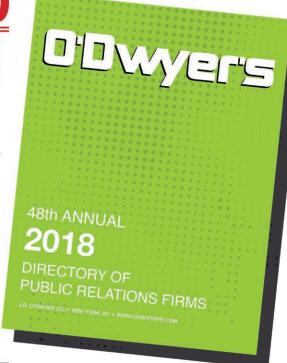
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O'Dwyer's is the #1 source for researching public relations firms and outside PR counsel. We've been connecting clients and PR firms for 47 years through our directory of PR firms.

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Marie RapertoCantor Integrated MarketingSearch

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Thomas L. Harris, Author Choosing and Working with your PR firm

#### RASKY PARTNERS

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munications challenges with a commitment to serve our clients' interests first. We are dedicated to providing consistent, strategic hands-on engagement at all levels, as each client team — including the senior professionals — is highly engaged, from the beginning to the end of each client engagement.

#### **SWYFT**

1201 W. 24th Street, Suite 103 Austin, TX 78705 512/721-1097 https://growswyft.com/

Dave Manzer, President and Jo Detavernier, Vice-President and Partner, SCMP, APR

Swyft is an agile marketing and PR agency that embraces the lean startup model in everything it does. Headquartered in Austin with offices in Denver, Houston, and Antwerp, our client focus is exclusively on the B2B technology sector. We combine creativity, tech industry expertise, and great storytelling to help our clients achieve their most important marketing goals. Where we shine is at boosting struggling brands, accelerating startup launches, and perfecting enterprise corporate growth strategies.

At Swyft, we see our work as helping our clients take the calculated creative risks necessary to grow. We work with our customers to create disruptive strategies that cut through the noise and win market share. We are committed to quality and measurable value. Over the years, we have worked in multiple technology verticals, including Fintech, IoT, Cloud, 3-D software, security, eCommerce, mobile-social, MedTech, and enterprise productivity apps. Every client is different, but our goal for each and every one is to exceed their expectations

Although our roots are in Austin, we work globally with a little help from our friends as proud members of two international agency networks: First PR Alliance and The Global Fintech PR Network.

First PR Alliance is the network of partner agencies we founded in 2016 and manage to this day. Through this network, we are connected with other independent marketing and PR agencies in Europe, Asia, and South America to provide a seamless level of ac-

count service for growing global brands. The Global Fintech PR Network is a network which we helped co-found in 2016. It is the world's first network of agencies that serve the specialized needs of the Fintech industry. The international networks in which we participate are vital to our clients seeking assistance with global growth across time zones, borders, languages and cultures.

We are your growth partners and the team behind yours. Our goal is to create meaningful relationships with established businesses to provide creative solutions that respond to a fast-changing market. We won't consider anything a "win" unless you do. We bring expertise in a variety of marketing and PR disciplines, including media and analyst relations, web design and development, content asset creation, inbound marketing, video production, PPC, and more. We bring all of that experience and skill with a healthy dash of creativity in a lean agency model that delivers amazing results for our clients.

#### TREVELINO/ **KELLER**

981 Joseph Lowery Boulevard Suite 100 Atlanta, GA 30318 404/214-0722 X106 and X105 dtrevelino@trevelinokeller.com akeller@trevelinokeller.com www.trevelinokeller.com www.groovy-studios.com

As Atlanta continues to establish itself as one of the country's startup hotbeds, Trevelino/Keller continues to leverage its depth with startups and its strategic partnerships with organizations such as Atlanta Tech Village, Atlanta Tech Angels, TechAlpharetta, Raise Forum and Keiretsu Forum. Not limited by geography, its startup, middle market and national technology clients can be found across the country. Trevelino/ Keller's long-standing pedigree in technology continues to be its economic engine. It's powered in part by its cross fertilization across its six other practices, yielding a powerful vertical prowess in areas such as Fin-Tech. Consumer-Tech, Clean- Tech, Food-Tech, Fashion-Tech and more recently Ag-Tech. Highlights include representing the AgTech Conference of the South and Fintech South this past year. While it's four areas of service — public relations, digital/ social marketing, demand generation and creative services, align

with what it believes are the most relevant services today, new markets of focus are gaining increased traction — Disruptive Forces, Category Pioneers, Stealth Leaders and Wonder Women. For companies whose leadership aligns with one of these markets of focus, the agency demonstrates a unique understanding of the company's personality and mission that's increasing its ability to close and grow business.

In its 2017 repositioning, the firm introduced its Outcome-Driven position with emphasis on four strategic outcomes - Growth, Value, Engagement and Leadership. Each outcome features its own path of customized programming. Rounding out the firm's capabilities is its Groovy Studios brand, made up of in-house specialists that deliver graphic design and dynamic content.

#### WEBER SHANDWICK

909 Third Avenue New York, NY 10022 www.webershandwick.com GlobalTech@webershandwick.com

Our role as communicators and storytellers in the technology sector used to be straightforward: educate the world about why technology is important. But that world changed. Technology is now pervasive in every facet of our lives and deep in every industry. The communications challenge is no longer to explain how technology works, or even why it's relevant but rather to manage the impact of innovation, in all its various forms, in all its various engagements.

That requires a dynamic team of the best experts from media, analytics, strategy and creative to engage audiences with communications that drive value. It requires teams who understand today's unique environment, from Silicon Valley to London, from Singapore to Sydney, and everywhere in between.

Weber Shandwick's Global Technology practice is uniquely qualified to deliver this kind of value because we see the whole picture. We start with the problems our clients want to solve and apply a strategic rigor to position for long-term success. We deeply understand the shift from publishers to platforms and how this affects what content your customers see. We see the link between storytelling and how to drive action from your most trusted audiences. And we know the value of data and

analytics to the lifecycle of every campaign, from inception to con-

Companies embracing this era of change — from automotive to fintech to healthcare — see Weber Shandwick as a critical partner to navigating it.

#### **WEISS PR, INC.**

101 North Haven Street, Suite 301 Baltimore, MD 21224 410/303-5019 info@weisspr.com www.weisspr.com @WeissPR

Ray Weiss, President and Co-Founder Jessica Tiller, Executive Vice President and Co-Founder Matthew Pugh, Vice President

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Weiss PR, Inc. helps companies and non-profit /trade associations to reach, engage, and influence the right audiences in order to achieve their communications and business objectives.

Staffing accounts exclusively with senior-level executives who have a minimum of 10 years of public relations experience. Weiss PR has developed a strong reputation for getting positive results for its clients by using an integrated approach to communications that typically includes media and influencer relations, social media and marketing services, and issues management — all anchored by strategic communications planning.

The firm also has extensive experience in crisis communications, including strategy development and rapid response implementation for both corporations and individual executives.

While Weiss PR's two dozen plus clients are spread across five industries in the U.S. and abroad, much of its work is concentrated in the technology space. The firm has extensive experience working with data centers; encryption and information security firms; serious gaming/simulation companies: software and applications developers; and wireless. It has also handled public relations for two award-winning technology incu-

In spite of its rapid growth, Weiss PR has stayed true to its vision to provide clients with ideas built on strategy — not egos — from a team of senior public relations professionals who are committed to providing exceptional service, great work, and measurable results. O

## O'DWYER'S RANKINGS TOP TECHNOLOGY PR FIRMS

		Firm Net	Fees (2017)	Firm Net Fe	es (2017)
	1.	Edelman, New York, NY \$2	259,839,000	<b>36. Karbo Communications,</b> San Francisco, CA \$1	,400,882
$\S$	2.	Hotwire, New York, NY	33,249,507	<b>37. Brownstein Group,</b> Philadelphia, PA	,348,738
X	3.	Finn Partners, New York, NY	26,420,000	38. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	,300,000
	4.	<b>W20 Group,</b> San Francisco, CA	20,037,000	<b>39. 360PR+,</b> Boston, MA	,251,553
$\stackrel{\sim}{<}$	5.	Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	19,348,817	40. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	955,179
$\geq$	6.	ICR, New York, NY	17,168,965	41. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	922,953
$\leq$	7.	<b>Highwire PR,</b> San Francisco, CA	17,019,030	42. Greenough, Boston, MA	869,432
	8.	PAN Communications, Boston, MA	15,080,445	43. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	830,000
	9.	<b>Spark,</b> San Francisco, CA	13,000,000	<b>44. Singer Associates, Inc.,</b> San Francisco, CA	801,411
	10.	LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	12,875,000	<b>45. Tunheim,</b> Minneapolis, MN	631,620
>	11.	Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	12,719,000	46. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	527,620
	12.	Bateman Group, San Francisco, CA	12,447,340	47. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	500,151
	13.	Merritt Group, McLean, VA	11,440,000	48. Dale Curtis Communications, Washington, DC	481,363
	14.	APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	11,196,700	49. CooperKatz & Co., New York, NY	375,015
1	15.	Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	10,365,568	<b>50. French I West I Vaughan,</b> Raleigh, NC	305,199
	16.	Fahlgren Mortine, Columbus, OH	9,613,606	<b>51. BoardroomPR,</b> Ft. Lauderdale, FL	300,000
	17.	Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	8,932,702	<b>52. O'Malley Hansen Comms,</b> Chicago, IL	273,000
	18.	Walker Sands Communications, Chicago, IL	8,678,584	53. Bellmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	234,459
	19.	Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	7,295,844	<b>54. Weiss PR, Inc.,</b> Baltimore, MD	229,245
	20.	<b>5W Public Relations,</b> New York, NY	5,700,000	55. Bradford Group, The., Nashville, TN	213,188
	21.	G&S Business Comms, New York, NY	4,474,331	<b>56. IW Group, Inc.,</b> West Hollywood, CA	212,000
	22.	March Communications, Boston, MA	4,077,235	<b>57. Hodges Partnership, The,</b> Richmond, VA	204,000
	23.	Peppercomm, New York, NY	4,064,635	<b>58. WordWrite Comms LLC,</b> Pittsburgh, PA	195,727
	24.	MP&F Strategic Comms, Nashville, TN	4,034,810	<b>59. BLAZE,</b> Santa Monica, CA	192,602
	25.	Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	4,016,802	<b>60. Power Group, The,</b> Dallas, TX	166,726
	26.	Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	3,964,357	61. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	156,000
Ŋ	27.	<b>Idea Grove,</b> Dallas, TX	3,205,075	<b>62. Maccabee,</b> Minneapolis, MN	144,322
₹	28.	Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms, Seattle, WA	2,996,834	<b>63. Landis Communications,</b> San Francisco, CA	100,000
	29.	Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,500,000	<b>64. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN</b>	96,483
		<b>Gregory FCA,</b> Ardmore, PA	2,410,195	<b>65. Champion Management Group,</b> Dallas, TX	91,435
1		Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	2,173,034	<b>66. Rosica Communications,</b> Paramus, NJ	91,322
1		North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	2,016,260	67. Hollywood Agency, Hingham, MA	62,000
7		Lambert & Co., Grand Rapids, MI	1,605,000	<b>68. The Buzz Agency,</b> Delray Beach, FL	60,827
		ARPR, Atlanta, GA	1,576,984	<b>69. LANE,</b> Portland, OR	32,783
1	35.	Hunter PR, New York, NY	1,500,000	70. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	20,000

## Civility begins at home

By Fraser P. Seitel

espite the tip-toeing of U.S. justice officials, there's little question that Donald Trump's harsh, threatening and decidedly-uncivil rhetoric played a role in the phony bombs the right wing



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.

Florida nut job recently dispatched to Trump critics.

Nor is there much doubt that the similarly-inflammatory statements of Bernie Sanders, Maxine Waters, Nancy Pelosi et al. helped stimulate equally-delusional left wing wackos, like the Illinois crazy who shot up the Republican baseball practice.

So, anyone concerned about the

current course of the country's coarseness can't much quibble with CNN President Jeff Zucker's conclusion that the President, his press secretary and the rest of us ought to recognize that "words matter."

Public relations professionals, in particular, have a responsibility to advise the clients they counsel and the media they talk to that toning down accusatory or offensive rhetoric is every public person's responsibility and that civility begins at home.

For example, we could begin by tamping down the vitriol, not to mention repeated unfairness, of some of our most trusted media companies themselves, starting with ... Mr. Zucker's company, CNN.

The one-sidedness of Fox News and MSNBC is clearly an embarrassment to anyone who still believes in the pursuit of "objective journalism." But neither network pretends that Sean Hannity or Rachel Maddow or Lou Dobbs or Lawrence O'Donnell is anything near "fair and balanced." They're not. They're true believers and make no bones about it.

Sure, they should clean up their act too, but CNN — which insists that it even-handedly reports "news" - must go further.

CNN White House correspondent Jim Acosta is a textbook case of incivility. Acosta has gained wealth and notoriety for being the press corps master of badgering and interrupting the press secretary, disrespectfully challenging the President and shouting out impertinent questions

when press scrums are over. Acosta unabashedly nurtures his persona of despising Trump. Here's how he put it in a recent

"If you think ... you can take children away from their parents on the border and put them in cages, if you think you can demonize immigrants and call them rapists and criminals, if you think that you can distort the sense of reality that we all have on a daily basis by telling lie after lie and falsehood after falsehood, and not face any hard questions, then you're just not living in the same United States of America that

Not exactly the most objective reporter. If CNN President Zucker is serious about his comments on the need for civility, he might like to chat with his decidedly uncivil White House correspondent.

#### **NBC News**

The network known for Brian Williams' lying, Matt Lauer's sexual harassment and, most recently, Megyn Kelly's blackface backlash, can point to at least one sterling representative of fair and balanced journal-

Lester Holt, since he was reluctantly brought in to rescue a tottering NBC Nightly News ship after Williams nearly sunk it in 2015, has represented the network with principle and professionalism. If he has a bias against any individual or institution, he stifles it well.

The same can't be said for the two virulently anti-Trump NBC reporters who cover the White House. Hallie Jackson and Kristin Welker nightly pile on the President and his administration with regularly negative, thinly-sourced quasi-news.

Among the NBC reports: Welker's "scoop," attributed to unnamed "current and former officials," that White House Chief of Staff John Kelly privately called Trump an "idiot," a charge presented with breathless coverage and commentary that Kelly labeled "total BS."

Jackson's show biz probing of the Presidential doctor who declared his patient in "incredible health," asking "if you can assess the President's mental fitness for office?"

An exclusive and extensive interview with Justice Brett Kavanaugh rape accuser Julie Swetnick, who, along with her attorney Michael Avenatti, have subsequently been recommended by Congress for criminal investigation for making the whole

The point is that in a world where incivil-

ity reigns, NBC News must hold itself to a higher bar than Facebook or Twitter or the countless repugnant social media sites, in determining what merits making its nightly 22 minutes of most important "news."

#### The New York Times

More than any other journalistic institution, the New York Times should feel the greatest obligation to treat its subjects dispassionately in its search for truth, regardless of the personal views of its management and editors.

Sadly, in the age of Trump, the Times has fallen from its perch of respectability, not only in its undeniable anti-Trump bias but in picking on other unlikeable editorial targets. Like Exxon Mobil, for example.

The Times clearly doesn't like the oil company, particularly in terms of its perceived lassitude in reacting to climate change. Even though today's Exxon acknowledges that over time it's come to believe that climate change is real, the *Times* refuses to abandon its vendetta against Exxon for perceived past sins.

For the past three years, the *Times* has relentlessly propped up a difficult-to-fathom and probably even more difficult-to-prove campaign by anti-fossil fuel advocates that Exxon purposely misled its shareholders about the dangers of global warming.

The *Times* began its quest to take out Exxon in March 2016 with a lead front-page story announcing that New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, joined by 15 other attorneys general, was considering suing Exxon Mobil for lying to the public about climate change. The story compared Exxon to the tobacco industry, which purposely covered up research proof that cigarettes caused cancer. Exxon immediately labeled Schneiderman's quixotic quest for justice an expensive waste of taxpayers'

A year later, to keep the Exxon controversy front and center, the *Times* ran a halfpage story highlighting a content analysis study, authored by hardened Exxon critic Naomi Oreskes, a Harvard Professor. The study concluded that Exxon knew all about climate change for years but failed to share the information with the public. Exxon disputed the findings essentially as "rubbish," and other university researchers questioned Oreskes' methodology as "biased."

In late October, the *Times* was back again with the announcement that the AG suc-

Continued on next page

## Cost-based systems for agency contracts

By Richard Goldstein

his year, one of my smaller agency clients was forced to deal with a procurement department in the course of working with a multi-national client. Obviously, the role of this department was



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to determine what the proper billing rate should be for services to be rendered by the PR

The agency had to deal with something as vaporous as an hourly billing rate with an individual whose professional experience encompassed buying products the lowest possi-

ble cost — that would be used to produce other physical products. That, coupled with the fact that control of the PR budgets rested with the client's marketing department. Suffice to say, the agency wasn't prepared to deal with the level of sophistication required by this process, which is something that smaller agencies must work through when dealing with larger clients. A few years ago, Al Croft addressed this very is-

Historically, the level of profitability achieved by a privately-owned PR agency had been a matter between agency management and the IRS. This has changed because of the procurement department.

#### The procurement process

The goal of the procurement department was to understand every facet of the agency's billing rate. They were asked to supply previously confidential agency information, such as overhead percentages, salaries

and the amount of profit the agency expected to generate on the account.

The trouble with this so-called costbased system is a higher rate for value-added services that's lost in the process. The model used by the procurement department starts with direct labor costs (staff salaries), adds indirect costs (overhead) and then assigns the agency a "reasonable" profit for the account. The profit an agency earns should be based on how well the agency is managed and how well the clients are served, and not on the cost-dictated formula. However, agencies should nevertheless use this formula internally to determine what billing rates are needed to earn a desired profit. It's also a management tool. If the calculated billing rates aren't competitive with other agencies of similar size, a problem exits. For example, if overhead is 125 percent of direct labor, the calculated billing rates will probably not be completive with other agencies and agency profitability low.

#### What should an agency earn?

I guess the answer to this question is: as much as it can! The profits an agency earns should be based on how well the agency is managed and how well the clients are served, not on a cost-dictated formula.

A PR agency's single-largest expense is the salaries and benefits of its staff. Most agencies consider how much staff time it must invest to deliver a certain value to the client and to help the client achieve its business and communication goals. If the agency isn't well managed — a topic for another column — it may wind up investing a lot more time than predicted to deliver the expected value or may even deliver less than the promised value. If the agency is exceedingly well managed and its staff exceptionally skilled, it may even be possible to invest less staff time than previously imagined and yet produce even greater

value than promised.

#### Do clients have the right to impose limits on agency profitability?

The answer to the above is a simple "no." If a client doesn't believe the value offered by the agency is sufficient to warrant the price — and thus, the profit earned by the agency — the client can simply decline to

So, what should an agency do if asked to supply confidential data and accept the profit limits? Simply bite the bullet and acquiesce to the clients demands? Try to educate the client's procurement department personnel on the realties of PR agency operations while providing as little privileged information as possible? Or, refuse to provide confidential information and accept profit limits and tell the client that the only way the price — and thus, agency profits can be reduced is if the client accepts less value, requiring less investment of agency staff time?

#### Short shots

With the space left this month, here are some things that are necessary if and when you want to sell your agency:

- 1. At least three years of financial state-
  - 2. At least three years of tax returns.
- 3. Accounts receivable aging.
- 4. Accounts payable aging.
- 5. Office lease(s).
- 6. Selected bank statements and year end reports.
- 7. Revenue by client analysis.
- 8. Bio of owners and staff.
- 9. Census by person with title, compensation and hourly rate.
- 10. Retirement plan report.
- 11. Firm brochures, press release, etc.
- 12. Business and financial plans.
- 13. Profitability analysis by client.
- 14. Client lists with copies of significant contracts. O

#### CIVILITY BEGINS AT HOME

Continued from page 42

cessor to Schneiderman, who had lost his job after being ousted as a multiple #Me-Too offender, was finally suing Exxon for defrauding shareholders by downplaying the expected risks of climate change to its business. Once again, Exxon labeled the lawsuit as an attempt, after three years of finding nothing, to justify a "meritless investigation."

But the *Times* was undaunted, quoting another long-time Exxon hater as concluding, "Apparently, Exxon has deceived the investing public about the economic consequences of climate change, just as they deceived the general public about the 'catastrophic' harm they knew their products

Forget that the assertions against Exxon "deceiving" anybody have never been proven ... that the vast majority of Exxon shareholders have no complaint against the company ... that Exxon over the past decade has acknowledged the existence of human activity-related climate change, discontinued contributing to climate deniers and invested heavily in alternate energy sources ...and that a lawsuit at this stage will waste millions of taxpayer dollars and contribute nothing to society.

The New York Times, like the other Exxon enemies it regularly promotes in its pages, seems committed only to obtaining its "pound of flesh."

Not exactly the most promising start to restore civility to society. O

### **Campbell fires lobbyist**

ampbell Soup fired VP-Government Affairs Kelly Johnston for spreading false information that billionaire philanthropist George Soros was funding the caravan of people from Central America heading for the U.S.

Johnston, on his personal Twitter account, charged Soros' Open Society Foundation with bankrolling "rail cars" for the migrants who are walking through Mexico heading for the

Keith McLoughlin, interim CEO of Campbell, sent a letter to Open Society to rebuke Johnston's remark.

"We expect our leaders to present facts, to deal with objective truths and to exercise impeccable judgment," wrote McLoughlin. "Mr.

Johnston's remarks do not represent the position of Campbell and are inconsistent with how Campbell approaches public debate."

The Open Society said it was surprised to see a Campbell's executive spreading false stories, though it supports "the historic U.S. commitment to welcoming people fleeing oppression and violence in their homelands."

Johnston joined Campbell in 2002, Earlier, he was Secretary of the Senate under then Majority Leader Bob Dole and a PR staffer at the National Food Processors Association. O



tarbucks has hired LOP Strategies as federal lobbyist for a raft of corporate social responsibility issues. Lori Otto Punke, who did a ten-year stint at the coffee

chain before exiting as Director of Government Affairs in 2015, heads the Mercer Island-based firm.

At Starbucks, she is remembered for helping to launch the company's high-profile College Achievement Plan to send baristas to

Earlier, Punke was Microsoft's Manager of Government Affairs, dealing with intellectual property, antitrust, tax, trade, cybersecurity and regulatory matters. She also served on the board of the software giant's political action committee.

LOP will advise Starbucks on workforce employment, benefits, training, ethical sourcing, family leave and sustainability issues.

Starbucks spent \$8.4 million for D.C. lobbying during the first nine months of 2018 at firms including Monument Policy Group, K&L Gates and Petrizzo Group. O

## **RG** backs Russian pipeline

oberti Global received \$1.2 million in lobbying payments for the nine months of 2018 to support the Nord Stream 2 pipeline to bring Russian gas to Europe, which is vehemently opposed by President Trump.

Trump says the finished pipeline will increase Europe's reliance on Russian energy sources.

Trump scored a major victory on Oct. 22 when chancellor Angela Merkel announced support for the import of U.S. gas to Germany. The Nord Stream pipeline is to have a hub in Germany when the gas begins to flow next year from Russia to the Baltic Sea.

Gazprom owns 100 percent of Nord Stream while Royal Dutch Shell has a debt interest in the project.



Kelly Johnson



Vin Roberti, who has represented General Motors, Samsung, Pfizer, AT&T and Ashraf Ghani's successful bid to become Afghanistan President, and Lydia Strunk, Deputy Floor Director for Republican House Speakers John Boehner and Paul Ryan, make the pitch for Nord Stream.

They deal with issues related to the U.S. position toward Nord Stream 2, including potential financial sanctions. •

### Waxman fights opioid addiction

enry Waxman, who was a powerful Los Angeles Congressman, is working Washington for a Pennsylvania drug company that's positioning itself as the leader in opioid addiction treatment.

Braeburn Inc.'s new drug application for CAM2038 weekly and

monthly buprenorphine formulations is currently under review by the Food and Drug Administration.

Democrat Waxman, who was involved in healthcare, environmental and technology issues, stepped down from Congress in 2015 after a 40-year career that was capped by chairing the Energy and Commerce Committee and Committee on Oversight and Government Re-



Henry Waxman

In January, Braeburn received \$110 million in financing from a Wellington Management

Co.-led group that included Deerfield Management, RA Capital Management, New Leaf Venture Partners, Rock Springs Capital and Apple Tree Partners. O

## **GSG** signs Schiumo

eteran New York City journalist and news anchor John Schiumo has joined public affairs powerhouse Global Strategy Group, where he's been named Vice President.

Schiumo joins GSG from CBS News, where he served as a national correspondent since October 2017. For more than two decades he was stationed at NY1 News, where he hosted the local cable news channel's popular hourlong live nightly newscast "The Call," which he created in 2005. That program was cancelled last year amid a major restructuring of the channel by parent company Charter Communications, which acquired NY1 parent Time Warner Cable in 2016.



John Schiumo

He'll be based in GSG's New York headquarters. •

#### PR firms axe Saudi accounts

PP's Glover Park Group and BGR Group have quit their Saudi Arabia accounts following the alleged torture, murder and dismemberment of Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* columnist, by Saudi agents in the Kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

Turkish officials say Saudi agents tortured, murdered and dismembered Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate after he visited to obtain documents needed for his wedding.

Saudi Arabia denies any involvement in Khashoggi's disappearance

Glover Park's \$150,000 per-month pact was for counsel regarding foreign policy, as well as legislative, public policy and media-related activities, according to Justice Dept. filings. It also agreed to conduct specific advocacy programs selected by the client.

BGR Government Affairs received \$80,000 monthly for strategic counsel on issues of concern to Saudi Arabia and advice on US policies. It also maintained contact with Members of Congress and their staffers.

The Harbour Group has also dropped its \$80,000 a month contract to represent Saudi Arabia, where it handled outreach strategies dealing with the US-Saudi relationship, including foreign policy matters, economic and trade cooperation and security issues.

THG Managing Director Richard Mintz sent a letter to the Saudis to end the relationship.

In May, the Saudi Embassy renewed THG's contract for another year.

Finally, Gladstone Place Partners has also killed its \$200,000 Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia account in the aftermath of Khashoggi's alleged murder.

Gladstone has been hired to promote the construction of Neom, a \$500 billion mega-city designed to help the Kingdom diversify its economic base and reduce its dependence on energy revenues. The campaign was supposed to run through July 2019.

Gladstone CEO Steve Lipin, who did a 10-year stint as *Wall Street Journal* finance editor and a 15-year run as Brunswick Group senior partner, launched New York-based Gladstone in 2017.

### **Greece pays Piper for D.C. work**

reece has hired DLA Piper to a \$75,000 monthly retainer contract to advance its mutual interests with the US in the areas of economics, trade, foreign policy and national security.

Ignacio Sanchez, co-chair of DLA Piper's government affairs practice, heads the firm's five-member lobbying team for the Greeks.

That group includes DLA strategic advisor Tom Korologos, the well-connected Republican who was US ambassador to Belgium.

Korologos, who has attended every GOP convention since 1972, served as director of congressional relations for Ronald Reagan's transition team and advisor to both Bob Dole's presidential bid and the Bush-Cheney transition team.

He was among advisors to lobby Reagan to celebrate Greek Independence Day (March 22) in the White House, a tradition that has been carried out since 1986.

Greece faces an economic challenge in 2019, which will be the first time in nearly a decade that the country is not subject to International Monetary Fund and European bailout requirements.

The IMF warned Greece in September of the need to stick to its promise of making big pension cuts that were part of the bailout package. **O** 

#### **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.

Husch Blackwell Strategies LLC, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 5, 2018 for Organization for Peace and Justice, Staten Island, NY, to ensure the US Government does not create an environment where Jamaat-e-Islami (Pakistan's oldest religious party) is defined as a security threat within Bangladesh or on an international scale, as well as increase US pressure on Bangladesh to develop and support a fully fair and open judiciary system.

LGND, LLC, Bethesda, MD, registered Oct. 20, 2018 for Canadian Ambassador (Canadian Embassy to the US), Washington, D.C., to assist with transforming the Connect2Canada website to serve as a knowledge base and ready resource for those in the US to learn about the bilateral relationhip with Canada

Cooke Robotham LLC, Washington, DC, registered Oct. 7, 2018 for Alexander B. Cummings, Liberia, regarding legal and policy advice for Cummings as political leader of Liberia's Alternative National Congress.

The Silversmith Law Offices PLLC, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 3, 2018 for Embassy of the State of Qatar, Washington, D.C., to assist with research and briefings as well as arranging and attending meetings with US government officials.

#### **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.

LOP Strategies, Mercer Island, WA, registered Oct. 22, 2018 for Starbucks Corporation, Seattle, WA, regarding issues related to post-natural disaster importation of coffee seeds to affected areas; programs related to workforce employment, benefits and training; ethical sourcing and sustainability; and family leave policies.

Sirona Strategies LLC, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 22, 2018 for Partnership to Empower Physician-Led Care, Washington, D.C, regarding independent physicians moving to value-based care.

Capitol Tax Partners, LLP, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 22, 2018 for Facebook, Washington, D.C., regarding issue related to tax reform and tax administration.

MWR Strategies, Inc., Midlothian, VA, registered Oct. 25, 2018 for Avanir Pharmaceutical, Aliso Viejo, CA, regarding pharmaceutical issues.

**BGR Government Affairs**, Washington, D.C., **registered Oct. 25, 2018 for Synthetic Turf Council, Inc.**, Forest Hill, MD, for strategic guidance and counsel on US trade and tariff issues impacting the synthetic turf industry.

Grant Consulting Group, Lansing, MI, registered Oct. 22, 2018 for Comet Mobility, Brighton, MI, regarding autonomous vehicles.

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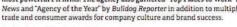
www.jpublicrelations.com

Employees: 65. Founded: 2005.

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

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

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



Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

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Regent Seven Seas Cruises (project work)

Relais & Châteaux

The Palms and The Shore Club, Turks & Caicos

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