

Communications strategies to grow B2B tech brands

Managing communications through an IPO

How Artificial Intelligence is changing PR

Tech tre

Why PR should integrate with paid media

'Legacy

brands PR for SaaS companies Strategies, challenges for tech startups

Content's evolving role in tech Investor presentation fundamentals

Tech trends for 2020 Is single-channel communications bad for B2B brands?

'Legacy': the dirtiest word in tech?

Mindful engagement habits for PR pros



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Richard Goldstein

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Can the media be saved?

t's hard to imagine the state of the U.S. media getting worse than it currently is. And yet, something tells me we'll find ourselves surveying new lows next year.

Partisan pandering and a polarizing political climate have left trust in the national news at a nadir. Fewer than a third of Americans (31 percent) trust reporting by national news outlets these days, according to a new Knight Foundation/Gallup study, and an October survey from Morning Consult found that media organizations now account for nearly all of the companies with the biggest net favorability gaps between Democrats and Republicans (see more on pg. 8). Trust and confidence in the media among Americans identifying as conservative stands at only 23 percent, according to a 2018 Poynter Institute survey.

Then there's the fact that calling the news business an unstable enterprise in 2019 qualifies for understatement of the year. The number of newspaper newsroom employees dropped by nearly half (47 percent) between 2008 and 2018, or from about 71,000 staffers to 38,000, according to Pew Research numbers. A 2019 New York Post report found that job losses across the U.S. news sector rose 28 percent in 2018 alone.

Consider this year's casualties so far. The closure of Youngstown Ohio's *The Vindicator*, which debuted in 1869, has left that Steel Valley mainstay as the largest city in the country without a daily print paper. Washington, D.C.'s Vox Media now owns New York magazine. The pending merger of the nation's two largest newspaper chains—GateHouse Media and Gannett—despite creating the largest U.S. media company by print circulation, may lead to the end of USA Today's print version, according to rumors. Family Circle, which has been in publication since 1932 and still boasts a circulation of four million, will shutter by the end of the year. I could go on.

All this consolidation and cost-cutting means smaller newsrooms, dwindling resources, fewer pages, less content. This, in turn, assures fewer future readers, which results in declining future ad revenues, setting the stage for more future cuts. Our news industry is circling the drain.

At the same time, it deserves mentioning that online adverting is booming. Digital ad revenues in the U.S. surpassed TV ad spends several years ago and crossed the \$100 billion threshold for the first time in 2018, according to an Interactive Advertising Bureau report. Ad spending in digital video alone—via social media and streaming platforms, as well as across mobile devices and programmatic exchanges—is expected to gain 21 percent in the U.S. this year to more than \$36 billion, according to new eMarketer estimates.

And yet, distrust in digital media is even higher than that for its polarizing analogue counterpart. Partisanship and the "fake news" phenomenon have rendered the Internet a playground for the misinformed, worsening the media's ongoing trust problem. Online news outlets, regardless of whether they lean left or right, are seen as the least-trusted media brands in America, according to a 2017 University of Missouri study. And a 2018 Cision report found that more than half of Americans (56 percent) claim fake news via the Internet has made them more skeptical of content produced by bona fide newsrooms. A majority of Americans (63 percent) now consider the fake news phenomenon to be a "major problem" in the U.S., according to a 2019 Institute for Public Relations survey, one on par with gun violence (also 63 percent) and terrorism (66 percent).

Everyone is a content publisher these days, but as it turns out, not everyone should be. The current online model also isn't a sustainable one, and if the press is going to be saved in this country, we need to fortify a sense of trust in the only economically viable media environment we're going to have left in five years.

Consider the one area of media where some semblance of trust remains: the local news. All things considered, trust in local media outlets remains unusually high when compared to their national counterparts. According to the Knight /Gallup survey, nearly half of Americans (45 percent) trust reporting by their local news "a great deal," 61 percent believe these outlets do a good job of educating them on what's going on in their community, and 51 percent don't feel these organizations have become more biased in recent years.

Granted, the local news isn't a service many are compelled to pay for these days (84 percent of Americans admit they didn't pay for local news coverage of any kind last year, according to a March Pew Research report) and alas, these are the very outlets that are disappearing at blinding speed across the country. But if we found a way to instill the sense of trust Americans have for their local news with the revenue potential that's made digital media a boon, it could be the day we stumble upon a model that actually works.

Nature abhors a vacuum; information is everywhere, but trust in that information remains in shockingly short supply. For this reason, I think a coming phase for media could be quality, expert-produced content on trustworthy platforms that attracts regular reading habits among an audience of devotees. And call me an optimist, but when that day happens, it may serve as the death knell for the web's current proliferation of bad content. Some of us might even be willing to pay for it. O

— Jon Gingerich



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kevin McCauley kevin@odwyerpr.com

PUBLISHER

John O'Dwyer john@odwyerpr.com

SENIOR EDITOR

Jon Gingerich jon@odwyerpr.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Steve Barnes steve@odwyerpr.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Fraser Seitel Richard Goldstein

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS & RESEARCH

Jane Landers Melissa Webell

Advertising Sales: John O'Dwyer john@odwyerpr.com

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Diverse, inclusive workforce pays dividends

Diverse, inclusive workplaces boost employee morale and brand engagement, and are top incentives for today's job seekers.

ostering a diverse, inclusive workforce can help companies in areas ranging from recruitment to employee morale to brand engagement, a new study from Brodeur Partners finds.

Respondents who said that the company they worked for has "a very diverse workforce" were far more likely to rate employee morale as "excellent." More than half (56.2 percent) of respondents from very diverse workplaces gave morale at their company a top rating, while only 23.3 percent of those from "somewhat, not very or not-at-diverse" workplaces said morale at their companies was excellent.

Diversity and inclusiveness also are a prime incentive for job seekers. The survey asked respondents to rate how important six factors were when making a decision about where they would like to work. While flexible working hours were the most attractive incentive across the board, diversity came in second for many groups, including women, African Americans and Hispanics, as well as for Gen Z and Millennial respondents.

Productivity on the job was also thought to increase in diverse workplaces. Nearly three in five respondents (59 percent) said they would be more productive in a workforce that includes people with different backgrounds.

By Steve Barnes

When asked how a diverse workforce happens, respondents acknowledged the pivotal role that company policies play. About half of those at diverse companies (50.1 percent) said their employer actively recruits a diverse range of potential employees.

Diverse workforces also affect a company's business policies, with 47. 1 percent of workers at diverse companies saying that their employer designs products and services for diverse communities. Slightly more (47.8 percent) said their employers engage diverse audiences through commu-

"This research cements the case that creating a welcoming, inclusive workplace ultimately improves the bottom line," said Brodeur Partners Senior Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion Angela Hayes.

The Brodeur Partners study surveyed a group of 1,592 people in July. O

America's partisan view of media widens

By Steve Barnes

he partisan divide characterizing Americans' view of media companies is getting wider, according to a new survey from Morning Consult.

Out of the 15 companies that showed the biggest gap in net favorability between Republican and Democratic respondents in the survey, 12 were media companies. While Trump Hotels won the prize for most polarizing brand, with a gap of 86 percentage points between how respondents from the left and right viewed the company, news organizations comprised almost all of the rest of the list.

For every media company that was part of the survey in 2018, that favorability gap grew over the past year. CNN, number-two on the list, saw that divide increase by 14 points, thanks mostly to a 12-point hike in the number of Republican respondents who had a negative view of the network.

The tale is similar (though the political slant is reversed) for Fox News, where the increasingly negative view of the network from Democratic respondents resulted in a favorability gap that grew by 19 points.

The real story with Fox, however, is that the divide is not simply between left-leaning and right-leaning media—it's between Fox and just about everyone else. While a broad range of companies (CNN and The New York Times as well as NBC, CBS and ABC News) were favored more by Democrats than Republicans, the brands favored by Republicans (Fox News, FOX, Fox Business and Fox Nation) all live under the same corporate umbrella.

And despite the negative effect that increasing polarization may be having on the country as a whole, there's one place where it's reaping benefits. The study notes that viewership was up at CNN, Fox News and MSNBC, all of whom appear on the list. For the three combined, revenues have risen 36 percent since 2015, with profits up 50 per-

With the number of local newspapers dwindling, national companies on Morning Consult's list are gaining an ever-greater share of the public's attention, the study reports. O



Social, green issues top concerns of Gen Zers

A recent survey discovered that an overwhelming majority of Generation Z members believe companies should take action on social and environmental issues.

By Steve Barnes

vast majority of Gen Zers say that they care about social and environmental issues—and they think companies should take action on them, according to the 2019 Porter Novelli/Cone Gen Z Purpose Study.

More than nine out of 10 survey respondents (91 percent) said they want companies to get involved in promoting job creation in the U.S., while 90 percent want to see companies do their part to solve problems surrounding racial equality and sexual harassment. Working for women's equality (89 percent), battling climate change (85 percent) and defending religious freedom and tolerance (83 percent) were also priorities.

Two topics that show a big jump in interest from Gen Zers were gun control and LGBTQ rights. Eight in ten respondents said that companies should address gun control (up from 68 in the 2017 survey), and 74 percent said they should get in-

volved in working for LGBTQ rights (up from 65 percent in 2017).

In addition, Gen Zers want companies to take action, not just make statements. Nearly all respondents (93 percent) said that companies should have the appropriate programs and policies in place to back up their commitment to an issue. And three-quarters (74 percent) said they intended to do research to see if companies really follow through on their statements.

A company's positions and actions can have a strong effect on how attractive a place it is to work, and to whether or not Gen Zers want to buy its products. 83 percent of survey respondents said they consider a company's purpose when deciding where to work, and 72 percent said that purpose was a factor when they make a purchase.

When it comes to how they can move social change forward themselves, most Gen Zers are big believers in social media, with 80 percent saying they feel they can have an impact on issues by going online. Sharing positive opinions about a company that is doing good (85 percent) or taking an online action to trigger a donation (76 percent) were two popular ways of exercising social media's power.

In fact, survey respondents believed in social media's power so much that 64 percent of them said supporting issues online is more effective at making a difference than doing something in their communities.

But perhaps the biggest priority for Gen Zers is finding a way to bring people together, with 90 percent of survey respondents saying they were tired of how negative and divided the country has become, and 94 percent citing the need for greater unity. They do see hope for the future, however, with 76 percent saying progress is likely to be made on important issues within the next five years.

The Porter Novelli/Cone Gen Z Purpose Study surveyed a random sample of 1,026 American consumers ages 14 to 22 in August. •



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Managing communications through an IPO

Communications strategy approaches to consider when your company is heading towards an IPO.

By Dan O'Mahony

018 and 2017 were banner years for IPOs in tech. DocuSign, Dropbox, Cloudera, Okta and many others entered the public markets and, despite a rocky six months for the market overall, are still trading well above their opening day prices.

On the other hand, 2019 has been a mixed bag for technology IPOs, to say the least. WeWork had a shocking fall from grace. The company delayed its IPO after investors showed big concerns about We-Work's financials. Uber and Lyft have also had rocky debuts as well.

All of this means it's an incredibly challenging time if you're an in-house communications person or team lead at a PR agency, and your company/client is preparing to go public. Yes, there's more market skepticism, but the process is daunting even in the best of times: there's new terminology, new stakeholders and much higher stakes

Employees can be emotional and hyper-aware about the process as well, considering a successful IPO could mean a new house, a year off, paying off debt or the beginning of a college fund for their kids.

And of course, these recent negative headlines only intensify things further. No company wants to be the next WeWork.

There are also specific, legal consequences based on your decisions, with the potential for compromising or delaying the IPO if there are mistakes. This represents a major shift for most PR people in the startup world, who are used to pushing and shoving to get attention and ask for forgiveness

So, if your executive team lets you know going public is close, how should you approach it? Where do you even start?

No two IPOs are the same. For a wellknown brand like Airbnb, the challenge might be around explaining the company's path to profitability. For a B2B-focused company like Databricks, the challenge is likely more on broadening awareness with the business press so they understand what the company actually does.

Regardless, messaging, timing, media outreach and other activities should all be high-touch and over-communicated to different teams and stakeholders to get buy-

That said, there are some broad-stroke

guidelines that apply in more situations than not. Here are six lessons I learned working on Carbon Black's IPO in 2018 and Okta's IPO in 2017 (InkHouse worked with both companies as their agency of record through IPO):

Be ready. If your CEO tells you an IPO is a year out, keep tabs on the timing to make sure it doesn't shift. Ask to speak with the Investor Relations team or legal team to get the full download. Find out when the first private filings, S-1 filing and roadshows

Even tentative dates are helpful, because once the company files its S-1, you'll enter a complete quiet period—like a lockdown and won't be permitted to say anything. Knowing the dates well in advance will help you plan as much activity as possible before filing so no ideas or campaigns get delayed or canceled.

Be prepared to hear "no" (and to push back). Chances are, an IPO will mean more interactions with legal teams than you've ever had before. The good folks on your legal team are your friends, and you'll want their sign-off on everything because they know what can get the company into hot water with the SEC.

That said, remember what their priorities are: they want to reduce risk. Saying "no" is the easiest way to do that. Try to push back when something seems overly restrictive and you'll know what's flexible and what is non-negotiable.

Don't overlook social. Did you know that if an employee posts an article about your company's rumored IPO, or even likes a story on Facebook, that could mean a flag from the SEC? Social media is the area with the biggest potential for employee sprawl. Be sure to train your employees on what they can and can't be saying.

Build a great story. For a lot of companies, an IPO is an opportunity to get a higher level of interest from a different batch of reporters. It's all the more important to have a great story, because now reporters will cover you whether or not you

If all they have to go on is your S-1, then that's what the coverage will look like. Or worse, they'll pull messaging from an old press release.

Go through your numbers in great detail to paint a better story that shows the company's competitive moats, the value of its executive team and where you're headed in the next ten years. That extra bit of context could mean the difference between straight numbers being reported on and a business feature with a strong narrative.

Educate reporters on your story today. If you know an IPO is coming and you're

not yet in a quiet period, you should be thinking about how to get your CEO and other spokespeople in front of lots more reporters.

Nagging misperceptions won't go away through an IPO, they'll intensify; during the IPO, more reporters



Dan O'Mahony

will cover you organically than ever before. By law, your numbers are now publicly available, free of spin or context.

Particularly in the quiet period, when you won't be able to comment on anything, your story is essenßtially out of your hands. This is why you should be hyper-aware of timing and briefing reporters well in advance so they're well-informed about your company or client's corporate story.

Remember it is a moment in time, not a finish line. Once an IPO is over and the excitement wears off-believe it or not, it will—you'll be going back to the grind. Treat IPO day as an announcement and point in time—albeit a huge, much more complicated and longer-term moment in time—and start thinking about what the next six months will look like.

Make sure the story you tell on IPO day is one you'll want to stick to three, six and 12 months out. Afterward, some of those IPO-day briefings will turn into long-term relationships and a chance to tell bigger, better stories.

An IPO is a huge achievement and milestone, but it's just that, a milestone. Building for the long haul and treating this as the end of a chapter—as opposed to the end of a race—will put your communications program in a great position to benefit from all the goodness and excitement from a public exit.

Dan O'Mahony is Executive Vice President and San Francisco General Manager at InkHouse. O





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Mindful engagement for disengaged PR pros

PR is difficult work, and the unresolved stress that PR professionals deal with daily necessitates a more thoughtful and systematic approach to mindful engagement practices in the workplace that can help defuse conflicts and develop order among confusion.

By Doug Swanson

very PR person has experienced the workplace stress that develops in this volatile and unpredictable profession. Public relations professionals undertake their daily responsibilities amid unprecedented technological change and shifting marketplace expectations, in a cultural era in which "truth" seems to be continually under attack.

Recently, the University of Alabama's Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations Leadership Report Card was the latest canary in the PR coal mine to sound the alarm regarding professional disengagement. The Plank narrative described "sharp perceptual differences" between public relations leadership and the rank-and-file. Women, the findings showed, are particularly susceptible to being "less engaged, less satisfied with their job, less confident in their work cultures, and more critical of top leaders."

The Plank report followed a nationwide survey of PR professionals in 2018. That survey, conducted through California State University-Fullerton, found extensive reports of stress, career burnout, unresponsive leadership and a workplace approach of "just going through the motions."

The unresolved stresses that PR people deal with daily—and the challenges presented by the arrival of Generation Z—necessitate a more thoughtful and systematic approach to the nature of PR work itself. That strategy is mindful engagement, an approach that's been applied throughout many other sectors of the business workplace and in many *Fortune* 500 corporations. Mindful engagement is effective, on both an individual and collective level, to reduce stress and develop order among confusion.

Although mindfulness is rarely—if ever identified in a public relations context, it's found throughout modern life. Professional athletes and coaches credit mindfulness as key to getting "in the zone" for winning performance. Movies and television programs document mindfulness as a life-changing experience. Entertainers, celebrities and talk show hosts proclaim its calming power. Many millions of dollars are invested every year by Nike, General Mills, Goldman Sachs, Procter & Gamble and other Fortune 500 firms whose C-Suite executives recognize that employees who aren't mindfully engaged lack the focus necessary to develop and implement good ideas.

To be mindfully engaged is to be thoughtful in the present moment and take action in a disciplined and beneficial way. Mindfulness involves more focus on process and less on future outcomes. It does not ignore professional obligations. It supports them.

One of the leading scholars in the field, Harvard University Psychology Professor Ellen Langer, has invested decades in the study and application of mindfulness. She calls it "an embodied awareness of what is happening in ourselves, in others, and in our environment on a moment-to-moment basis"

Mindfulness isn't a religion or a health care practice, although it developed from Asian meditative practices that've been used for thousands of years to calm the mind and aid in healing of the body. Mindful engagement at work doesn't mean lighting a candle and banging a gong. What mindful engagement does mean has been made abundantly clear through numerous workplace case studies and examples.

Mindful engagement means:

- Taking some time each day to be still and quiet the mind.
- Recognizing that the mind, a trickster, often makes work appear worse than it really is.
- Expecting workplace ambiguity to be ever-present, because even the best problem-solver never has all the facts at hand.
- Being thoughtful and deliberate in decision-making, but not to the point of obsession.
- Applying compassion with even the most difficult coworker or client, because no one ever knows the extent of another person's hidden challenges.
- Collaborating in ways that diverge from the traditional top-down model, because there are always other options to explore.
- Seeing the organization, in the words of HR professional and leadership consultant Michael Carroll, as "a web of lively relationships, not a series of transactions about me and my opinions."
- Stepping away from the desk and out of the office at regular intervals, to remind oneself that the work being completed, though important, is not one's life.
- Maintaining a healthy balance between time spent in work and time invested in life.

Application of a strategy of mindful engagement works to calm the workplace and the workforce. It helps turn disorder into

order. Mindfulness is important for PR people now, both individually and collectively. It will be essential in the future, too, as more Generation Z workers enter the public relations field.

Sixty million people identified as Gen Z

were born between the mid 1990s and early 2000s. These young adults have no memory of a time without social media. They're tech savvy multitaskers who are more at home with a cell phone or tablet than a desktop computer.



Doug Swanson

Gen Zers tend to be optimistic for the future but studies show they're challenged by poor communication skills, a misunderstanding of business realities, poor organization and a lack of follow-through. One common observation is that Gen Zers are often hesitant to pick up a phone and "cold call" a client. Sometimes it's because they've not had experience doing this, and sometimes it's because they're more comfortable with communicating via text or instant message. Gen Z adults are expected to succeed in public relations, yet this generation often doesn't share the same language as our clients.

Recruiting, training, motivating and rewarding a new group of employees who see work differently will add more stress to the life of the PR executive (a position already ranked among the ten most stressful in the workplace, according to the 2019 Agility Solutions PR blog).

The answer is mindful engagement. It has to be practiced individually and collectively by PR professionals at all levels of the hierarchy. It has to be recognized and invested in by leadership. Its practice by the rankand-file needs to be rewarded. Mindfulness has to be woven throughout our daily experiences, becoming a foundation for the big decisions and the little ones.

If we can bring about a more mindful workplace, we can change the industry. We can improve collaboration with our employees, clients and communities in substantial ways. When should we start? The mindful individual would say—quite literally—there's no time like the present.

_ Continued on page 17

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Al in PR: liberty from the shackles of the mundane

For years, tech trend mavens and workplace futurologists have been throwing predictions about Al around like confetti at a wedding. Al is going to do X, machine learning will reshape Y. Wrapped up in this have been fears regarding mass layoffs amid gloomy prognostications of careers automated to extinction. But are these worries warranted?

By Heather Kernahan

n a sense, the future is already here. "Humans Still Needed," a 2018 CIPR report analyzing skills and tools in the industry, found that the market for AI tools in public relations is "exploding," with more than 120 such tools already available.

Doom-mongers might paint this as a bot army at the gates. But this is really a liberating force. As the CIPR report states: "Many experts agree that AI will help more than hurt white collar workers by freeing them from more mundane tasks and allowing them to concentrate on innovation and creativity."

And it's a refrain taken up by PR:Tech, the 2019 global communications report by USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations, which asserts: "As the PR profession adopts new technology, PR professionals will need to adopt new skills. Machines may do the analysis, but intelligent humans will be required to translate data into actionable insights. Those insights will be expressed visually, which increases the need for production and design capabilities."

That aligns with our thinking in Hotwire. AI is not only a boon for our tech clients, it's great for our business too.

We don't want bright minds in our business to feel frustrated and on the path to burnout because of tedious hours staring at spreadsheets. Rather, technology is revolutionizing the way we work and generating new opportunities at a dizzying rate.

Investing in the best technology will increasingly free our people from dreary, repetitive tasks, allowing them to provide real value by devoting their time to strategy, creativity and delivering amazing client service. I say "increasingly" because for us the journey has already begun.

What makes this possible is our "tech stack," a collection of tools and services that provide our people with insights, data and analytics. We evaluate every tool in our stack yearly to make sure we are using "best in industry."

These tools vary from the expected such as media monitoring to the more advanced behavioral analytics, influencer identification and predictive PR responses. We've moved away from the outdated mentality that for decades held sway in communications planning and measurement to become more proactive, data-driven and geared to-

ward making our clients thought and industry leaders. Our technological edge is helping clients gain a valuable edge of their own in the highly competitive markets in which they operate.

Internally, we give our people the choice between PC or Mac laptops but ensure our teamwork is speedy and smooth by using collaborative enterprise solutions such as Zoom, Slack and Egnyte. As you'd imagine, we're big on the cloud.

Ensuring our people are tech savvy goes beyond boosting efficiency. It helps build understanding of our clients' tech products, leading to better communication programs and results.

Those agencies that don't adapt to embrace the opportunities brought by new technologies will be left behind yet it's clear many agency managers have yet to grasp the significance of what's going on. Research for the USC Annenberg Center report mentioned above found that only 18 percent of PR professionals believe AI will be "very important" in PR work.

Yet when the same question was put to PR students, a majority (53 percent) agreed. The generation soon to enter the workforce is more aware then those making decisions today that will set the direction of the agencies of the future.

This brings me to what we look for in our new hires. Creativity is a must. As LinkedIn research shows, it is the most in-demand soft skill of 2019. Its rise is no surprise. Back in 2016, the World Economic Forum's influential "The Future of Jobs" report projected that creativity would leap from 10th place to 3rd most important skill in the workplace between 2015 and 2020.

However, creativity must be accompanied by data knowhow. In the next five to 10 years, we will need to teach every employee how and when to use data. We will all become some degree of data scientist. More and more, our business will hinge on taking data and converting it into something creative or strategic.

AI will do the data crunch heavy lifting. Yet we must be mindful of the saying that while a robot can do the work of 50 people, at the same time, 50 robots can't do what one person does.

Not only will AI be able to rattle through large data sets, its openness to patterns and correlations is rather like a child's mind. It throws up potential connections we would not set out to look for. What, if anything

would it mean if there was a spike in social media usage just after a TV commercial for a funeral parlor? Or an ice cream brand? Nothing at all, a red herring? Or something important that would otherwise have been overlooked?

This is where the sub-



Heather Kernahan

tlety and cultural intelligence of the human mind comes into play. It will be about interpreting data into valid insights and then applying market knowledge and creative chops to come up with killer strategies and

The need for this subtlety and imagination is growing fast because the march of AI is gathering momentum. As the New York Times reported earlier this year under the headline "The Rise of the Robot Reporter," some form of automated technology is used in around a third of the content published by Bloomberg News. That translates into thousands of articles on company earnings reports each quarter.

"In addition to covering company earnings for Bloomberg," the newspaper noted, "robot reporters have been prolific producers of articles on minor league baseball for The Associated Press, high school football for The Washington Post and earthquakes for The Los Angeles Times."

Meanwhile, the AI-powered content management system at Forbes is playfully named Bertie in honor of the magazine's visionary Founder Bertie Charles Forbes, who once said: "If you don't drive your business, you will be driven out of business." How true.

We're looking to technology and AI in particular to drive our business forward, because our intention is to carry on growing rather than being driven into oblivion. And we all can learn from each other as we build our own tech stacks and integrate AI into our organizations. Read everything, talk about this everywhere, try new tech and processes. All of this will keep us from the shackles of the mundane.

Heather Kernahan is President North America and Australia, Hotwire. O

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PR challenges for tech startups

Applying the right strategies and tactics for your tech PR programs depends, in large part, on knowing how to utilize different approaches depending on the company in question. Namely, whether it's a newer venture or a well-known, established brand.

By Bob Geller

hen I joined my agency as a young recruit back in the day, V I took on clients ranging from data storage and software startups to Swedish telecom giant Ericsson.

Each had their challenges, but one was notably different. The pitches for the startups required a great deal of trial and error. After banging my head against a wall, I'd shift gears to Ericsson. Phone conversations with reporters felt more like banter with old friends (once we got past the awkward "Oh, you're a PR guy" stage). A typical response was: "Right, Ericsson, let me try to fit you in." Chasing stories down for other clients made me feel more like an annoying bill collector.

This was a long time ago, and much has changed in the technology and public relations worlds. One thing remains the same, however: success hinges on very different playbooks for established brands versus startups. Below, I'll explain how this plays out and how to stack the deck-or stack the tech—depending on which side your company or client falls out on.

The power of brand

Technology dominates our lives and the headlines. Nine out of 10 companies in the NASDAQ 100 are in tech, from old school vendors like Microsoft and Intel to relative newcomers like Facebook and Amazon. Unicorns—young, private companies valued at over \$1 billion—dominate their sectors and command outsize attention.

It's a winner take all world in business, and this applies to media coverage too. Big news about recognized companies and brands still ranks the highest on the press attention scale.

So, if you're a big tech brand, you're all set, right? And startups should just pack their bags and go home?

Not at all. The primacy of brand is a double-edged sword. Well-known brands come with associations, sometimes, less than glowing. There can be baggage that needs to be overcome, and this isn't necessarily easy, given the inertia. Think of how hard it is for a large ship to shift course. A large brand can be a major target for a looming crisis.

The startup's brand can be viewed as a blank canvas, waiting to be filled in. Their challenge is to overcome the initial reluctance and natural skepticism about something new and unproven.

Inevitably it gets to games of defense vs.

Defense vs. offense

The tech leaders have much working for them, such as recognition and market power. Their business challenges typically involve defending turf, growing market share and conquering new areas. PR needs to support each of these.

The programs should focus on reputation, crisis management-when necessary—and news about business progress and product and business lines. In short, it's primarily a defensive game and needs to heed vulnerabilities such as any baggage related to their brand or space (think of cable companies and customer service, or social media platforms and consumer pri-

The PR team should explore tactics to counter these issues. This could mean finding ways to rebuff unwanted media inquiries for certain topics and pursuing those that are more strategic.

Startups face different challenges and need to play offense. This means taking risks and being bold to fight for attention. New can mean newsworthy. Disruption, taking on the giants: these are appealing storylines. Plus, there's an affinity for the entrepreneur, and a natural rooting for the underdog.

The new ventures, the lesser-known competitors should launch communications aimed at the weaknesses of the leaders to get coverage. A tried and true tactic in technology is sowing FUD: fear, uncertainty and doubt.

In addition to taking more risks, startups can use their small size to advantage. For example, they can be nimbler when responding to news and marketplace developments. Big brands can be constrained by bureaucracy and disclosure regulations governing public companies.

Executive branding

There are parallels between the challenges and opportunities of big brands and the profiles of their leadership. Indeed, it can be hard to separate a well-known leader from the company brand. Think Larry Ellison at Oracle, Marc Benioff at Salesforce, and Elon Musk at Tesla.

Having a celebrity CEO can seem to be an unfair advantage. And this may be true, depending on the personal brand of the executive. Some are loose cannons that create more PR damage than windfall. We saw this recently with the WeWork IPO flameout, when CEO Adam Neumann was regarded as a hero, until he wasn't.

The startup with the unknown executive

team needs to work hard to earn attention and build a brand for its leaders. This can involve thought leadership programs, especially in the B2B sector.

The PR teams at companies should understand the strengths and weak-



nesses of the public faces and do their best to mitigate problems by counseling on talking points, when to engage the media, when to shun the spotlight or sometimes, the best way to apologize.

Don't fear the techlash

It's hard to ignore the growing technology backlash, or techlash. People fret about habit-forming apps and social media, and news and algorithmic bias and manipulation. Governments around the world are clamping down to fight against monopolies and protect consumer privacy. Reporters are editorializing with harsher tones in their articles.

How to respond? Again, this can vary based on the type of company. Big tech is taking the brunt of the criticism, especially the FANGs (Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google). Their PR teams are doing their best to fight the fires, but many of the problems they endure are systemic and won't go away overnight.

This doesn't mean that smaller companies get a free pass. They can get dinged too. One of our startup clients was called out as a violator of consumer privacy by TechCrunch, and several other publications ran articles quoting the TechCrunch article. We felt the company was unfairly singled out, as others offer similar functionality which can, in fact, expose personal information, if implemented incorrectly. On the other hand, the TechCrunch piece positioned our client as de facto leaders in the space and thrust the company onto the world stage. We took it as an opportunity to go on the offensive, and issued a statement that countered the inaccuracies in

Continued on next page

Is single-channel comms bad for B2B brands?

How a multi-channel strategy can help you connect with buyers in the right place and at the right time.

By Amy Fisher

f you asked tourists in Times Square how they got to New York, you'd probably hear tales of trains, planes and automobiles.

One person might describe flying from Sydney to Hong Kong to New York over an exhausting 24 hours. Another might mention a far less eventful trip, like a morning train ride from Boston to Penn Station. And yet, another might tell you they took the subway from New Jersey.

When we make travel plans like these, our thinking is pragmatic. We decide what it is we want to do—in this case, visit New York—and pick the transportation mode that works best for us.

Unfortunately, we don't always apply this kind of thinking to B2B communication. Rather than using the channels or modes that work best for reaching buyers, too often we limit ourselves to just one channel.

And just like taking the train won't work for every visitor to New York, one communication channel won't work for reaching every buyer.

Change the channel

In the B2B world, you spend your days trying to reach audiences that have long and complex buyer's journeys. Using only one channel limits how and where you can meet them in those journeys.

With a multi-channel approach, you can capitalize on the opportunities that the many channels in today's complex media

PR CHALLENGES FOR TECH STARTUPS

Continued from page 16

the article. Several outlets published it ver-

The PR team went out with a pitch about the problem and explained the benefits of the technology. The client's CEO was eager to get out there and educate about their technology, damn the torpedoes. This aggressive approach resulted in interviews and coverage with many top-tier outlets.

A larger company might not have been able to respond as quickly or be as eager to go on the offensive about such a sensitive

Despite the techlash, I feel that tech PR is still a great place to be and will be for years to come. You just need to apply the right tactics for the type of company and technology.

Bob Geller is President of Fusion Public Relations. O

landscape can offer to reach buyers. This includes opportunities to reach buyers at different times in their journey and to reach different types of buyers.

So, how do you deploy a multi-channel communication approach? With a rock-solid understanding of your communication goals and your target market and a well-crafted strategy for moving your buyers through the awareness-to-adoption continuum. You can do this by following five steps:

Define your goals

You won't know if your communication is successful unless you define up front what success looks like.

Start with some of the basics: What do we do? Why do we do it?

Then, go deeper to identify what it is you're trying to achieve with your communication. Where is our business now? Where do we want it to go? How and when do we get there? What's standing in our

Get to know your buyers

We can pretty quickly identify the best transportation method for getting to New York. But understanding our customers and the motivators that inspire them to act isn't as easy.

Ask questions like: Who do we need to reach? What do we want them to do? What are their trusted sources of information?

MINDFUL ENGAGEMENT FOR PR PROS

_ Continued from page 12

Here are three excellent sources to assist in developing mindful engagement at work:

- Awakening Compassion at Work: The Quiet Power that Elevates People and Organizations, Monica Worline and Jane Dutton (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017)
- Fearless at Work: Timeless Teachings for Awakening Confidence, Resilience, and Creativity in the Face of Life's Demands, Michael Carroll (2012, Shambhala Press)
- Growing Up Mindful: Essential Practices to Help Children, Teens, and Families Find Balance, Calm, and Resilience, Christopher Ward (2016, Sounds True Press)

Doug Swanson is Professor of Communications at California State University, Fullerton, where he's Founder and Director of the student-run PR agency PRactical ADvantage Communications. •

Work with people not only within your communication team but also from other teams or departments to map out the answers to these questions.

Customize your messages

Just like you can't always rely on the same channel, you also can't always rely on the same message.

Certainly, your high-level story should be consistent. But your key messages and

proof points should be personalized to different buyers. They should be tailored, for example, to resonate with a buyer's habits and beliefs. They should also acknowledge the challenges the buyer faces. And they should clearly articulate what the buyer will get by taking the action that you offer them.



Amy Fisher

Map paths for buyers

Visitors to New York have different paths and schedules for getting there. Similarly, buyers have different channels for different outcomes.

Look at your buyers' personas. Do they get news and information in different ways and at different times? This can help you decide which communication channel you should use—and when you should use it to reach them. If buyers are looking to influencers on social media, for example, you should be on that medium trying to reach them, perhaps with a campaign that involves those influencers.

Test messages and channels

Barring some dramatic change to transportation, a tourist from Australia will never veer from using an airline to get to New York. But that doesn't mean you should never change up the messaging or channels you use to reach buyers.

This is where measurement is crucial. If you can track your efforts against your goals, then you can continually evaluate, adjust and optimize your communication.

Take the wheel

Once you've gone through these steps, you'll gain a new appreciation for how different your buyers can be and the different paths they can take on their buyer's journey. And you'll see why leaning on a single-channel approach makes about as much sense as asking everyone visiting New York to arrive by bus.

Amy Fisher is a Vice President in Padilla's *Technology Practice.* **O**

The right comms strategy to grow B2B tech brands

Awareness strategies, messaging, positioning and key initiatives to focus on when taking your tech offering global.

Bv Katie Blair

rowing a technology business is no easy feat. Taking that business to international markets is even more of a challenge. From laws and regulations that vary by country to variances in payment methods, going global brings a whole new set of considerations that shouldn't be tak-

In fact, a study conducted by Harvard Business Review of 20,000 businesses in 30 countries showed that, "companies selling abroad had an average Return on Assets of minus one percent as long as five years after their move."

Now, layer in the challenges of developing the right communications strategy for building awareness in your new market. Several factors come into play, including messaging and positioning, leveraging key spokespeople, carrying customer voices into a new market and establishing trust with an entirely new audience.

It takes guts, determination and a clear business plan to initiate global expansion and tap into benefits such as new revenue, access to fresh talent and foreign investment opportunities. When making the leap abroad and into new regions, the coordination of a global marketing and communications plan should be first and foremost to maximize business impact.

Getting to know the local landscape

It goes without saying that opening your brand to international markets means opening the gates to new competition. To begin, do your research and study your competition in each of your new regions. The brands that you've come to know and compete with in the United States may be entirely different than your competition in APAC. This is especially true for emerging growth businesses looking to make a name for themselves in new regions that are brimming with well-established brands.

There is a certain an "underdog mentality" that comes with entering a new region. You're no longer the hometown team. Will buyers, customers and potential employees respond positively to your brand? Dedicate time to understand the local power players, research trends and offerings specific to that market and outline your brand's key differentiators.

The B2B tech space is crowded, there's no way around it. Leveraging the research that you've done about the local market, consider these five steps as you begin your international growth journey:

Build a listening and monitoring platform to evaluate key brands, overall market positioning and competitive voices driving the conversation. In order to insert your footprint into this new market, you need to understand it entirely. Marketers have access to tools like Trendkite and Netbase, designed to monitor your brand's earned and social media presence in relation to your top competitors. With today's technology, there's no excuse for ignorance.

Activate appropriate awareness strategies based on your findings. Keep in mind, this isn't a one-size fits all model. After all, localization is the key for globalization, and this includes ensuring that your valued marketing assets-mainly your websiteare tailored for each local audience and that your content utilizes appropriate language.

It's also important to think about your new customer base and what makes them tick. Is your new target market already familiar with your technology, brand and service offerings? If not, it's best to start at the ground level with general education on your technology's value. Ask yourself: how does the need to educate your audience impact your side of the buyer's journey? The answer is the development of strategic, top of funnel content like news releases, social sharables and blog posts that familiarize them with your brand and its value proposition.

Select key spokespeople who will develop and support a thought leadership program. Expanding to a new region means re-establishing the same trust and credibility that you built in your original market. Thought leadership initiatives such as speaking opportunities, bylined articles and events are ideal for framing your brand as a credible resource as you expand inter-

Create a VoC program that can scale globally. Customer experience must be top of mind throughout your expansion journey, or you'll risk retention of current customers and fail to attract new ones. Buyers expect that their experience will be highly tailored and when conducting business internationally, this includes varying cultural norms. According to Microsoft's State of Customer Service Report, 61 percent of respondents indicated that they've stopped conducting business with a brand due to poor customer service.

To avoid this, engage with local partners to help carry the brand forward. This can range from distributors to hiring local managers that know the regional culture. It's important to ensure that you have the right infrastructure in place to support your VoC efforts.

Measure globally. You can no longer look at your share of voice across a single market. Make sure you are including the changes you've made to your messagingpersonalization, tone, style-and measure that impact through a



Katie Blair

global lens. Monitor the influence—or lack thereof—that your subject matter experts have made on building awareness in the region, but also on a global scale. Remember to compare your successes to that of your competitors in each market. How are your programs performing? Be ready to adjust by country but prepared to look at a unified view of the brand globally.

While there's no simple formula or onesize fits all model for scaling a B2B tech communications strategy into a new territory, doing your diligence to understand the market at hand can aid in setting you up for success. Strive to set yourself apart from your competitors in all markets with localized messaging, culture-specific awareness strategies and a customer experience model that resonates with all customers. Over time, your audience will begin to recognize your brand as an international mark of suc-

Katie Blair is Vice President and General Manager at PAN Communications. O

PR news brief

Sard Verbinnen & Co. handles Virgin Galactic's NYSE 'lift off'

Sard Verbinnen & Co. handled investor relations for the New York Stock Exchange "lift-off" of Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic Holdings as it became the first publicly held space tourism company.

The stock opened at \$12.34.

The company says it has reservations for more than 600 people from 60 nations who have forked over deposits of \$80 million and represent potential revenue topping \$120 million.

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Why doing PR for SaaS is so painful

Tactics for getting successful media coverage for software-as-a-service products.

By Edward M. Yang

et's be honest. In today's age of content saturation, it's getting harder to stand out from the crowd through public relations. Spamming press releases and pitches to reporters have all but made it impossible for most companies to get legitimate press coverage.

That trend is converßging with another trend: the growth of software-as-a-service, commonly referred to as SaaS. In fact, SaaS—or the cloud, as it's also sometimes referred to-has now become so much of our work and personal life that we don't really think much about it any longer.

Moore's law, or the notion that the number of transistors in a processor doubles every two years, has been broadened to also include the impact of continued growth of cheaper storage, faster networks and more technological adoption of devices such as smartphones. All this means that SaaS products continue to explode, both for consumers and businesses. Gartner predicts that SaaS revenues will reach \$85 billion in 2019, with total cloud revenue hitting \$278 billion.

SaaS companies often run into a problem when they launch a new product or unveil features: they find out the hard way that it's much more difficult to get press coverage than they thought. This is due to the nature of SaaS products. By definition, it's basically software that's delivered over the cloud. And frankly, software isn't that exciting. It's also intangible. Unlike a physical product, SaaS lives here, there and everywhere. Physical products can be held, examined, tested and reviewed. They can be photographed from different angles, or in different use cases. SaaS, on the other hand, can show only screenshots.

Through trial and error over the years, we've learned what works best when trying to get media coverage for SaaS products.

Figure out your "one thing"

Anyone who's studied branding will tell you that in order to stick in the minds of your prospect, you need to hone your positioning. In one of Seth Godin's earlier seminal books, Purple Cow, Godin touts one simple message for success: be remarkable. Similarly, as it relates to SaaS, don't fire a list of bullet points to a reporter and think that will get your message across. Instead, focus on the One Thing that you want them to remember about your product.

Even if you feel it's an unremarkable product—say, project management—identify one key thing that makes you stand out and is also memorable. Yes, SaaS may seem boring and unglamorous. But figure your One Thing: slick user interface, integrated chat, killer APIs.

Focus on benefits by telling a story

This is also Marketing 101, but it's amazing how often press releases and pitches seem to be taken directly from sales collateral. You're not going to move a reporter with speeds and feeds. Instead, tell a story. Reporters are there to tell stories to their readers, so it would make sense that your chance of success goes up if you tell a story to the reporter. Stories bring home the benefit of your SaaS product in a real way.

The story can be about how you came up with the idea for your SaaS product, or how your clients transformed their lives or businesses by using your product (i.e., use cases). Every SaaS project started with the goal of improving on something. Start there and brainstorm all the benefits. Make it a habit to write press releases or pitch emails that tell stories with a structure of framing the problem, how you came up with the solution, and finally, what the concrete results were. Be sure to back up your assertion with data wherever possible.

Rely heavily on thought leadership

Because SaaS is so intangible, one PR tactic that works particularly well is thought leadership. Thought leadership includes activities such as contributed articles-sometimes referred to as guest posts-question and answer interviews, radio or podcast interviews, award submissions, speaking engagements and analyst relations.

Basically, the idea is to elevate your CEO, founder or executives as thought leaders in whatever space you're in. Topics could include controversial industry discussions, educational material, how-tos or anything else that your target market is concerned about at the moment. Teach them instead of selling to them, and they'll come to view you as a trusted thought leader.

Expand your media opportunities

Sure, everyone wants to be featured in BusinessWeek or the Wall Street Journal. The unfortunate reality is, due to the nature of SaaS that's probably not going to happen unless you're going public or some other earth shattering news. But with the plethora of content publishers, there's a media outlet that's right for every cloud service.

Each industry has their own magazines, bloggers, email newsletters and influencers. They have their own trade association

groups, trade shows and meet ups. They likely have LinkedIn Groups where discussions occur, or even sub-Reddits where like-mindprofessionals interact. Check Quora and see if prospects are asking questions related to your field. Seek out YouTube in-



Edward M. Yang

fluencers. "Media" today is wherever your prospects are. Meet them there.

Successful PR for SaaS companies is possible, but it does take more effort and creativity. Done right though, the long-term payoff can be enormous, making media relations a worthy component of any SaaS marketing plan.

Edward M. Yang is Managing Partner of Firecracker PR, an agency that specializes in helping technology companies rapidly scale awareness through their proven "Ignites" process. Yang is author of "RepGold: A Stepby-Step Guide to Successfully Repair and Build Your Online Reputation." •

PR news brief

Platinum Equity shells out \$2.7B for Cision

Platinum Equity, which has \$19 billion in assets under management, is acquiring Cision for \$2.7 billion in cash. The \$10-per share offer is a 34 percent premium over the 60-day closing stock price for the period ended Oct. 21.

The PR services firm posted a \$7.7 million loss on \$190.4 million in Q2 revenues. Its stock has traded in the \$6.02 to \$15.76 range during the past 52 weeks.

Cision's board and GTCR, which owns a 34 percent stake in the company, approved the deal, which has a "go-shop" provision to seek offers through Nov. 21.

This transaction will provide shareholders with immediate and substantial cash value, while also providing us with a partner that shares in our commitment to customers and employees," said Cision CEO Kevin Akeroyd in a statement.

As a private company, Cision "will be able to make strategic investments for sustainable and profitable growth, while remaining agile and focused on operational excellence, said PE Partner Jacob Kotzubei.

The deal is expected to close during the first quar-

THE STORY IS ALWAYS THERE.

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Stephen Burkhart 1 408 286-2611 sburkhart@hoffman.com

ASIA PACIFIC:

Caroline Hsu +825 2581-9380 chsu@hoffman.com

EUROPE:

Mark Pinsent +44 (0)203 322 6903 mpinsent@hoffman.com



The story is always there Z

Investor presentation fundamentals

Tips for how startups can deliver the kind of presentation that grabs investors' attention.

By Tim Johnson

ocking down VC funding is the lifeblood of most startups. Yet many start-■up CEOs make basic mistakes when putting together what could be their most important presentation. Given the competition for funding and the ever-present sense of skepticism in place since the dotcom bubble, there's little or no room for error during these presentations.

Here are a few tips that will go a long way to making your investor presentation a suc-

Begin with a very clear, quantified **problem statement.** Neuroscientists claim that people tend to focus on just one or two numbers when evaluating a product. In cameras, it's pixels, in cars it's horsepower. Find a stat that describes the issue your startup solves and lead with that.

Continue with a brief, concise statement of your solution-what it does ver**sus what it is.** Briefly highlight what your solution is and quickly move into how your solution addresses the problem and why it's superior to previous efforts to solve the problem. Include in this why you'll succeed while others have tried but failed.

Build on this by highlighting your key differentiators. Be concrete and specific, mention patents or IP that's proprietary.

If you have an MVP (minimum viable product), show a very brief demo to add credibility to your pitch. Video is useful here to also break up the presentation a bit.

Highlight your go-to-market strategy. Bringing a new product to market is expensive, outline whether you'll go it alone, white label through partners, distribute through channel partners, etc. Focus particularly on your plan to gain market traction versus larger, established competitors.

Ideally, have this strategy already in place; i.e., online or brick and mortar retailers that will carry your product or partners that have already signed on.

List your team and their qualifications, make sure your team aligns with your company's direction and goals. If your solution relies on new technology to solve a problem, highlight your CTO and development team, for example. If you're in a market dominated by large players that you plan to disrupt, creating an advisory board of industry experts can go a long way to convincing investors you have a strong probability of success.

Know your audience. Investor presen-

tation are typically limited to four or five minutes, so it's important to know your audience's understanding of your market. Avoid wasting time explaining the basics of your technology if the audience is made up of software engineers, for example, who know at least as much about your basic technology as you do.

Spend two-three slides max on financials. Discuss pricing and margins, include a P&L on a three-to-five-year timeline. If relevant, outline potential ARR (annual recurring revenue) and also include your exit

Frame your market realistically. If your solution is focused on the insurance industry, your addressable market is not the \$900 billion health insurance market, but a slice reflecting the problem/issue you address.

Create a unique presentation for each investor audience. Take the time to create a unique presentation for each investor audience. Never use your 80-slide sales deck and simply flip through for the slides that are relevant to an investor audience. This sends the terrible message that you couldn't bother to adequately prepare. And, spend a few bucks to have a professional designer improve the look of your slides. Nothing says "amateur" like poor use of color and graphics.

Wear decent clothes. It shouldn't matter, but it does. You may be asking investors for millions of dollars and to take a chance on your company, so you need to do everything you can to inspire confidence. A T-shirt and cargo shorts don't inspire confidence. Putting aside social commentary, most investor audiences today are still older and populated largely by men. Adjust your attire to your audience.

Have a clear "ask," are you looking for investment, strategy advice, something **else?** Be specific about the intended use of funds, plans to execute on advice provided,

Anticipate investor questions and work them into the pitch. After you've presented a few times, you can adjust your presentation to answer in advance the questions that come up repeatedly. Proactively addressing investor questions and potential concerns positions you as an experienced CEO and will help boost investor confidence in you.

Practice and vet your presentation. You have between four and five minutes to tell your story. Don't read your slides, make new points that supplement your story. Practicing your delivery will ensure you don't make statements that lead you down a path you don't want to go. Memorize the first minute of your presentation. That gives you time to scan the audience and get comfortable with your surroundings. As part

of practicing, also time your presentation. You often get just five minutes or so to make your presentation, running out of time demonstrates a lack of preparation.

If you have more than one person presenting, have a clear



reason for the additional person/people. If your role is to drive sales and you need the CTO on stage to explain how your technology is disruptive, and she can do it better than you, fine. But, simply having another person on stage wastes time in the handoffs between the two of you, and that

Every situation, investor audience and startup requires the need for a unique presentation, but among the presentations that receive kudos from investors, all have included the elements outlined above.

matters when you have just a few minutes.

As President and Founder of UPRAISE Marketing + Public Relations, Tim serves a wide range of clients, earning outsized results. For more than 30 years, Tim has helped companies ranging from startups to the Fortune 500 in various industries as diverse as consumer electronics, financial services, many shades of tech and more. O

PR news brief

Gladstone works Hughes' facelift

Gladstone Place Partners is working the restructuring of The Howard Hughes Corp., redeveloper of New York's South Street Seaport District, as it installs new leadership, shifts headquarters from Dallas to Houston, slashes overhead and unloads \$2 billion in "non-

Paul Layne, president of HHC's central region and a 35-year veteran of the real estate development, steps into the CEO role, replacing David Weinreb.

Most recently, the eight-year HHC veteran led the development of 110 North Wacker, a 56-story tower in Chicago slated to open in October 2020.

Layne will oversee HHC's transformation plan to become a more focused, profitable, and free-cash-flow-generative company focused on its master-planned communities and the Seaport District.

HHC expects the asset sale will be carried out over the next 12 to 18 months and result in a \$600 million cash windfall.

It's time to burst the college debt bubble

Why the admissions scandal offers community colleges' best PR opportunity since The Great Recession.

By Dustin Siggins

n the surface, The Great Recession and Operation Varsity Blues have little in common. However, both offer community colleges the same crisis-borne opportunity to show how they provide high value, low cost, successful futures for middle-class Americans.

Community college attendance peaked in 2010, according to a study from The American Association of Community Colleges, which examined attendance from 2000-2017. That drop was caused by the worst recession in 80 years and the loss of \$16 trillion in assets. Educational opportunities today exist for the lawbreaking super wealthy, corruption at "elite" schools and dozens of court cases which made it clear that middle-class Americans simply can't afford to bribe or borrow their way into "elite" schools.

Americans owe \$1.56 trillion in college debt, \$500 billion more than our sum total credit card debt. This is a crisis for families which fear that massive debt, the lawbreaking super-wealthy and corrupt officials at "elite" schools, and a possible recession will keep them down forever.

But every crisis has its opportunities. As families seek to better the next generation, alternative professional and educational options have an opening to brand themselves as viable options.

Going to college? Start in your community

"Community colleges are flexible and relevant to today's economy" because they "design programs to match local labor market conditions," said John Rainone, Ed.D., President of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College in southwest Virginia. According to Rainone, his school and others in Virginia "are adding programs that take only weeks or months to complete, not semesters or years," to accommodate the "fewer individuals [who] are pursuing a typical college degree."

Community colleges are a fantastic start to a financially successful future. In the 2017-2018 school year, community colleges tuition and fees were 36 percent the price of in-state tuition and fees, according to the American Association of Community Colleges. In Maryland and Virginia, community college costs are about one-fifth of the costs of in-state four-year schools.

Second, most community colleges have easy in-and-out policies. Open enrollment policies on the front end mean almost any high school senior will be accepted at a community college. Because of this, "we do not encounter such 'scandals' when it comes to enrollment," said Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus Government Affairs Director Dana Kauffman.

Most Americans view community colleges as "settling" for a junior-level education. But are you settling, as NVCC's commercial series points out, for getting a cyber-security or nursing degree for a fraction of the price of other schools? And are you "settling" by taking advantage of near-automatic acceptance at a four-year school if you're a community college graduate with a qualifying GPA? Nope. All you're doing is getting an affordable education with the socially required "stamp of approval."

According to my calculations, the community college savings under this strategy in Maryland and Virginia amount to more than \$32,000. That's before counting interest on college loans.

There's no relationship between school attended and success

In most fields, there's no relationship between school attended and high levels of success. The University of Wisconsin beat out Harvard and Cornell to produce the most Fortune 500 CEOs of any college or university last year.

The student and the quality of education lead to success, not the name on the degree. My alma mater—Plymouth State University in New Hampshire—has taken big steps to negate the Yale and Harvard alumni network advantages. Plymouth State recently launched the PSUnite alumni/student networking platform. It's the first online networking program which directly connects current students to established alumni in their fields anywhere in the world. The 43 percent of Plymouth State students who are the first person in their family to attend college now have the same opportunities as people at Yale and Harvard who have family and other connections.

PSU also has an integrated cluster model of learning which Vice President of Communications Marlin Collingwood said gets students "real-world experience" in providing "hands-on opportunities to use what they learned in the classroom."

You don't have to go to college

One of the most insulting memories I have of high school involves a piece of paper on the guidance counselors' door. Each student who was accepted at a college or university was named on that piece of paper.

Not a single person who chose to open a business, become a blue-collar apprentice or enter the military was on that piece of paper. My high school considered only college attendance as worthy of acclaim to the rest of the student body.

That's an insult to my classmates who served our country as active duty service members. It's an insult to people like Jen-

nifer Lannon, a master plumber in Massachusetts who partnered with her father to build a company. Jennifer isn't a quarter-century old, but she's a master of her craft and a successful business owner.



Dustin Siggins

Service members. entrepreneurs and

blue-collar workers all make "outside-thebox" choices that provide them with financial and professional opportunities.

Thinking inside the box is financially

Problem-solving and critical thinking have been traditionally learned in the college environment. Some still do that, putting education over the college "experience." But for many middle-class and poor parents, college is simply out of reach, even more so in light of huge debt, Operation Varsity Blues and a possible recession.

Non-traditional professional and educational choices should show parents that instead of putting themselves and their children into debt, most parents can easily invest in their children's future, radically changing their future and the future of their children.

Here's how to turn today's high-school senior into a multi-millionaire. Properly investing \$5,000 in retirement funds during each of a student's four years in school costs \$20,000, a lot less than most students' debt. Properly invested, this money will turn into over \$2.6 million by the time today's high school senior turns 67 and over \$5.5 million when the teen turns 74.

That's just the start. If a 23-year-old invests just \$100 per month in their retirement account at the average annual rate of return of 11 percent until they're 65 years old, they'll earn another \$959,000.

Former Chicago Mayor and Obama White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel said to "never let a crisis go to waste." With the college admissions scandal rocking so-called "elite" schools, the time couldn't be better for community colleges to use this crisis to make their case to middle-class Americans.

Dustin Siggins is CEO of Proven Media Solutions and a business columnist. He was previously Director of Communications for a national trade association. O

Content's evolving role in tech

Brand storytelling and content marketing strategy development are essential parts of any successful technology brand's communications plan, and PR professionals play a critical role in helping their clients adapt and grow in this new era.

By Courtney Stack

eading brands today understand they aren't just jockeying with direct competitors for people's time and attention online; they're competing with all the Internet has to offer.

The brand-consumer power dynamic has shifted: consumers now have more control over the content they consume and when and how they consume it.

To reach and memorably connect with today's enlightened and empowered consumer, brands must deliver real user-centered value, not by selling or promoting, but by being informative, entertaining and purposeful. To win their attention, brands must deliver content that's worthy of their

Brands everywhere are rising to the challenge, and as a result, what it means to be a brand is changing in profound ways.

Today's most successful brands are more than providers of products and services. They're activists with a heightened sense of social consciousness and responsibility. They're entertainment studios, producing video shorts and scripted series focused not on selling, but on engaging audiences. They're publishers and journalists, with influential blogs and sponsored articles authored for nearly every major media outlet from the New York Times to the Washington Post.

Content marketing is nothing new, but the extent to which companies are investing and discovering value in it is. A 2016 Nielson study found that branded content generated 86 percent brand recall among viewers, compared with 65 percent from traditional pre-roll ads. Branded content also outperformed traditional ads across key performance indicators including affinity, recommendation intent and purchase intent.

It's no surprise that recent reports from the Content Marketing Institute reveal that B2B and B2C content marketing efforts are expanding. 93 percent of the most successful B2B and B2C content marketers report that their organization is extremely committed to content marketing, with 90 percent of top B2B content marketers putting their audience's informational and entertainment needs ahead of their company's promotional message.

These reports also find that B2B companies are ramping up spend on content creation and 83 percent of B2C companies plan to increase spend or continue allocating budget towards content marketing. Still, more than half of B2C companies surveyed have a small or one-person marketing team to serve their entire organization; approximately half of B2C marketers outsource content creation activities.

This represents an enormous opportunity for PR professionals to deliver new client

In fact, PR experts might just be the best people for the job. The core tactics and principles of content marketing-educating and informing, aligning brands with topics of public interest, infusing brand identities with purpose and meaning—are the very same principals the PR industry

PR pros understand the bigger picture

As PR professionals, we're acutely aware of trends, movements and rapid developments across industries. Brand storytelling and content development can't happen in a vacuum. To achieve relevance and traction it must be tied to the broader landscape.

PR teams can play a critical part in the content marketing strategy development process by bringing a broader perspective to the table.

We represent the public's perspective

A common content marketing pitfall is creating brand content that's focused on the company's agenda, rather than what's genuinely valuable to their audiences. PR teams are already tasked with the responsibility of understanding and managing public perception and representing that perspective in important conversations

By involving PR teams in the content creation and review process companies can avoid this pitfall.

To ensure that all content is valuable to the consumer, PR teams should be reviewing content with the following questions in mind:

- Is it high quality?
- Is this entertaining?
- Is this informative?
- Is the primary objective to inform or entertain? Or is it to sell/promote?

We orchestrate and lead events

Events are an excellent opportunity to generate timely content. PR teams secure speaking opportunities and coordinate companies' participation in events; we're perfectly poised to help clients capitalize

on their event participation by producing content around the event.

Live stream the event, live tweet and utilize relevant hashtags. Or take it a step further by doing on-the-spot interviews with event attendees.



Courtney Stack

Create shareable graphics from informative tidbits and share on social media.

Capture learnings in an informative blog post and cross promote with other attendee companies that are value aligned to maximize reach and connect with new audienc-

We shape brand identities

The best brand content is relevant to the brand not because it speaks to its products and services, but because it speaks to the brand's heart and soul. PR teams understand that it's not about what you're selling, it's about why it exists. We specialize in crafting brands' core messaging frame-

We're starting to see a shift from mission and vision statements towards concrete purpose statements comprised of actionable principals and outlined values. Establishing these tenets during the brand messaging development phase serves as a foundational basis for future content strat-

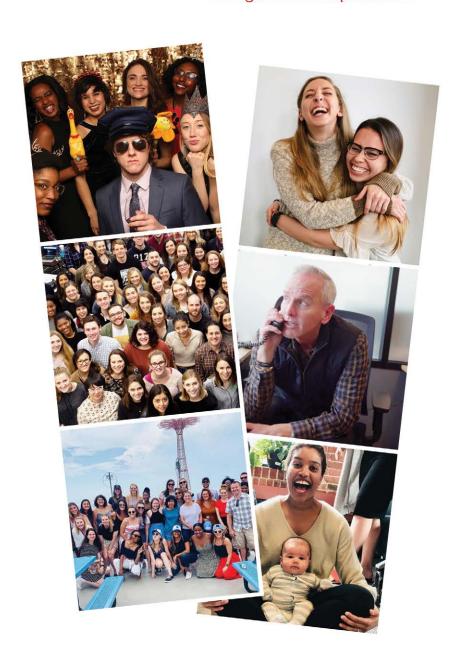
Content marketing is an essential part of any successful brand's communications plan. As content marketing strategies become increasingly integrated and sophisticated, PR teams have an opportunity to help clients adapt and grow, building meaningful customer relationships, achieving new levels of relevance and redefining brands' role in society for the better.

Courtney Stack is Head of Content and Digital Marketing at Karbo Communications in San Francisco. O

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Claiming PR's seat at the table

PR technology offers valuable audience data and insights for marketers and advertisers, allowing communicators the ability to provide a more integrated communications strategy that can be applied to earned and owned media audiences and then retargeted for paid media campaigns.

By Brendon O'Donovan

or anyone with a career in communications and PR, the fabled "seat at the table" has been prophesized by speakers, vendors and thought leaders for decades now. However, these past few years have pushed communicators, particularly PR professionals, back into the spotlight.

This isn't because of some new social media network or fad, but from actual societal change. Consumers today are weary; they've been overly targeted, bombarded with poorly targeted messages and duped by bad actors. Where marketers used to pour endless dollars into advertising and personalization, the trends are shifting to integrated storytelling and brand campaigns.

Luis Di Como, Head of Global Media for Unilever, said it best in a recent AdExchanger article, "We have an issue in the [advertising] industry around lack of trust and lack of transparency," Di Como said. As a response, he said, "We are moving away from an interruptive model to one that encompasses brand integration and branded content around consumer passion points."

That, at the highest level, is the integration of paid, earned, shared and owned media.

So, how does this integration work? It starts with understanding how audiences are consuming media. After collecting that intelligence, teams should create unified content that can be applied to earned and owned media. Once those narratives and strategies are finally in place, marketers and communicators can use paid advertising to promote and target audiences that's contextually relevant to them and their interests.

The first part of the puzzle involves getting a deeper understanding of how media coverage is being consumed and measuring its success. It's no secret that PR has traditionally been about reporting potential reach, whether that's potential impressions, circulation or ad-equivalency.

The problem with that is those metrics don't tell you how many people were actually exposed to your earned media, and just tells you estimations about a publication's readership. We know however that not every visitor of that outlet will read the article you worked so hard to get placed. Until recently, this was the best way to measure success. Now, we've developed modern communications measurement programs that tap into ad-networks to better understand the real validated readership of your

How does this technology work? Nearly every publication uses ads for survival. By tapping into this network, communicators can get a real look at the unique visitors, views and demographic profiles of earned media content. It gets even more extensive though. Using the ad-network attribution methods, this technology can also prove the downstream effects of your media cov-

We have the ability to see how exposed audiences convert to site traffic in the most granular ways, from the number of home page views to actual purchases. This, finally, can be incorporated into internal attribution models and put a real value on earned media and its contribution to your organization's strategic goals.

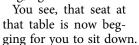
The second puzzle piece is identifying and then activating contextual audiences with integrated campaigns. Contextual targeting-or advertising to users based on the context of the site—is the original integration of paid and earned. Since contextual targeting is all about what content is being consumed and not personal data, it's more privacy friendly and less intrusive. Using the same ad-network based technology, communicators can identify and create target audiences based on their earned media consumption. The magic is in the precision and its all-around media placements, monitoring and reporting: the core competencies of communicators.

An example might be a resort in Austin, TX that can now identify and target people who are reading articles about traveling or events in Austin. This contextual audience is much more relevant and targeted compared to the old method in which businesses might simply target single, 18-to-35-year-olds with disposable income. Additionally, this contextual audience data won't be reliant on personal information.

The final piece of the puzzle is using these audiences and your understanding of them as the basis of your campaigns. The best part about contextual audiences is that marketers and communicators no longer have to guess the interest of that audience, or use overly broad interest categories to base their targeting.

Because you understand the content that these audiences have interacted with, you can deliver highly relevant and timely con-

tent and messaging. Cision clients using this method of targeting earned media audiences have already seen between five and 20 times an increase in the effectiveness of their ad spend. Pretty compelling, right?





Brendon O'Donovan

Communicators have always been about delivering the right message, to the right people, at the right time. The missing link was measuring and activating those exposed audiences. By combining the superpowers of brand equity, trusted earned media and technology, communicators now have a powerful asset that answers the call of a changing, increasingly privacy-con-

Earned media is no longer the supplement to the larger campaign; it's the centerpiece and the future of a better relationship between you, your customers and society.

Brendon O'Donovan is the Head of Global Product Marketing at Cision. He was previously the Director of Product, Brand and Content Marketing at TrendKite before the company was acquired by Cision in 2019. •

PR news brief

Kekst CNC adds PR sparkle to LVMH's bid for Tiffany

Kekst CNC is handling the \$14.5 billion all-cash bid of LVMH Moet Hennessy-Louis Vuitton, the world's No. 1 luxury goods group, for Tiffany & Co.

The \$120 per-share offer represents a 22 percent premium to Tiffany's Oct. 25 closing price.

Paris-based LVMH says it had preliminary discussions with Tiffany but gives no assurance that a takeover may result from the talks.

Tiffany confirms receipt of "an unsolicited, non-binding bid from LVMH," which it is reviewing.

The New York retailer chalked up \$4.4 billion in sales last year.

James Fingeroth, Molly Morse, and Anntal Silver of Kekst CNC, which is part of Publicis Groupe, are handling U.S. media for LVMH.

Publicis Consultants and DGM Conseil are working the media in France.



You can tech the tech, but can you talk the talk?



When it comes to technology, innovation is the hard part. Grabbing the attention and interest of your customers, partners and investors to help you turn today's next big thing into tomorrow's actual big thing ... is also the hard part. We help build, grow and protect tech brands, so you can focus on building the business tools we all rely on. See how you can connect with purpose at PadillaCo.com.



Why PR agency acquisition discussions fall apart

Whether you're actively considering acquiring another PR agency or wondering what you'd do if someone makes you an offer, there are numerous key factors you should always take into account.

By Art Stevens

ringing two agencies together, whether large or small, is a significant undertaking. The art of acquisition takes not only a high degree of patience and focus but also a special set of skills and a great deal of strategic planning.

In addition, whether or not your agency acquisition experience is seamless depends on crucial aspects surrounding company culture, personnel dynamics and collaboration, as well as the blending of best practices of each firm.

From my experience helping hundreds of agencies through this process for more than 13 years, I've realized there are many reasons why PR agency acquisition discussions tend to fall apart.

To avoid this scenario, here are some critical red flags to be aware of during the

If the seller doesn't enter discussions with the right attitude. If the selling agency's leadership takes an approach of "I'm here to listen, but you really need to sell me," then err with caution. When a buyer and seller enter acquisition discussions, there should always be a mutual exchange of information and positive attitudes regarding what lies ahead.

If there's no chemistry between the seller and the buyer. When considering an acquisition, ensure a good cultural match. Strive for positive chemistry among leadership on both sides, a shared business philosophy and compatibility among team members. Both parties should be preconditioned, as well as guided, on how to have an initial conversation. Enlisting the help of an experienced facilitator can help make things go smoothly.

If the seller hasn't carefully considered what a combination with a larger firm can do for his/her business. When it comes to reaping maximum rewards, it's vital to realize that an educated seller is a wise seller. Do your due diligence and consider every factor. The decision to relinquish ownership of a firm isn't one to be made in haste.

If the seller hasn't considered the reasons he wants to sell his firm. Does the seller wish to exit the business upon its sale? Does he wish to continue working throughout the three to five year earn out? Does he wish to become a senior executive within the buyer's larger organization? A seller needs to be clear what the reasons for

selling are in addition to an acceptable purchase price.

If the seller starts the initial discussion by saying he's interviewing other buyers as well. This wouldn't be the ideal way to begin discussions with a desired buyer. Being standoffish sends a negative signal to a buyer who will feel he may have wasted his time meeting with this particular seller. My advice is to be in the moment and get to know the person you're breaking bread with. Don't put on airs or play hard to get.

If the seller reveals they don't run their business to make huge profits. Nothing can turn off a buyer more than a PR firm that's in it for the wrong reasons or underperforms mid-transaction. It's important to realize most buyers enter the acquisition process with the hopes that the businesses will perform consistently and will be worth the projected value when the ink dries.

If the seller reveals that he/she wants to leave the business right after the sale. Get clarification from the seller's leadership that you'll be able to retain them and continue to tap into their expertise following the acquisition. Proceed cautiously if you uncover any concerns from managers or senior employees that they don't want to be part of the larger organization following the sale.

If the buyer reveals that they plan to absorb the seller's firm into their own. It's always a possibility that a buyer will opt to preserve a practice as a wholly owned, standalone operation. However, in my experience, I can confidently say it's more likely that a firm is being purchased as a strategic investment because of everything it can bring to the table, ultimately complementing the buyer's firm. It's critical during the discussions phase that the seller makes expectations clear to the buyer-both verbally and in writing—to ensure a true "meeting of the minds."

If the seller says they want equity in the buyer's firm. The likelihood of a buyer considering selling or making equity part of any deal is nil, except if your discussions are with a private equity firm that wants its sellers to retain skin in the game. But PR agency buyers are reluctant to part with equity in their organizations and prefer to purchase 100 percent of each seller's equity.

If the buyer says that he/she wants to acquire only 51 percent of the seller's firm. Most PR agencies in the market for acquisitions prefer to acquire 100 percent of seller agencies. However, private equity firms may prefer acquiring a majority of ownership rather than 100 percent. It's incumbent

upon a seller to weigh the merits of selling 100 percent or partial equity. Each situation needs to be appraised carefully because each has pluses and minuses.

If the seller discloses financial reversals during the previous two years. Let's say



Art Stevens

your cultures match perfectly and you've planned out how you'll work together in the coming years, but you've based all of these plans on financial results from the previous two to three years and year to date. The seller will have a tough decision to make. Should he sell now and settle for a lower price than he might've gotten two years ago? Or should he have faith in what he and the buyer can achieve together in the coming years? It just may be well worth the risk with the right buyer.

Don't go it alone

It's important to note that not every acquisition in the PR industry dissolves in the eleventh hour. In fact, the vast majority of transactions proceed relatively seamlessly thanks to positive, collaborative relationships and strategic, careful coordination between buyers, sellers and their trusted advisors.

In today's competitive environment, it's critical to strategically prepare for and closely manage the due diligence process in a potential PR agency acquisition. Yet, even with the closest attention to details, issues can arise that will cause discussions to fall

To avoid this scenario, strive to maintain ongoing dialogue between seller and buyer to avoid last-minute lines drawn in the sand. Focus on how a deal will be beneficial to both parties.

The bottom line: if you believe that the future of you and your firm will be beneficial if you're acquired by the right organization, then engage, engage, engage. You'll have many options in the marketplace to connect with the right buyer.

Art Stevens is Managing Partner of The Stevens Group. O

Breaking through the clutter

Generating marketing insights begins with engaging the right audiences with the right story.

By Brian Sinderson

eaching the right audience with your message can be daunting in a world where more than 188 million emails, 18 million texts and 511,000 tweets get sent every minute.

And those numbers represent just a fraction of the advertising, digital and print content that entices audiences to buy a product or service.

Regardless of whether you're trying to reach a B2B or B2C audience, people are more distracted by the abundance of messages across multiple channels than ever. Before we can leverage the data and insights that marketers value, people first need to engage with the content communicators disseminate.

It's up to savvy PR professionals to connect with audiences through impactful stories that break through the clutter.

As communicators, we have access to a variety of tools to help us understand if our messages are reaching specific audiences to influence buying decisions. The analytics generated help us better understand many of the demographic and psychographic details of our target audiences. When they get translated into specific insights, they can also help us know how and when to reach buyers with the information they need to make informed decisions.

These insights are especially helpful on the B2B front, where corporate technology buyers are often more digitally savvy and self-directed in the way they search for information. According to Forrester, the corporate buyer is more in control of purchasing decisions than ever. Three-quarters of buyers use social media to learn about different vendors, while 68 percent conduct research online to inform purchasing decisions.

More and more, the business buyer wants specific information about the products and services that interest them, so they can understand the benefits and value of what they're buying.

The focus on customer benefit isn't a new concept, but it can be challenging to implement across each marketing channel. Communicators are driving more integrated efforts to deliver consistent messages and proof points to customers.

While data and insights provide value in understanding why audiences make purchasing decisions, we can't lose sight of how we communicate. Although it may change to reflect the times, the sector, the audience or the channel, compelling storytelling will never go out of style. But, understanding how to capture someone's attention and hold it long enough to deliver that "aha" moment is an art form that marketers and PR professionals need to continue to embrace and perfect.

It's also the reason leading-edge technology companies value public relations as a marketing tool to craft stories that get attention, relate to industry news or trends or convey unique customer value.

Because audiences get inundated with multiple content choices, we need to leverage our storytelling craft to engage them at the onset. The elements of good storytelling haven't changed that much over the years. However, they often are forgotten or not considered, especially in the tech world where speeds and feeds can get in the way of good marketing.

The stories that tech PR pros tell need to be relatable, personable, creative, genuine, visual and authentic. They need to be based on facts and not fake.

Communicators should be curious and do their research to understand the best way to engage the audiences they're trying to reach. For inspiration, consider TED Talks. The best TED Talks incorporate all the elements of good storytelling to deliver some of the most powerful speeches on topics that drive people to take action. Who can forget Bill Gates' speech on malaria, where he released mosquitos—not infected—into the audience? He knew how to get their attention, but backed it up with a compelling story based on facts and his personal experience.

Creativity is essential and authenticity is crucial. Companies that oversell themselves run the risk of failure before they've even begun. The days of "fake it until you make it" are gone. On the flip side, brands that are too modest may not express the benefits of their new technology, product or service clearly or in a manner compelling enough to get the attention of a buyer.

Also, some companies fail to understand that storylines can become marginalized through a management-by-committee approach that overuses tech jargon and strips out creativity.

Because more business buyers lean on their research to make purchasing decisions, getting the right content in front of buyers is critical. Adding compelling statistics, endorsements from customers, business benefits, and results tell a better story. Incorporating wit and short, snappy prose will get a buyer's attention and draw them in.

Backing up your claims with factual detail

and proof points will help drive engagement.

In today's world, it's challenging to convey unique differentiators that get the attention of a business buyer. Stories that help frame the value of a technology product or service are often the most complex and challenging to tell,



Brian Sinderson

but when done well, they can engage audiences to take action.

In an age where more products vie for user attention and dollars, conveying the right story can make all the difference, so marketers can get the data and insights they need to drive sales.

Brian Sinderson is Senior Partner and East Coast Tech Practice Lead at Finn Partners. •

PR news brief

Falls acquires Wyse Advertising

Falls Communications has acquired Cleveland-based brand management and advertising agency Wyse Advertising. Financial terms of the acquisition were not made publicly available.

One of Ohio's largest independent full-service agencies, Wyse was founded in 1951 by Marcus "Marc" Wyse and then-wife Lois Wyse. The duo became ad industry legends, coining famous taglines such as "With a name like Smucker's, it has to be good" for then-unknown client the J. M. Smucker Co. Wyse was also behind the classic "Ask Sherwin-Williams" phrase.

In light of the acquisition, the agency will henceforth be known as Wyse, a Falls company. The newly-combined organization will count more than 80 staffers

Falls president and CEO Rob Falls now assumes leadership of both entities. Wyse CEO Michael Marino, meanwhile, plans to retire.

Falls president and CEO Rob Falls told O'Dwyer's that the new combined entity will offer clients a broader array of products and services as well as shared resources and expertise to help clients better connect with consumers and customers.

"By bringing Wyse into the Falls family, we are gaining decades of expertise building top brands while expanding our services to include advertising, media buying and expanded creative capabilities," Falls told O'Dwyer's.

'Legacy,' the dirtiest word in tech

Too many entrepreneurs make missteps when talking about their business, often using words and phrases that have the effect of making their company sound more status quo than innovative. One term in particular has become the ultimate tech company takedown, and it's time we talk about it.

By Curtis Sparrer

media contact once referred to one of her clients as a "legacy" company, intending it as a compliment. But that's not how I took it. My response was, "Oh, no. That's the worst thing you could say in tech!"

"Really?" she said. "I'd love to know more about that."

That's when I started my research. But I was surprised to discover there's very little information available to explain how "legacy" became such a dirty word in the tech

You don't want to be seen as a legacy company

In all other contexts, legacy describes something or someone iconic, an unforgettable classic. It can also refer to what someone is remembered for, such as the legacy left behind by a national hero. In tech, however, it's a nice way of saying obsolete.

A legacy system is a digital tool or application that's reached its expiration date. Generally, these platforms are clunky and inefficient compared to newer solutions. But people are stuck using them because it's too expensive and time-consuming to switch to something better. You see this all the time in enterprise and government settings. It's why many organizations still rely on fax machines, much to the chagrin of ...

well, everyone.

So, when you're running a tech company, "legacy" is the last word you ever want to be associated with. The whole idea behind technology is to invent something new, to disrupt an industry or develop a life-changing innovation. The absolute worst way to position yourself is to make your product sound dated and old.

The way you articulate your vision is everything

When you're a founder or CEO, you're the first person to describe your company. And if you're not doing it in a way that captures the market's attention and proves that you're the new best thing, no one's going to feel excited about you. No one is going to invest in you. And, definitely, no one is going to buy you.

You need to articulate a compelling vision, and then you need to get other people to agree with it. You must communicate what your company does and how it's going to change the world in a way that drums up momentum. In other words, you must communicate a clear, repeatable and unique message.

It takes a village

If you're the only one calling your company awesome and disruptive, few people will believe you. So, the next recommended step is to recruit influencers, contacts and customers who love your business and turn them into brand champions.

This works even for companies seen as

"legacy." After making major updates or building a new system, you can get the word out through these guerilla tactics. People who have tried your revolutionized platform will post that you're now "cutting edge," if you get the message right.



Curtis Sparrer

When in doubt, focus on your strengths

With so many companies vying for the title of most innovative or disruptive, it can be hard to stand out. These are the right kinds of words, but they aren't the only words you can use to position your company as a leader. Describing your specific strengths is always a good idea.

Any entrepreneur or C-level executive needs to do this exercise to find the right message. How can you position yourself against the competition and make sure you win? It takes some tinkering to land on the right answer. But once you have it, it's an amazing lever to propel your company for-

Your message matters

Today, every company is a tech company in some respect. Fortune 500 companies all have an IT department and want to build the next big digital thing, if they can stay ahead of the scrappy startups on their heels. Competition is fierce in industries across the board.

The bottom line is that you need a strong, consistent message to get ahead of the pack. As a leader, you have to be thoughtful about how you describe your company. And you need a clear strategy to elevate that message.

Dirty words like "legacy" can hurt your business in more ways than you may think. It's hard to change perceptions once people have an idea about you. It's possible, but you're far better off positioning yourself correctly from the beginning.

So, think about that one thing you want to be known for. Your world-changing legacy, so to speak. Just don't call it that out loud.

Curtis Sparrer is Co-Founder and Principal at Bospar in San Francisco. O

Brand-produced video gets good press

By Steve Barnes

rand-produced video has become a key component in garnering positive media coverage, according to a new study from D S Simon Media.

The "DS Simon Brand Visibility 2020" report, which surveyed 366 journalists, found that media platforms across the board want to use brand video. The appetite for brand video is strongest among blogs—with 85 percent saying they use it—and television stations, which come in close behind at 84 percent.

About two-thirds of radio station web sites (66 percent) say they use brand video, as do 54 percent of print media outlets.

In-house spokespeople are more popular with journalists than are outside sources. Almost nine out of 10 respondents (87 percent) said they would rather interview an

in-house spokesperson than a third-party expert. The reason for that: 83 percent of those surveyed said in-house spokespeople make brands appear more authentic, while only 44 percent thought that a third-party expert added to a brand's credibility.

Making CEOs available to the media was seen as an effective way of boosting the appearance of brand authenticity by 76 percent of survey respondents.

And for those afraid that the messages they get into the media may be drowned out in a tidal wave of political news coverage over the next year, the study finds cause for optimism.

Only 12 percent of TV news stations surveyed said more than half of their news coverage would be political in nature, with 67 percent saying that political subject matter would fill 25 percent or less of their air time. O

Three tech trends for 2020

Why immersive social platforms, storytelling engineers and an evolving model for media trust are now taking the stage as the top trends to shake up the technology world in 2020 and beyond.

By Robin Kim

ommunications experts have written previously about the changing IPO landscape, smarter analytics, political and social activism, techlash, regulation, advances in health tech and the impact of emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, voice and more.

At our agency, we're witnessing three new emerging trends that we believe will impact our tech sector clients in 2020 and beyond.

Video games and immersive platforms will be the new social channels, ascending at a time when social status among the children of Millennials-known as Generation Alpha—is increasingly being driven by their status in the digital versus the physical world. This isn't just because gaming is dominating online chatter, or because more than four in 10 Americans own a video game console (with an equal percentage of adults playing them, by the way).

The breakout success of Fortnite, a free game, made a history-setting \$2.4 billion in 2018 from a revenue model based entirely on microtransactions: most notably, costumes—known as skins—which players buy to enhance their online persona. Minecraft is another indicator: its multiplayer community of 91 million players worldwide was a driving factor in its \$2.5 billion acquisition by Microsoft in 2014. The net worth of YouTuber Joseph Garret, who makes Minecraft videos for his nine million subscribers under the name Stampylonghead, is \$14 million.

This trend comes amid shifts regarding what defines social status. For Baby Boomers and Gen X it was based on what you owned, wore, or drove. For Millennials, it's

about experiences. For the new generation of teens, it's about one's status in a digital world, a world that is as important as the physical one, with teens seeing their online friendships as equally important as their offline ones. Future-forward consumer brands are looking beyond bridging the analog and digital world. They're embracing a fully digital world as one where a growing number of teens feel most at home.

Engineers who can communicate simply and authentically will be the new monarchs. Technology's sophistication, scale and interdependence has created a level of complexity so great that even the engineers that create it don't understand it, a point that scientist and author Samuel Arbesman called out in *Overcomplicated*: *Technology at the Limits of Comprehension.* This complexity is only increasing with the rise of machine learning, AI, quantum computing and cloud.

The challenge and risk this presents for brands can't be underestimated: when stakeholders don't understand how complex technologies function, they question the motives behind those technologies, and the company's ability to manage it. Today's techlash against Silicon Valley illustrates in some part the consequences of this failure. Complexity is the enemy of trust.

It's no longer enough for an organization's narrative to focus on what it does and why it does it. It's critical to detail transparently, from the start, how it does it, along with how it's mitigating against the unintended consequences of its results. In other words, good technology isn't good enough: the company must show how it is living up to

Facebook closes UK books on data hack scandal

acebook on Oct. 30 agreed to pay \$643,000 to Britain's information commissioner's office for its suspected failure to comply with UK data protection principles covering lawful processing of data and security.

The ICO in 2017 opened its investigation of FB allowing political data firm Cambridge Analytica to gain access to users' data. In settling with the ICO, FB admitted no wrongdoing.

Harry Kinmouth, FB's Associate General Counsel, said the company wished it had done more to investigate claims about CA in 2015.

"Protecting people's information and privacy is a top priority for FB, and we are continuing to build new controls to help people protect and manage their information," he said in a statement.

Kinmouth said FC will continue to cooperate with the ICO's wider and ongoing probe into the use of data analytics for political purposes.

James Dipple-Johnstone, ICO Deputy Commissioner, is pleased to hear that "FB has taken, and will continue to take, significant steps to comply with the fundamental principles of data protection."

FB faces 11 privacy probes in Ireland. O

its broader societal responsibility.

Smart storytellers must also be responsible for vetting insights provided by engineers, versus simply deferring to them. This includes engineers who are CEOs, whose numbers are growing. The best perform-

ing CEOs are now more likely to have engineering degrees than MBAs, according to Harvard Business Review. Marketers may want to follow suit.

The media model of the future will be trusted reporting with deep **expertise.** This trend is accelerating as audienc-



Robin Kim

es convene in smaller, closed communities and independent platforms. There are a number of reasons for this, but one of the more critical is related to trust and current perceptions of the media as polarizing.

"The stakes are high as the media's credibility is being attacked, which is why it's so important that the media make the right choices on what to cover and why," said Jessica Lessin, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Information, at her recent Subscriber Summit.

It's a trust equity that audiences are willing to pay for, whether the editorial is organic or brand supported. The success of unbundled, highly tailored subscription media models is evidence of this.

With the source of our information under unprecedented scrutiny, the conversation around fake news will also shift beyond Facebook and Twitter bashing toward holding individuals accountable for ensuring the validity behind what they repost, like and share. For CEOs, the expectation goes further as employees expect their leaders to take a stand on major social and political issues. In a world where everyone is a content publisher and distributor, our reputation will be inseparably linked to our role as shared stewards of the conversation. Even if indirectly, we're sources too.

Robin Kim is Practice Head, Global Technology & Innovation, at Ruder Finn, and leads Ruder Finn's global technology & innovation practice. Robin is a 20+ year senior technology veteran who has lived and worked across 9 cities in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East. She's based in San Francisco. O

The 'lopsided' state of tech PR

Tech companies are throwing unprecedented dollars at trade shows as a way to conduct PR, curry favor with prospective customers and grab as many sales leads as possible. But what about other stakeholders? Are you effectively telling them about how important your company and technology is to keep your stock value healthy?

roadly speaking, tech PR encompasses a long list of marketing activities, from product datasheets and briefs on up to trade shows. Media relations and content marketing are sandwiched somewhere in between. In most instances, Silicon Valley tech companies follow long standing traditions when it comes to promoting and showing off their products and technologies. That practice is placing the lion's share of their marketing dollars and assets on trade shows and major events in an attempt to generate sales leads and satiate the appetite for closing customer sales.

Thousands upon thousands of dollars are thrown at the most extravagant trade show booths. The bigger the event, the more dollars are thrown at it. Silicon Valley is fraught with major trade shows, and the harried trade show manager for any given tech company finishes one trade show and immediately sets forth on making arrangements for the next one (or two or three).

Generally, there's virtually nothing else in the arena of technology public relations, but trade shows and a few periodic press releases. Therein lies the state of lopsided tech PR. Or put another way, a large number of a tech company's influencers and stakeholders fail to get the word and are virtually left in the dark. From a business perspective, that's a bad place to keep them.

It's also important to point out that lopsided PR is more in tune with company-oriented marketing than customer-oriented. Some tech companies relish in hyping their products as a way to get their PR messaging across to customers with little understanding that the customer wants technical answers to his/her pressing new product and engineering design issues.

Most stakeholders make it a point to attend trade shows to learn about the most recent product and technology trends. Unfortunately for them, in many instances they're not getting the full story. The reason is because, generally speaking, attendees get a shallow sales and marketing pitch to get the best customer leads possible. Often, sales and marketing pitches are right off a data sheet with a litany of product benefits. However, those pitches are generally empty of in-depth system application details or technical applications tutorial.

Certainly, the PR pro shores up that shortfall by playing a supplemental role at trade shows. He/she rounds up editors and reporters as best as possible for interviews at the company's booth. However, due to busy editor schedules, lack of a conducive interviewing environment and ill prepared company spokespersons, those scheduled interviews usually go awry, or at the least, prove ineffective. Certainly, your company can get ink, but is it the right kind of ink?

What's a PR pro to do?

With all the attention on trade shows and the huge dollar outlays, what happens to tech PR operations? What is the PR pro to do to get more management attention and effectively get the word out? How do you connect to key influencers such as:

Prospective customers who don't have travel budgets to attend tradeshows?

Top tech executives who have a say in the buying process but don't have the time to go to tradeshows?

Engineering staffs that don't attend tradeshows, but are on the verge of transitioning from one generation of a technology to the newer ones you're launching?

What happens to the importance of communicating a company's detailed technology story to all the influential stakeholders, like investors, financial analysts, market analysts, the technical press, the business press? What happens or can happen?

In short, a tech company's critical technology message that should be going in the press goes into a black hole. But also, savvy competitors see your absence and exploit it by using the trade press to one up your technology approach to gain greater mar-

You can be strategic about tradeshows if your top management wakes up to certain opportunities. However, you have to gently nudge those top captains and do a show and tell regarding how an effective PR and content marketing program can pay big dividends at those trade shows. It's called being strategic with your PR operations.

If you're going to throw big bucks at one, two or three major trade shows annually, complement that herculean marketing effort with a modest budget for a sustained PR and content marketing program focused on contributed byline technical articles in the trade press. Not just random byline articles, but strategically developed ones that set the stage for more effective trade shows.

Setting the stage means using contributed bylines to discuss customer challenges and issues that your company's upcoming

new products or technologies will resolve. Those new products and technologies are the ones targeted to be the big showstoppers at your next trade show.

Get your act together

This means organizing a cadre of technology and product Subject Matter Experts to pro-



Dan Garza

vide the necessary product and technology information as the basis for those articles. Also, execs should be involved in such a program to provide some very critical thought leadership.

This is where you—the PR pro adept at effective content marketing writing—steps in to orchestrate the overall program. As we say, this PR content marketing program sets the stage for upcoming trade shows. You do that by creating your strategy and defining your article topics. Each and every one of those topics discusses customer challenges and issues and lays out a few solutions with the pros and cons of each.

Executive thought leadership articles, meanwhile, are inextricably intertwined with this on-going technology contributed article campaign to further fuel the solid barrage of marketing content being delivered to customers and potential customers. In effect, these twin barrels of PR marketing content educate the market and generate even greater customer interest, as well as convey an aura of technology leadership to other key influencers.

Your potential customers read your contributed articles in print and online publications to learn more about the technical product issues they face. If they don't get a chance to read your articles, they'll readily find them on Google, Bing or some other search engine. By taking this route, you increase your chances of making your trade show a greater success because attendees will have read your articles and have a better understanding of how you'll be helping him/her to resolve their next generation technology issues.

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

Top strategies for tech startups

In order to increase visibility among key audiences and maximize ROI, technology startups require a comprehensive PR strategy that adequately communicates the company's story and success.

By Cindi Goodsell

ew things can put a tech startup on the map more effectively than credible earned media resulting from a concerted public relations program.

In today's competitive business environment, startups can fail because not enough investors and customers know about them and what they bring to the marketplace. Finding the right communications strategy can help a startup build press-worthy news that increases visibility among many key audiences, distinguishes its brand in the marketplace, attracts investors and spurs subsequent growth.

While a story in the right media outlet can certainly be a great benefit, it's not what makes a brand. Reputation takes time and investment—and comes with repetition which is why the right strategy is key.

To maximize ROI on their communications investment, startups need a strategy that encompasses media relations, thought leadership, social and digital media, strategic messaging and content marketing. It's hard work and—as many startups have learned—it's not a simple, do-it-yourself effort.

With that in mind, here are a few things technology startups should consider to ensure they add value:

Set realistic expectations

Expecting immediate returns on investment can be an occupational hazard. Sometimes it takes many tries to capture a reporter's attention, as well as weeks or months for an article to be published. Earned media requires patience from firms who may be used to the instant gratification paid advertising brings.

Communicators need time to put a strategy in place to market the company's story and to find success with both long- and short-lead targets. PR teams have to be crystal clear with C-level executives regarding the overall message and course of action.

Cast a wide net

Sure, tech startups are focused on the New York Times, TechCrunch and other A-list media outlets. But pitching the broadest reach publications without approaching those that speak directly to the company's buying audience isn't strategic thinking.

A robust program includes not just business media outlets focusing on the big picture of the technology, but also technology verticals that focus on more granular coverage of solutions, niche web sites concentrating on emerging technologies and markets, and even influential bloggers who are able to introduce the brand to a much wider audience.

Demonstrate real-world impact

Earlier-stage companies without brandname investors or meaningful visibility are easily overlooked. To increase the odds of success, it's crucial they rely on communications expertise to help them develop messaging that explains their real-world applications and highlights how the company's products and services are differentiated. The company can also help prove claims by providing interesting statistics and working with customers to make them

Nurture affinity groups

Startups can rely on their communications partners to actively engage trade and meet-up groups that can help put them on the map and spread the word. There are plenty of opportunities for startups to develop new business partnerships, and cultivating relationships is an



Cindi Goodsell

effective way to expand their footprint and engage with like-minded people.

PR brings a 360-degree perspective to startups and helps them communicate their way to success. It usually won't begin with a feature in the Wall Street Journal. By exploring all media channels and using them appropriately, startups can steadily build toward major media coverage.

This takes alignment, trust, inclusion, partnership, investment and patience on both sides of the client-agency relationship.

Cindi Goodsell is a Director at Harden Communications Partners, a Stanton Agency, where she's focused on technology and *healthcare clients.* **O**

Amazon gains in U.S. search ad revenues

Google's share of the U.S. search ad market is expected to shrink in the coming years, while number-two search ad platform Amazon's share is expected to grow, according to eMarketer figures.

By Jon Gingerich

oogle dominates the U.S. search ad market, but the search giant's current share of search ad revenues is expected to dip within the coming years while Amazon's will rise, according to the latest ad spending forecast by digital market research company eMarketer.

Overall, the U.S. search ad market will grow nearly 18 percent this year to total more than \$55 billion, according to eMarketer's report, which includes search ad spending on desktop and laptop computers, as well as mobile phones, table and other Internet-connected devices. Google is expected to account for 73.1 percent of that total, or about \$40.33 billion.

Google's share of the U.S. digital ad market is slipping, however. The search giant is expected to take 37.2 percent of all U.S. digital ad spends this year (or about \$48.05 billion) representing a dip from 2018's 38.2 percent. Google's overwhelming share of the paid-search market is also expected to drop, slipping to an estimated 70.5 percent by 2021.

Amazon, meanwhile, will see its search ad revenues grow nearly 30 percent this year from 2018, accounting for nearly 13

percent of the U.S. search ad market (or about \$7.09 billion).

eMarketer predicts Amazon search revenue share will continue to climb, gaining an additional 30 percent in 2020 (to \$9.27 billion) and 26 percent in 2021 (to \$11.70 billion).

The Internet's largest retailer, which is currently the number-two search ad platform, surpassed Microsoft last year, which now ranks number-three for search, with about 6.5 percent of the market. Verizon Media ranks number-four with two percent. Yelp rounds out the top five at 1.8

Amazon in July was ranked the top digital media platform in terms of perceived ROI among advertisers, according to data from Pivotal Research Group. O

O'Dwyer's guide to TECHNOLOGY COMMUNICATIONS

5W PUBLIC RELATIONS

230 Park Ave., 32nd Floor New York, NY 10169 212/999-5585 Fax: 646/328-1711 info@5wpr.com www.5wpr.com

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, N26, AvidXchange, ironSource, Zeta Global, Xaxis, Captify, Undertone, CareerBuilder, Airhelp, Avant and Payoneer.

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40 Gold Street San Francisco, CA 94133 www.allisonpr.com

Jordan Fischler, Managing Director, Consumer Technology Karyn Barr, Managing Director, B2B Technology

Allison+Partners' approach to technology evolves as quickly as the industry itself. Our strategies based on years of experience are coupled with the ever-changing landscape of media and influence to ensure our clients capture mindshare and own their categories. As part of our early YouTube work, we helped create the very notion of online influence, and in the years since, our global tech teams remain at the forefront of the influence ecosystem supporting the likes of Google, Amazon, Autodesk, Teradata and Visa.

Technology shapes culture, and in turn, culture impacts how we use both established and emerging technologies. Our efforts are informed by today's trends, coupled with real-time research, that allow us to drive impactful business results. Whether an established consumer brand, a B2B powerhouse or an ingredient brand looking to break new ground, our team has been there before and can lend deep expertise to guarantee measurable and meaningful success.

ARPR

675 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE Suite 9800 Atlanta, GA 30308 855/300-8209 annaruth@arpr.com www.arpr.com

Anna Ruth Williams, CEO Blair Broussard, Chief People & **Operations Officer** Renee Spurlin, Senior Vice President, Analytics & Digital Evan Goldberg, Senior Vice President, Client Service

ARPR is an award-winning tech PR agency representing cybersecurity, FinTech, cloud and HealthIT brands. From Day 1 we've existed to fill a deep void in specialized subject matter expertise and to bring consistency to the integration of media relations, content marketing, social media and demand generation. As such, ARPR is uniquely built to strategize and execute multi-channel marketing communication campaigns that make our client reputations thrive and their sales pipelines prosper. Driving our Panorama Approach is our team, aka the Army of Awesome, whose collective energy and passion con-



ARPR's Sr. Leadership Team: SVP of Analytics & Digital Marketing Renee Spurlin, SVP of Client Service Evan Goldberg, CEO & Founder Anna Ruth Williams, and Chief Operations and People Officer Blair Broussard.

sistently lands us on national and local Best Places to Work lists.

BEEHIVE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

1021 Bandana Blvd East Suite 226 Saint Paul, MN 55108 651/789-2232 info@beehivepr.biz

Lisa Hannum, President & CEO Nicki Gibbs, EVP, Strategy Becky McNamara, CFO
Ayme Zemke, SVP, Client Services

Beehive Strategic Communication is an independent, strategic communication firm, a certified B Corporation and Women's Business Enterprise. Our clients trust us to solve complex business challenges using the power of communication to get better results.

Beehive's services range from workplace culture and employee engagement to brand positioning, earned media and digital marketing, to crisis and issues management. We work nationally and globally with leading brands in technology, health care, financial services, education and retail, as well as others who are committed to building better businesses for a better world.

Our team of senior communication consultants has experience working with national and regional technology brands like Microsoft, Fit Bit and Davenport Group.

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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, Executive Vice President Heather Resnicoff. Senior Vice President Shruti Sehgal, Vice President

Named the #1 most powerful PR firm in the nation by the *Observer*, BerlinRosen is a full-service strategic communications firm. With offices across NY, DC and LA, the firm's burgeoning technology and innovation practice represents some of the biggest newsmakers defining the future of technology, finance, work, education, environment and urban innovation.

BerlinRosen's client portfolio includes leading global brands Samsung, Bloomberg Media, Alphabet's Sidewalk Labs, Lyft, Citi



Jeff Bradford, CEO of the Bradford Group.

and Virgin Hyperloop One, mission-driven organizations General Assembly and Per Scholas; startups and incubators New Lab and **URBAN-X** and dozens of others. Drawing from its political 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.

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 and service launches
- · Fundraising milestones and announcements
- · Conferences, Tradeshows and Events
- · High-impact media relations across all major technology markets in the U.S.
- · Digital, creative, social and other paid media or advertising services

Technology clients include Samsung, Citi, Alphabet's Sidewalk Labs, Bloomberg Media, Lyft, Cornell Tech, Barnard College, Virgin Hyperloop One, Intersection, General Assembly, Per Scholas, CommonBond, Arcadia Power, EVgo, Convene, URBAN-X, Motivate, Storyful, Coord and Eaze.

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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 Officer

Hey — can we talk to you for a second?

Yeah — you — the person reading these descriptions.

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

We bet nearly every agendescription says "we're award "tech and 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 for the second year in a row, 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 Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Orange County, San Diego, 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 vears.

Bospar's staff includes journalists who know how to reverse-engineer 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" 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.

BROWNSTEIN GROUP

215 South Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19107 215/735-3470 brownsteingroup.com hello@brownsteingroup.com

Marc Brownstein, President and CFO Erin Allsman, Managing Director

At Brownstein Group, our tech PR practice is strategic yet diversified, with a comprehensive understanding of technology trends and a changing media landscape. Our outcome-driven approach supported by an integrated team spanning traditional and digital channels—has delivered meaningful results for technology clients in AEC, fintech, transportation, materials sciences and beyond. Whether our clients are launching a product, hosting a brand activation, or looking to better communicate their story, we work to generate big headlines and meet ambitious growth objectives. Our expertise spans category leaders including Lyft, Saint-Gobain, DuPont Sorona, ACI Speedpay and more.



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



Fahlgren Mortine's annual B2B Peer Summit engages clients and industry thought leaders on forward-looking trends and topics.

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 B2B 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 DevOps, agile software development, 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.

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250 Hudson St., 16th Flr. New York, NY 10013 212/768-0550 Fax: 212/704-0117 www edelman com

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

4030 Easton Station Suite 300 Columbus, OH 43219 www.fahlgrenmortine.com Info@fahlgren.com 614/383-1500 Twitter: @FahlgrenMortine

Aaron Brown, EVP, B2B aaron.brown@fahlgren.com 614/383-1608 Dennis Brown, SVP, Technology dennis.brown@fahlgren.com 614.383.1609 Julie Exner, SVP, Technology julie.exner@fahlgren.com 614.383.1632

Fahlgren Mortine is one of the nation's largest integrated communications companies, ranking #17 on O'Dwyer's list of U.S. PR firms.

Through a pledge to "think wider," the agency skillfully 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. 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. Core areas of technology experience: logistics, data center, software

FEINTUCH COMMUNICATIONS

245 Park Ave., 39th Fl. New York, NY 10167 212/808-4901 info@feintuchpr.com www.feintuchcommunications.com www.PRWorldAlliance.com

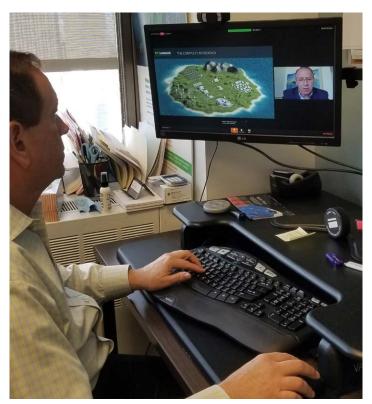
Henry Feintuch, President Doug Wright, Senior Account

We "heart" 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



In October 2019, Feintuch Communications helped produce a global webinar as part of the Virtual Island Summit for its cleantech client. Leclanché. Thousands of participants from Island nations worldwide participated.

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

301 East 57th St. New York, NY 10022 212/715-1600 www.finnpartners.com

Brian Sinderson, Senior Partner New York/East Coast Brian.Sinderson@FinnPartners.

Margaret Hoerster, Senior Partner Chicago/Midwest Margaret.Hoerster@FinnPartners.

Jeff Seedman, Senior Partner San Francisco/West Coast Jeff.Seedman@FinnPartners.com Flora Haslam, Managing Partner London/Europe Flora.Haslam@FinnPartners.com

Goel Jasper, Managing Partner Jerusalem/Israel Goel.Jasper@FinnPartners.com

Yin Ching Yeap, Managing Partner Singapore/Asia Pacific Yinching.Yeap@FinnPartners.com

With more than 150 professionals across three continents, Finn Partners is the third-largest technology agency in the world. With senior technology professionals in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, the firm enjoys strong global growth and thrives as the agency's largest practice area.

Today's technology trends are disrupting and altering the way we engage in the world of business, completely changing the dynamics across all verticals. We support our clients to address trends like 5G connectivity, artificial intelligence, industry 4.0, the gig economy, virtual and augmented reality, machine learning, robotic process automation, and blockchain.

The technology revolution impacts every single company — creating the TechEffect. The TechEffect impacts big technology giants that need to transform and articulate their relevance. It touches hot new startups that must demonstrate their potential, establish credibility, and communicate a new value proposition. The TechEffect also impacts non-tech companies that need to act like technology brands by sharing unique stories that underscore how they use technology in new, innovative ways.

No matter the type of company, you need world-class, seasoned communications professionals who have the ability to grasp the technology landscape and deliver data-driven business impact.

FIRECRACKER PR

1800 E Lambert Rd., Suite 106 Brea, CA 92821 888/317-4687 www.firecrackerpr.com info@firecrackerpr.com

Firecracker PR helps you get known, period. We are relentlessly focused on getting you media coverage. Our proven 5-step process - "Ignites" — has helped numerous technology companies rapidly scale their awareness from Day 1. Benefit from our team's experience in blending PR, SEO, social media and content marketing into one powerful campaign.

Companies we have worked with include Fujitsu, SRI International, Boeing, HP, Microsoft, D-Link, TP-LINK, Beyond Limits, Sparkcentral and many others.

FUSION PUBLIC RELATIONS

1177 6th Ave., 5th Floor New York, NY 10036 212/651-4200 info@fusionpr.com https://www.fusionpr.com/

Jordan Chanofsky, Founder and CEO Bob Geller, President Olga Shmuklyer, Senior Vice President

Fusion Public Relations is a bi-coastal boutique public relations agency that specializes in B2C and B2B tech. Founded in 2000 and headquartered in New York City, Fusion PR stands out for its unusual and eclectic team comprising people with backgrounds in engineering and software as well as the sciences, sales, journalism, and business.

The Fusion PR team understands complex industries and products and turns dense tech and technical content into compelling stories that earn online attention and media coverage. Some of the tech segments served include cybersecurity, telecommunications, insurance, fintech, adtech, proptech, web/e-commerce, mobile, CE, entertainment, blockchain, medtech, and femtech.

In the last several years, the agency provided PR support that helped more than 20 clients achieve successful exits; two clients have remained with the firm to this day despite new ownership (Valen Analytics which sold to Insurity and Plarium which was acquired by Aristocrat for \$500M). Other clients have included Panasonic, Motorola, Amdocs, Allot, Pantech, PanAmSat, Oovoo, Clicktale, Lucent, Mellanox, Nice Systems, Hospital IQ, BlockSafe, Xpertdoc, and Rollins College. Fusion has solid relationships with VCs; Jerusalem Venture Partners is among the firms that regularly bring our team their portfolio companies.

GREENOUGH BRAND STORYTELLERS

One Brook Street Watertown, MA 02472 617/275-6500 www.greenough.biz greenough@greenough.biz

Phil Greenough, CEO Scott Bauman, ÉVP/GM

Today, technology buyers are moved by stories about what they can do with technology, not technical specs. For two decades since our founding, Greenough has perfected brand storytelling, leading with the what and why behind enterprise solutions, mobile applications, IT security, robotics and

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

We use brand journalism to uncover and deliver compelling stories across earned, owned and paid channels. As designated reporters for your brand, we bring stories to life by sifting through the marketing hype to extract what's authentic and most compelling to qualified buyers.

Our "reporting" uncovers client stories and perspectives that are routinely featured where their buyers go for education and validation: CIO, TechTarget, Venture-Beat and other technology trades as well as vertical publications. We turn client spokespeople into credible sources who appear regularly in national, trade, vertical and local media.

Our campaigns go beyond earned media, delivering clients' unique value propositions through owned and paid media as well. If, for example, we successfully "newsjack" a client expert into a business feature, we'll also turn those insights into a contributed piece and promote through targeted social. From story to interest and interest to affinity, we tell brand stories that move audiences to act.

HIGHWIRE PR

San Francisco Office: 727 Sansome St., Suite 100 San Francisco, CA 94111 hi@highwirepr.com www.highwirepr.com

10 W. Hubbard St. Chicago IL 60654

8 W. 38th St., Suite 1200 New York, NY 10018

142 Berkeley Street, 4th Floor Boston, MA 02116 415/963-4174

Emily Borders, Carol Carrubba, Kathleen Gratehouse. 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**

325 S. First St.. Third Floor San Jose, CA 95113 408/286-2611 SMussante@Hoffman.com LHoffman@Hoffman.com Twitter: @DailyBrew www.Hoffman.com/tech-pr/ www.storytelling-techniques.com

Lou Hoffman, CEO Syreeta Mussante, Mng. Dir. North America Caroline Hsu, Mng. Dir., Asia Pacific Mark Pinsent, Mng. Dir., Europe Lydia Lau, VP of Global Operations

With expertise that spans digi-

_ Continued on page 38

THE HOFFMAN AGENCY

_Continued from page 37

tal, content marketing, and 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 award-winning work today pushes the boundaries of B2B and consumer communications.

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 siloed structure. The Hoffman Agency applies a collaborative approach to implementing multi-country campaigns, leveraging content and thinking across geographies with a single-point-contact for clients. Built on the firm's cultural foundation of teamwork and trust, this approach consistently generates better re-

While campaigns vary by client and industry, all share one theme: the creation of content that reflects the key tenets of storytelling. This means developing narratives that prompt journalists to write and target audiences to read — a far cry from the "corporate speak" that satisfies internal stakeholders. The firm also conducts storytelling workshops that orient Hoffman employees and client stakeholders around this shared goal.

Even on the operations side, The Hoffman Agency walks to a different drummer. Eschewing the tradi-

tional 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. This fosters a culture of personal accountability and ownership, and an environment in which everyone is valued for their contribution.

HOTWIRE

45 East 20th Street 10th Floor New York, NY 10003 646/738-8960

222 Kearny Street Suite 400 San Francisco, CA 94108 415/840-2790

Barbara Bates, Global CEO Heather Kernahan, President, North America & Australia 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 33 locations including North America (US and Mexico), UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Australia, together with exclusive partners Yellow Communications in the Netherlands and Belgium, Active DMC in the Middle East and VIANEWS in Brazil, as well as other affiliate partners. We also have an exclusive partnership with The Hoffman Agency to collaborate in eight cities across Asia.

685 Third Ave New York, NY 10017 646-277-1200 Bo.Park@icrinc.com www.icrinc.com

Bo Park, Partner & Head of Technology PR Kevin McLaughlin, Managing Director Matt Lindberg, Senior Vice President Katie Creaser, Senior Vice President Alexis Blais, Vice President

ICR brings equal parts business acumen, technology expertise and media savvy to every account, for clients spanning all business stages - from startups seeking to raise additional capital, growth companies with IPOs on the horizon, organizations investing in M&A. businesses in the throws of digital transformation, and public companies seeking to elevate their brands. Comprised of former Wall Street analysts working alongside seasoned PR agency and in-house communications experts, ICR offers a unique combination of experience, contacts, and skills that helps technology companies generate the types of stories that both capture mind share and grow market share. Embracing a roll-up your sleeves approach from senior members to associates, the team delivers results for clients across a range of sectors, including Artificial Intelligence, Automotive Technology, Digital Payments & Ecommerce, Fintech, Martech & Adtech, Data & Analytics, Cyber-

security and IoT. ICR maintains offices in New York, Connecticut, Boston, Baltimore, San Diego, San Francisco and Beijing.

HARMAN Clients: (wholly owned subsidiary of Samsung Electronics), Mobileye (an Intel Company), Acoustic, (formerly IBM Watson Marketing), Cardlytics, FLEETCOR Technologies, Zoom, Dynatrace, OSRAM, TechStyle Fashion Group and ZoomInfo.

IDEA GROVE

14800 Quorum Dr., #320 Dallas, TX 75254 972/235-3439 844/235-3439 inquiries@ideagrove.com www.ideagrove.com

Scott Baradell, Founder & CEO John Lacy, President & COO Etta Goss, CFO Katie Long, VP/Account Service Liz Cies, VP/Public Relations Megan Chesterton, Creative Director Jarrett Rush, Content Director Brittany McLaughlin, Traci Scott, Account Directors Britt Ervin, Social Media Director

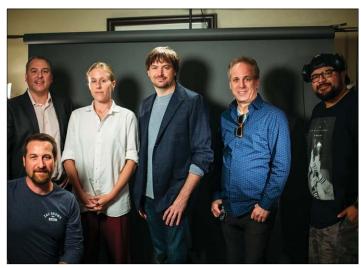
As a PR and marketing firm in Dallas, Texas, with an international roster of B2B technology clients, Idea Grove specializes in building authority for your brand in ways that other agencies don't. We bring together every form of third-party validation — including media coverage, word of mouth, case studies, customer reviews, search authority, paid editorial and influencer endorsement — to propel your company's narrative and establish your market reputation. Then, we transform that brand authority into industry leadership through highly focused amplification to your customers, prospects and other key audiences

Idea Grove takes the time to understand your business, your competition and-most importantly—your buyers. We use this foundation to create PR campaigns that generate buzz, websites that attract eyeballs, and marketing programs that deliver measurable ROI. We execute our innovative, comprehensive programs utilizing our unique blend of award-winning capabilities, including an experienced account team, B2B tech content specialists, in-house multimedia development, in-house video production and more.

Idea Grove exclusively focuses on B2B technology clients. We have experience in industries ranging from hyperconverged infrastructure to marketing technology,



We're connected via email, chat and phone every day, but we really appreciate collaborating face-to-face. And what better excuse for a coffee run than when colleagues from Hoffman's Washington office come down to HQ in San Jose?



The Karbo Com Content Studio team filming a customer case study video showcasing a client's work in Ang Lee's film, Gemini Man.

UC to RPA, smart speakers to 3D printing, PaaS to IoT. This domain expertise has enabled us to develop a highly specialized offering that spans all of the things we do.

Clients Include: Amazon, Brierley+Partners, Chrome River, Compass Datacenters, Digital Defense, DreamHost, K2View, NEC, Nimbix, Pivot3, Reflect Systems, Sabre, Stanford University, Vertex-One and WorkFusion

INKHOUSE

260 Charles St., Suite 200 Waltham, MA 02453 781/966-4100

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

199 Water Street Floor 34 New York, NY 10038 646/975-5142 www.inkhouse.com Twitter: @InkHousePR workwithus@inkhouse.com

Beth Monaghan, CEO & Co-Founder, beth@inkhouse.com Jason Morris, President, jason@inkhouse.com Alison Morra, EVP & General Manager, Boston, alison@inkhouse.com Nicole Bestard, EVP & General Manager, New York. nicole@inkhouse.com Dan O'Mahony, EVP & General Manager, San Francisco, dan@ inkhouse.com

InkHouse is an integrated PR agency for innovative thinkers, creators and leaders who believe in the power of stories to effect positive change. We translate complex ideas into accessible stories that

move innovation and culture forward. We were founded in 2007 and are one of the fastest growing agencies in the country. Find us in the real world in Boston, New York and San Francisco, and in the digital one at www.inkhouse.com.

Client shortlist: Bain Capital Ventures, Blume Global, Carbon Black, Cockroach Labs, Confluent, Datto, Forter, Fuze, Nutanix, Okta, Raytheon, Recorded Future, Salesforce, Talespin, TransferWise and Xerox

KARBO COMMUNICATIONS

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

Additional offices in New York City, Los Angeles, Seattle and Redwood City

Julie Karbo, Founder & CEO

Karbo Communications is a topranked technology PR and digital marketing agency that delivers sales and market leadership. With 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 compelling positioning, placing your company in top media, producing influential content, growing an active influencer and social media base or creating viral videos. We've pioneered marketing and PR efforts across categories and industries, such as cloud/SaaS, mobile, the IIoT/IoT, social, data, analytics, apps, marketing and 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, NerdWallet, TIBCO, The IoT World Conference, Equinix, Cisco, AppDynamics, Defense.Net, Go-Daddy, Fox Digital apps, Airbnb, 8th Wall, Oracle, Hootsuite and Intel. Our clients range from stealth startups to billion-dollar global brands. When it's make or break, vou 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.

Current Clients: Logitech, TIB-CO, Hootsuite, Penguin Computing, 500 Startups, Clearsurance, Pigeon, Megaport, The Tylt, RTI (Real-Time Innovations), TDK, Harmony Helper. TicketSocket. NTT and Project Text.

KETNER GROUP COMMUNICATIONS

3737 Executive Center Drive Suite 210 Austin, TX 78731 ketnergroup.com @KetnerGroupPR 512/794-8876 Jeff Ketner, CEO jeff@ketnergroup.com Catherine Seeds, President catherine@ketnergroup.com

157 Columbus Avenue, Suite 512 New York, NY 10023 Adrienne Newcomb. Director. New York adrienne@ketnergroup.com

901 Woodland St., Suite 104 Nashville, TN 37206 Kirsty Goodlett, Director, Nashville kirsty@ketnergroup.com

Our clients are reshaping the world we live in-using technology to solve real business challenges—and they trust Ketner Group to tell their stories. Founded 30 years ago, Ketner Group Communications is nationally recognized as the trusted PR firm for attractive B2B2C technology companies that have the potential for market leadership. Core capabilities include strategy and messaging, public relations, content development and digital content marketing. The company is known for its deep and expansive relationships with key media contacts across industry verticals including Retail, Grocery, Hospitality, FinTech, MarTech, AdTech and more.

Our average client engagement is 6+ years, reflecting Ketner Group's ability to build lasting client relationships and exceed expectations.

Writers at our core, we create content and manage media relations to ensure consistent organic pickup. And because we're experts in storytelling, we're able to create angles and individualized pitches that editors love, driving coverage for our clients as a result. The Ketner team is connected to key media, analysts and influencers, who consistently open doors for our clients. We are fearless, creative and proud to be an extension of our clients' teams, helping their efforts to differentiate themselves in the market, support sales cycles and generate brand awareness.

Ketner Group is headquartered in Austin, with offices in New York and Nashville. A selection of Ketner Group clients includes Adlucent, Mercatus, Kibo, Theatro, Shopgate, Symphony RetailAI, GK Software, NGC, and Elo.

KIVVIT

222 W. Merchandise Mart Plaza Suite 2400 Chicago, IL 60654 312/664-0153 www.kivvit.com info@kivvit.com

Maggie Moran, Eric Sedler, Managing Partners

Kivvit is a nationally recognized data-driven strategic communications and public affairs firm with offices in Chicago, New York, New Jersey, Miami, Boston, and Washington, D.C.. Kivvit prides itself on being a strategic advisor to organizations with big ideas and complex challenges.

Kivvit is defining the agency of the future. We don't have silos. We integrate our full suite of data-driven advertising and strategic communications capabilities across teams. Our holistic approach combines analytics, technology, and content to produce hyper-targeted campaign plans that shape public opinion, impact public policy, and enhance business outcomes. Our relentless focus on measurement means that our work maximizes results and achieves tangible goals for our clients.

Kivvit's culture is marked by an entrepreneurial spirit and an insatiable curiosity to master our client sectors and constantly find innovative solutions. No campaign is exactly the same; each is tailored to our clients' needs. That's what sets Kivvit apart.

LAUNCHSQUAD

340 Pine St. Suite 100 San Francisco, CA 94104 415/625-8555 squad@launchsquad.com www.launchsquad.com

LaunchSquad is an independent content marketing and public relations agency with offices in San Francisco, New York, Boston and Chicago.

Since 2000, we've been passionately helping companies build brands and gain market traction through innovative communications programs. Our expertise spans both consumer-facing and B2B clients in a variety of industries including consumer technology, enterprise software, fashion, retail, media, e-commerce, gaming, education, finance, energy and

We work with our clients to understand, shape and expand upon their stories and then connect with audiences to build lasting engagement. Our holistic approach to communications takes advantage of all of the ways stories can be shared through owned, earned and paid media.

Current clients include American Giant, Bonobos, Boxed, Cornerstone OnDemand, Getty Images, Nuro, Poshmark, Rothy's, SimpliSafe, Uber Freight and Visible among many other fast growth private and public companies.

MARCH COMMUNICATIONS

226 Causeway St., 4th Floor Boston, MA 02114 617/960-9875 info@marchcomms.com www.marchcomms.com

Martin Jones, CEO Cheryl Gale, President Jodi Petrie, Executive Vice President Juliana Allen, Senior Vice President

March Communications is a technology PR agency connecting innovation and people. We are a multi-award winning agency delivering creative, integrated PR programs to a diverse portfolio of emerging and established tech and consumer brands from across the U.S. and around the world.

Our insights-first methodology fuels our work crafting brand narratives and outcomes-oriented PR campaigns that bring our clients' innovative stories to life, delivering value to brands and buyers.

Ours is a unique "under one-roof" model comprised of in-house researchers, content specialists, seasoned PR pros, and social media experts. Our Consumer Innovation Group's shop within a shop structure enables our dedicated team of consumer brand planners, strategists and social media authorities to tap into the knowledge of the technology experts that make up our broader team.

Notable clients include: Affectiva, Dynatrace, Pitney Bowes, National Grid, Neurala, and Sophos, among others.

MERRITT GROUP

8251 Greensboro Drive, Suite 600 McLean, VA 22102 703/390-1500 info@merrittgrp.com www.merrittgrp.com

Alisa Valudes Whyte, CEO, Senior Partner Thomas Rice, Executive Vice President, Partner John Conrad, Executive Vice President, Partner Jayson Schkloven, Executive Vice President, Partner Shahed Ahmed, Senior Vice President, Partner

Merritt Group is an award-winwomen-owned agency specializing in Public Relations, Content Marketing, Performance Marketing and Creative Services. We live at the intersection of market expertise and technical proficiency to help our clients drive growth and dominate their markets. 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 and integrated marketing campaigns that help the world's most inspiring government, healthcare, emerging technology and security companies raise awareness, engage audiences and accelerate sales.

With offices in D.C. and San Francisco, our team of 50+ professionals works hand-in-hand with clients ranging from Fortune 500 industry leaders to early-stage technology startups to deliver measurable, high-impact campaigns that reach, influence and activate decision-makers. 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.



Martin Jones and Cheryl Gale, co-Founders of March Communications.

Clients: Varonis, IOActive, Iron-Net Cybersecurity, Remediant, PAS Global, Lexis-Nexis, Lastline, Arctic Wolf Networks, Nok Nok Labs, CalAmp, Cybrary, Northern Virginia Technology Council, Menlo Security, and Mo.

PADILLA

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

Scott Davila, Senior Vice President/Technology Lead 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, AI, 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, industrial, agriculture and transportation.

We service clients of all sizes such as 3M. HealthPrize. Rockwell Automation, Conservis, Direct Source and Outlier AI.

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.

PAN COMMUNICATIONS

255 State St., 8th Flr. Boston, MA 02109 617/502-4300 info@pancomm.com www.pancommunications.com Boston I San Francisco I New York I Orlando I London

Philip A. Nardone, President & CFO

Mark Nardone, Executive Vice President,

Elizabeth Famiglietti. Executive Vice President, Human Resources Darlene Doyle, Executive Vice President, Client Relations

Gary Torpey, Executive Vice President, Finance Lisa Astor, Senior Vice President & Managing Director, North America

Gene Carozza, Senior Vice President

Dan Martin, Senior Vice President Nikki Festa O'Brien, Senior Vice President

Megan Kessler, Senior Vice President

Gareth Thomas, Managing Director, UK

PAN Communications is a leading integrated marketing and PR agency servicing B2B tech and healthcare brands. With office locations in Boston, San Francisco, New York, Orlando and London, PAN supports customer growth journeys and helps B2B brands effectively scale by moving ideas that create compelling stories, drive intent and influence markets across all forms of media.

PAN's acquisition of UK-based Capella PR in July 2019 has allowed the firm to expand its international presence, while continuing to offer the agility and personalized service of a mid-sized agency. With a staff of 150+ strong, PAN strives to help today's modern marketers by integrating a combination of services to better engage with target audiences and move markets for brands such as SAP, AppDirect, 8x8, Radial, MediaMath, Actian, Cogito and Maestro Health.

Connected Content — Creative Storytelling — Results that Matter!

PEPPERCOMM

470 Park Ave. South, 5th Flr. North New York, NY 10016 212/931-6100 contact@peppercomm.com www.peppercomm.com

Steve Cody, CEO and Founder Ann Barlow. Senior Partner & President, West Coast Jacqueline Kolek, Senior Partner & General Manager, NY Office Maggie O'Neill, Senior Partner & Chief Client Officer Tara Lilien. Partner & Chief Talent

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 combines 25 award-winning years of expertise serving blue chip and breakout clients with forward-thinking new service offerings and the freshness of a start-up. This unique mix of experience and energy attracts and empowers teams with a creative edge, drive and a passion for pro-



Touchdown PR team in Austin headquarters.

moting, protecting and connecting clients in a fast-changing marketplace.

Corporate purpose continues to be a buzzword in communications with many brands taking a stand on societal issues to drive marketing programs. Peppercomm's STANDSMART Purpose Stress Test evaluates brands' business practices to ensure credibility and authenticity to stand behind their corporate purpose. Peppercomm's Employee Engagement helps Chief Human Resource Officers develop insight-led communications programs to attract and retain talent, ensure employees are informed and engaged, and create workplaces with genuine two-way dialogue.

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

STANDING PARTNERSHIP

1610 Des Peres Rd., Suite 200 St. Louis, MO 63131 314/469-3500 www.standingpartnership.com @standingteam | Standing Partnership - LinkedIn Melissa Lackey, President and

Ashlyn Brewer, Vice President

Today, technology companies in the B2B space face an uphill battle selling to buyers with multiple decision makers. Understanding the buyer's priorities and aligning the product's value to the prospect's needs can be a daunting task for marketing and sales teams.

Standing Partnership helps businesses in the tech space turn prospects into customers with aligned sales and marketing strategies. We have been successful at driving growth through demand generation, account-based marketing, digital advertising, SEO, and sales and marketing alignment.

We provide an integrated approach that delivers bottom-line results through powerful marketing strategies. Our team acts as a trusted partner and our services span strategic counsel to implementation support. We help our clients understand their prospects and their path to purchase and develop strategies and tactics that impact them at every stage of the buying process. In addition to customer acquisition, we help our clients improve retention and reduce churn through improved customer experience.

STANTON

880 Third Ave. New York, NY 10022 212/366-5300 Fax: 212/366-5301 astanton@stantonprm.com www.stantonprm.com

Alex Stanton, CEO Tom Faust, Charlyn Lusk, Managing Directors Liam Collopy, Katrin Lieberwirth, Mike Goodwin, SVPs

Stanton works with a wide variety of emerging and established technology firms across verticals including financial services, professional services, healthcare and insurance. Our client roster also includes the companies that technology firms want to sell to so we have a deep understanding of customer pain points, motivations, and the real-world impact technology has on business success. This is why cloudbased, SaaS platforms, enterprise, and AI tech businesses turn to Stanton. We excel at helping innovators grow their businesses by raising company profiles, building reputations and capturing mindshare.

With offices in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, Stanton is a full-service agency that supports our clients across a variety of communications disciplines including media relations, brand messaging, content development and marketing, executive visibility, thought leadership, digital and traditional marketing, reputation & change management, executive counsel, and social media. Our senior professionals spend the majority of their time on client work, ask tough questions, challenge assumptions, and suggest bold solutions. Clients find a home at our firm because we deliver a unique blend of smart strategy, strong relationships, innovative thinking, and first-class execution that produces business-changing results.

TOUCHDOWN PR

7600 Burnet Road, Suite 270 Austin, TX 78757 512/373-8500 touchdownUS@touchdownpr.com www.touchdownpr.com

James Carter, Founder and CEO Emma Carter, Founder and Finance Director Emily Gallagher, Executive Vice President

Touchdown PR is an international agency focused on helping B2B

Continued on page 42

TOUCHDOWN PR

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technology clients raise awareness of their brand, value proposition and differentiators in order to increase sales and achieve successful exits. With co-headquarters in Austin, TX and Farnham, UK, and several offices across Europe, the agency has 50+ employees specializing in the mobility, security, data protection, artificial intelligence, machine learning and storage industries. Clients turn to Touchdown to deliver integrated, multi-region PR, analyst relations, thought leadership and social media influencer programs. They stay with Touchdown because we deliver solid results, true partnership and unmatched service.

We have well established media relationships in the industries where we focus, including business, technology, verticals and channel, and know how to uncover stories and deliver content that will drive key audiences to action. We enjoy working with innovative technology brands — from VC-funded start-ups to large, publicly listed enterprises — that are changing the status quo.

TREVELINO/KELLER

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

As Atlanta continues to establish itself as one of the country's technology growth sectors, Trevelino/ Keller continues to leverage its depth with emerging and middle market brands and its strategic partnerships with organizations such as Atlanta Tech Village, Atlanta Tech Angels, TechAlpharetta, Raise Forum, LaunchPad FN and Keiretsu Forum. Not limited by geography, its emerging, 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 seven other practices, vielding a powerful vertical prowess in areas such as Fin-Tech, Consumer-Tech, Clean- Tech, Food-Tech, Fashion-Tech, Ag-Tech and Ed-Tech. Highlights include representing the AgTech Conference of the South and Fintech South in recent years. 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 repositioning, the firm introduced a more outcome-driven philosophy with emphasis on four strategic outcomes — Reputation, Engagement, Adoption and Advocacy. It achieves these outcomes through its Mind-Share methodology, which begins with Mind-Set, Journey Mapping and Mind-Share. Mind-Share taps into five media channels — earned, owned, shared, paid and mixed media.

Coming off of one of its best years, including a #2 ranking in Atlanta, as well as nine #1, #2 or #3 industry rankings, the firm is on track in 2019 with another strong year of growth and retention.

WALKER SANDS

Chicago / Seattle / San Francisco www.walkersands.com 312/648-6015 | sales@ walkersands.com

Ken Gaebler, Founder and CEO Ellen Hanson, Founder and COO Mike Santoro. President and Principal Andrew Cross, SVP of Public Relations Dave Parro, SVP of Client Services John Fairley, SVP of Digital Services

Will Kruisbrink, SVP of Public Relations, West Coast

B2B brands power the world, but their story isn't always heard. Too often, companies play it safe with corporate speak and uninspiring campaigns that don't reflect their true innovation or help them reach their full potential.

We get it. Running a business is hard enough; building a brand that inspires can seem next to impossible.

But at Walker Sands, we also know that B2B marketing can be bigger, better and smarter. That's why we build unique, customized programs that challenge the status quo and help companies break out of the mold.

We are a full-service B2B marketing agency with core capabilities in public relations, demand generation, branding, creative, marketing strategy and web. Our integrated approach to marketing drives awareness, credibility and conversions for 100+ clients around the world.

WEBER **SHANDWICK**

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

We are on a mission to help our clients navigate a more complex future. And to deliver the next-generation solutions clients need to win in this complex, prove-it-works world, we've been transforming our agency — investing in the power trio of data, innovation and technology.

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 subject matter experts across technology, media, employees, public affairs, analytics, strategy and creative to engage audiences with communications that drive value. It requires teams who understand the complex and challenging environment that surrounds technology and technology companies and how that changes — from Silicon Valley to London, from Singapore to Sydney, and everywhere in between.

Weber Shandwick's 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 understand how technology's role in society is changing and we understand how communications is changing thanks to technology. We see the link between storytelling and how to drive action from your most trusted audiences. And we know the value that data and analytics can add to the lifecycle of every campaign, from inception to conclusion.mpanies embracing this era of change — from automotive to fintech to healthcare and, of course, technology — work with Weber Shandwick because we know how to make change happen. O



Walker Sands' Chicago team sports new t-shirts to celebrate the company's rebrand in September – a big milestone for their banner year in 2019.

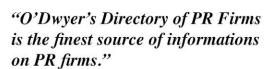
ORDER THE ONLY PRINTED DIRECTORY OF PR FIRMS!

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 Howard Rubenstein, President Rubenstein Associates

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

Robert L. Dilenschneider
 The Dilenschneider Group

"A phemonmenal job-seeking aid."

Marie RapertoCantor Integrated MarketingSearch

"Single most important source of information on PR firms."

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

Deutsche Bank hires Prosek's Hunter

aniel Hunter has been named Managing Director, Head of Communications for the

Americas at Deutsche Bank.

Hunter comes to Deutsche Bank from Prosek Partners, where he was a Managing Director in the New York office, advising global banks, private equity funds and hedge funds.



Daniel Hunter

He previously worked

in London as Head of Corporate Communications, EMEA for Nomura and Head of External Communications, Personal & Corporate banking at Barclays. Before entering banking, he was an Associate Director at Gavin Anderson & Company and worked at Burson-Marsteller.

In his new post, Hunter has full responsibility for the Americas region, and will be responsible globally for Deutsche Bank's Investment Bank business, which includes equity capital markets, debt capital markets, M&A, sales and trading. O

Amazon vet Berman joins LivePerson

raig Berman, who was VP-Global Communications at Amazon, has joined AI-powered conversational platform LivePerson, Inc. as Senior Vice President, Global Communications.

At Amazon, where he worked from 2004

until 2018, Berman most recently led PR for Amazon Entertainment. He previously advised Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos on corporate and crisis communications, led consumer PR for Amazon's retail business and oversaw communications for its fulfillment network.



Craig Berman

Before coming to Amazon, Berman was a Senior vice President at MWWPR. He has also run and advised congressional and legislative campaigns. Berman began his career working for John Kasich when he represented Michigan's 12th District in the House of Representatives.

At Live Person, he will lead the company's internal and external communications strategy. O

Finn gets Farnham from Porter Novelli

yle Farnham, who led Porter Novelli's New York and Chicago outposts, has joined Finn Partners as its first Consumer Practice Chief.

Peter Finn considers the consumer group, which has annual fees of \$12 million, a major growth market for the independent firm.

Prior to Porter Novelli, Farnham led BCW's US consumer marketing practice. He also was responsible for the



Kyle Farnham

WPP unit's integrated marketing communications team.

Farnham joined BCW from MSL, where he spent 16 years, including a 10-year stint as managing director in Atlanta. O

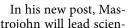
Pfizer's Mastrojohn takes Y&R PR job

ean Mastrojohn, who formerly led global media relations at Pfizer, has come on board at Y&R PR, where he will serve as Senior VP, Integrated Media.

Before coming to Pfizer, he was Communications Director, North America at

Reckitt Benckiser and Corporate Media Relations Manager, North America at Unilever.

He was also Corporate Communications Manager at KPMG and an Account Supervisor at MWWPR.



tific and corporate media relations across accounts and work to grow the Y&R PR integrated media team. O

Hill+Knowlton adds tech pro Derryberry

ohn Derryberry, who helped build Edelman into a Silicon Valley powerhouse, has joined Hill+Knowlton Strategies as Managing Director of the U.S. technology group.

He joined Edelman in 2006 following its acquisition of tech specialist A&R Partners, where Derryberry worked for 15 years, guiding it to the \$16 million annual revenue mark.

Derryberry co-managed A&R's flagship Adobe account while counseling clients such as Xerox/XSoft, Siemens, iRobot, Citrix and Palm.



John Derryberry

At Edelman, he maintained the Adobe relationship and advised

Bosch, Verifone, Lending Club and Western Union. O

Litigation PR pro McCaleb to Mercury

an McCaleb, who led Hogan Lovells' litigation communications and crisis group and chaired Levick's legal advisory practice, has joined Mercury

as Managing Director.

He did a stint as Senior Spokesperson at the criminal division of the Justice Dept. and served as the sole media consultant for the multi-agency task force created to assess damage from the leak of classified data to WikiLeaks.org.



Ian McCaleb

McCaleb worked as reporter and producer at Fox News, CNN, UPI and McClatchy specializing in legal affairs, law enforcement, politics, legislation, terrorism and conflict and the U.S. defense/intelligence establishment. O

Olson of Fingerpaint elected PRSA chair

ichelle Olson was elected 2021 PRSA National Chair at the

Assembly in San Diego. Olson, who runs the Scottsdale, AZ office of New York-based Fingerpaint, has served PRSA as a Director, representing the organi-

2019 PRSA Leadership



Michelle Olson

zation's western district, since 2017. She will be Chair-Elect in 2020, succeeding Children's Hospital of Alabama Chief Communications Officer T. Garland Stansell, who will serve as Chair.

Previously, Olson founded and led Olson Communications, which was acquired by Fingerpaint in 2014. O

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS TOP TECHNOLOGY PR FIRMS

	Firm	Net Fees (2018)		Firm	Net Fees (2018)
1.	Edelman, New York, NY	\$280,260,000	38.	Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	\$2,059,544
2.	Hotwire, New York, NY	36,879,576	39.	Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,012,737
3.	Finn Partners, New York, NY	27,476,000	40.	Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	1,804,510
4.	Zeno Group, New York, NY	25,303,770	41.	Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	1,501,330
5.	ICR, New York, NY	18,291,753	42.	Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	1,450,000
6.	Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	17,901,420	43.	Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	1,416,000
7.	PAN Communications, Boston, MA	17,307,546	44.	Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,212,060
8.	Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	16,712,708	45.	Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	1,165,032
9.	LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	16,273,000	46.	Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	1,063,518
10.	Bateman Group, San Francisco, CA	14,499,420	47.	CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	995,796
11.	Walker Sands Communications, Chicago, IL	14,116,410	48.	Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	984,452
12.	Hoffman Agency, The, San Jose, CA	13,665,000	49.	Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	810,529
13.	MWWPR, New York, NY	13,253,751	50.	Prosek Partners, New York, NY	607,455
14.	APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	10,889,600	51.	rbb Communications, Miami, FL	601,490
15.	Fahlgren Mortine, Columbus, OH	10,809,347	52.	Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	600,682
16.	W20 Group, San Francisco, CA	9,398,000	53.	360PR+, Boston, MA	486,947
17.	Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	9,084,293	54.	Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	356,100
18.	5W Public Relations, New York, NY	8,900,000	55.	Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	340,000
19.	Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	8,290,343	56.	Bellmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	337,669
20.	Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	8,229,872	57.	WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	336,025
21.	Merritt Group, McLean, VA	7,569,251	58.	French I West I Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	298,104
22.	Kivvit , Chicago, IL	6,051,241	59.	O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	295,750
23.	Havas Formula, New York, NY	5,060,125	60.	Bradford Group, The, Nashville, TN	285,197
24.	G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	4,856,039	61.	Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	264,893
25.	March Communications, Boston, MA	4,168,379	62.	Weiss PR, Inc., Baltimore, MD	235,128
26.	MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	4,145,326	63.	Kohnstamm Communications, Inc., St. Paul, MN	198,363
27.	Touchdown PR, Austin, TX	4,100,995	64.	Hollywood Agency, Hingham, MA	167,000
28.	Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	3,870,596	65.	BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	100,000
29.	Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	3,444,452	66.	Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	98,891
30.	North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	3,145,851	67.	Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	82,846
31.	Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms, Seattle, WA	2,915,484	68.	BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	74,618
32.	Idea Grove, Dallas, TX	2,901,468	69.	Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	70,000
	Hunter PR, New York, NY	2,800,000		Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	58,208
	Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,500,000		Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	54,840
35.	Crenshaw Communications, New York, NY	2,280,188		Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	27,000
36.	ARPR, Atlanta, GA	2,262,442		Stuntman PR, New York, NY	13,318
37.	Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	2,100,000	74.	Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MI	N 11,715

LeBron and the limits of social responsibility

By Fraser P. Seitel

hen both Rush Limbaugh and the New York Times go after you for the same infraction, you must be doing something right!

The poor shnook who found himself this



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.

month in the cross hairs of the right commenwing tator and the left wing newspaper was none other than the greatest basketball NBA player on the planet, LeBron James. The transgression that so enraged Limbaugh and the Times involved Mr. James' criticism of Twitter comments by Houston Rockets' general manager Daryl Morey, who

in October tweeted his support for the recent protests in Hong Kong.

Mr. James argued that Mr. Morey probably should've stayed out of the Hong Kong dispute with China because the Rockets' executive was "misinformed or not really educated" on the issue. In other words, contended Mr. James, Mr. Morey, as they say in court, "lacked standing" to offer his two cents on the conflict. And because the Morey tweet—which he quickly deleted resulted in an enraged China reconsidering its many financial relationships with the NBA, James worried that the errant tweet would inadvertently cost lots of people who depended on the NBA-China relationship lots of money.

So, James felt Morey should've kept his mouth shut, or in this case, his thumb still.

Mr. Limbaugh, the New York Times and social justice warriors throughout the fruited plain were revulsed by James' lack of empathy for the persecuted Hong Kong throng. In near-universal rejection of his cold-heartedness, James' critics responded with a full-throated, Greta Thunbergian "How dare you!"

Today, as James reverts back to his more familiar hardwood playground, his accusers return to their nonstop impeachment wrangling and Morey remains very much off the radar screen, the questions remain.

"Was LeBron wrong?"

"Should individuals who lack knowledge

on social issues get involved anyway?"

"And what about organizations? Should they spring to involve themselves in social issues that have little bearing on their business?"

It's fashionable these days to say that corporations have a responsibility to take action on important social issues, and if they don't, customers-particularly Millennials—will forsake them, meaning companies that don't get involved in issues like immigration, climate change and gun control will pay a penalty. Stated another way, the "cause marketing" of the 2000s has morphed into the "socially responsible marketing" of the 2010s.

Of course it's true that organizations directly affected by social issues have no choice but to take a stand. That's why Dick's Sporting Goods was right to stop selling automatic weapons and raise the age to purchase firearms in its stores. It's why CVS showed great courage in eliminating the sale of cigarettes in its stores. And it's why Facebook took the right step this month to contribute \$1 billion for California to build highly-paid technology workers have exacerbated the state's housing problem.

These companies correctly stepped up to confront social issues with direct bearing on their business. In doing so, they demonstrated when it makes sense for organizations to lead on social issues.

But that's a lot different than involving the organization in controversial issues far removed from the firm's business, which can—and have—redounded to the sponsor's detriment. For instance:

When Chik-fil-A founder Dan Cathay railed against same-sex marriage in 2012, his stores, employees and business partners became lightning rods for criticism, so much so that a month later, Chik-fil-A announced to the world, "Going forward, our intent is to leave the policy debate over same-sex marriage to the government and political arena."

Three years later, when Starbucks' do-gooding founder Howard Schultz announced his "Race Together" campaign, in which baristas would henceforth engage customers in "a national conversation about race relations," it was an unmitigated—and thankfully short-lived—disaster.

Most recently, it was Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff-a model business leader both in contributing philanthropically and rewarding his shareholders—who learned

the unintended consequences of suddenly abandoning one's business purpose for social betterment. When Benioff announced on CNBC that the time had come for the business to focus on "making the world a better place" and that "capitalism as we know it is dead," Salesforce's previously high-flying stock was immediately pounded and has yet to recover.

The point is that if there's no direct connection between the social issue confronted and the purpose of the enterprise, you've got to ask yourself whether it's really worth taking the risk.

Which brings us back to LeBron James, the NBA and the Hong Kong protestors.

The point, my dear Shaquille, is not whether Daryl Morey had the right to say what he tweeted. Of course he did; in the land of the free, we're all privileged with the right to say virtually anything we want.

But the more crucial questions are: Should he have said it? Was the outcome he hoped to achieve worth the risk of taking a public

And the answers to those questions, as affordable housing, after criticisms that LeBron and NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and all those thousands of merchandise sellers and sneaker makers and sports channel employees now worried about their livelihood will attest, is an unequivocal "no."

> And if you still aren't convinced, go ask Daryl Morey whether he still thinks it was a good idea. That is, if you can find him. **O**

PR news brief

Finsbury Guides Thoma Bravo's \$4B Sophos Deal

Finsbury is working Thoma Bravo investment firm's \$3.9 billion offer for Sophos Group, the UK-based cyber and network security software developer.

The San Francisco equity outfit's \$7.40 per-share offer represents a 37 percent premium over Sophos' closing last week on the London Stock Exchange.

TB ranks among the most active private equity firms in the software space, making more than 200 deals with an aggregate over \$50 billion in enterprise

Seth Boro, Managing Director, said TB is looking forward to partnering with Sophos' management team and employees to further develop the company as a "best-in-class software franchise and nextgen security leader."

He believes TBs "expertise, operational framework and experience" can accelerate Sophos' evolution

Finsbury's Edward Simpkins and Faeth Birch represent TB, while Tulchan Communications' Matt Low, Harry Cameron, Sunni Chauhan and James Macey White handle Sophos.

New revenue recognition standards for 2019

By Richard Goldstein

arely have I written in this column anything concerning accounting. Recently, however, Buchbinder published information for our clients regarding new revenue recognition standards that



Richard Goldstein is a partner at Buchbinder Tunick & Company LLP, New York, Certified Public Accountants.

may impact private companies. Because most PR firms are private companies and not public, these new rules will be important for financial reporting by PR agencies, both public and private.

Who will these rules impact?

The Financial Accounting Standards Board's new

revenue recognition standards will affect not only public companies, but also many private companies whose lenders or investors require them to follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. If your PR firm is one of them and has a calendar year end, these standards became effective beginning in 2019 and can very well impact your financial reporting.

What's behind the new standards? A primary goal was to shift away from the previous rules-based approach to revenue recognition, which varied by industry, and toward a principles-based approach which applies more broadly. Therefore, the new standards apply to most customer contracts across numerous sectors.

A fundamental principle behind the standards is that organizations should recognize revenue to "depict the transfer of promised goods or services ... in an amount that reflects the consideration to which the entity expects to be entitled in an exchange for those goods or services."

The FASB has outlined a five-step process for applying this principle:

Ensure parties can identify the payment terms. Several criteria must be met for a contract to exist. Among others, the parties must have approved the contract, and they must be able to identify the payment terms.

Ensure parties can identify the performance obligation(s) in the contract. A performance obligation is a promise to deliver a good or service to the customer. (FYI, all your "clients" are your customers.)

Determine the transaction price. This

should account for, among other factors, variable consideration, a significant component or a noncash component (barter as an example).

Allocate the transaction price to the performance obligation in the contract. If the contract includes more than one performance obligation, the transaction price should be based on the relative stand-alone price of each ... service.

Recognize revenue when (or as) the firm satisfies the performance obligation by transferring the promised ... service to the customer. When the organization satisfies the performance obligation over time, it can measure its progress in one of two ways. The first method is not attributable to a PR firm however. The second method recognizes revenue by measuring value to the customer of the ...services transferred. This could be measured by identifying the milestones reached.

If you're required to use GAAP, the new revenue recognition standards will likely affect your firm's financial statements, tax obligations and loan agreements. They also may require changes to your firm's accounting processes and IT systems. You CPA can help identify the changes needed and offer guidance on implementing them.

Something extra

I have some room to give something extra this month. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act changes some educational benefits. Accordingly, I'll briefly discuss how 529 plans could be useful.

Section 529 plans allow you to contribute to an account that can be used to pay for a student's qualified education expenses. Different states and state agencies offer the plans. (There are also prepaid tuition plans. Contact your tax advisor for more informa-

The benefit of the 529 plan is amounts can grow tax-deferred, so long as a few requirements are met. The money must be used to cover qualified educational expenses for the beneficiary. While the contribution is not deductible for federal tax purposes, some states, such as New York, do allow a deduction.

Through 2017, only postsecondary education expenses qualified. With the passage if the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, tuition at elementary or secondary schools also may qualify, subject to a \$10,000 per student per vear limit.

For post-secondary education, qualified expenses include not only tuition but also required fees, computer technology, books and, generally, room and board.

Contributions to 529 plans are limited to the extent that they cannot exceed the amount necessary to provide the beneficiary's qualified expense, but there is no specific dollar amount cutoff under the federal

Your CPA can help you determine the best ways for you to save for your child's or grandchild's education. O

Innovation 'halo' bolsters brands

eing perceived as innovative gives brands a boost in today's marketplace—and tech plays a big role in creating that perception, according to a new report from Diffusion.

About one of five consumers surveyed for Diffusion's "Everything Is Tech" 2019 report (19 percent) said that they would be more likely to give their business to a brand that they thought of as innovative, rather than to a competing brand.

A significant number of people were also interested in learning more about innovative brands, with 21 percent saying there was a greater chance that they would open an email from an innovative brand, and 29 percent saying they were more likely to seek out and read news articles about an innovative brand.

Some emerging technologies had a larger effect than others on making a brand ap-

By Steve Barnes pear innovative, the survey respondents

said. More than a quarter of them (26 percent) thought that using augmented reality makes a company look more innovative, while artificial intelligence came in second (19 percent) and facial recognition technology (18 percent) was close behind. Chatbots (6 percent) and cryptocurrency (4 percent) lagged behind.

As regards what consumers expect advanced technologies to do for them, 44 percent said they want the technologies to facilitate shopping experiences, while 33 percent want them implemented to improve customer service and 30 percent wanted such technologies as drones and warehouse organization to be employed in an effort to make deliveries more con-

The online study of 1,236 adults was conducted in April. O

Tech trade groups get high marks in Washington

rade groups representing the U.S. technology sector were ranked as the most effective-performing lobbying sector for achieving results on Capitol Hill, according to a research study of Washington policy leaders released by APCO Worldwide.

The study surveyed U.S. executive branch officials, congressional staff and private sector executives and asked them to identify what associations they believe are the most effective in delivering policy results for their members, measuring perceived performance and effectiveness across 15 separate effective public policy

A half-dozen specific associations were identified as top performers in this year's study. Half of those were groups representing the tech industry. The top-rated group for the most categories was electric company association the Edison Electric Institute, which won for local impact, member representation, membership mobilization, self-regulation and for providing a unified voice. Consumer technology group the Consumer Technology Association won for events and social media. The American Wind Energy Association won for media relations.

Healthcare groups rounded out the rest of the wins. Medical device trade association AdvaMed won in three categories: for multilateral impact, bipartisanship and for serving a top information resource. PhRMA won for lobbying.

The only non-tech or healthcare group to appear on the list was the National Federation of Independent Business, which won for grassroots work, coalition building and for being an industry reputation steward.

It's the second year in a row that the APCO TradeMarks study gave trade associations representing the tech sector the most wins for effectively-viewed specific advocacy area characteristics. Previous studies found that healthcare groups were most often considered the top-performing lobbying sector in the most areas.

Overall, however, healthcare groups remain perceived as the top sector-specific advocacy area on Capitol Hill. Technology comes in sixth overall, above lobbying associations representing food/ beverage and retail and immediately below financial services, manufacturing, and energy/extraction groups.

The study also found that, collectively, trade associations remain highly-regarded among Beltway insiders for their ability to successfully advocate public policy in Washington. The 50 trade groups assessed by policy leaders recorded the highest aggregate score since APCO's survey began in 2013, an especially impressive feat considering today's uncertain policy landscape.

APCO's sixth annual TradeMarks study surveyed 321 Washington policy leaders, which included congressional staff, executive branch officials and private sector executives. Research was conducted by the agency's in-house research team, APCO Insight. O

Teneo's Sayegh to return to team Trump

ony Sayegh, Spokesperson for Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin who joined Teneo last month as Managing Director, is expected to return to the Trump administration to handle communications surrounding impeachment.

He will be responsible for communications strategy, messaging and recruit surrogates to support the president.

A White House administration official told Politico that Sayegh's



hiring is a "done deal." A possible hurdle to Sayegh's return to DC: Trump's unwillingness to delegate impeachment communications

As Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Sayegh handled communications in support of Trump's tax cut. He also worked closely with Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, on the childcare tax credit.

Prior to joining the Treasury, Sayegh was Executive VP at Jamestown Assocs, a political consulting and advertising shop that placed ads for the Trump election campaign.



Tony Sayegh

He also was a Fox News contributor. **O**

MSL alum Smith to pilot **Invariant's PR push**

tephanie Smith, who was Global Client and Business Development Officer at MSL, has landed at Invariant to spearhead the government affairs/PA shop's push into strategic communications.

At the Publicis Groupe unit, Smith also served as Global Account Lead for the agency's Netflix business, which included overseeing its work on the streaming platform's simultaneous launch in over 130 countries.

Before joining MSL in 2004, Smith was a Producer at ABC News, working on such programs as "Good Morning America," "Nightline" and "World News Tonight with Peter Jennings." •

Express Scripts' Katz Catches on at BCW

mily Katz, who was senior director of government affairs at Express Scripts, has joined BCW's public affairs and crisis practice in Washington. She reports to

Licy Do Canto, Executive VP and Managing Director of the group.

Express Scripts, which is part of Cigna, is the pharmacy management giant, with more than 100 million members.

Prior to joining ES in 2015, Katz worked as Senior Health Policy Advisor to California Senator Barbara Boxer.

She also did stints as health policy director for Colorado Congresswoman Diana DeGette and Legislative Assistant for Oregon Senator Ron Wyden. O



Emily Katz

Ballard pulls plug on indicted **Turkish bank**

allard Partners, which has ties with President Trump, terminated its relationship with Turkey's Halkbank on Oct. 16, the day after the U.S. Justice Dept. filed fraud and money-laundering charges against the country's No. 2 state-owned bank.

The charges stem from the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York investigation into whether Halkbank helped Iran dodge US sanctions.

BP began providing strategic communications and advisory services to Halkbank in August 2017 under a one-year contract worth

The firm of Brian Ballard, who was President Trump's chief fundraiser in Florida, was already working for the Republic of Turkey at the time under a one-year \$1.5 million contract that went into effect in May 2017. That relationship lasted until November 2018.

Halkbank signed a three-month extension with BP on Aug. 21 at \$40,000 a-month. **O**

China Telecom dials Levick for PA, crisis work

hina Telecom's US unit has hired Levick Strategic Communications for a public affairs campaign and crisis communications counsel/support/services on an as-needed basis, according to the Washington-based firm's agreement with the Herndon, VA-based client.

Levick says it is "without knowledge" that any foreign government or political party controls, directs, finances or subsidizes its client, a subsidiary of China Telecom Corporation Ltd., a joint-stock limited company incorporated in the People's Republic of China.

That effort began Oct. 9 and runs through Dec. 31. The PA campaign auto-renews for another three months unless China Telecom Americas notifies Levick in writing by Dec. 15.

CTA markets integrated communications and information technology services from offices in Herndon, New York, Chicago, Dallas and Los Angeles. O

BGR joins Russian sanctions fight

GR Government Affairs represents Allseas Nederland, Dutch energy services company that's laying pipe under the Baltic Sea for the controversial Nord Stream 2 project.

Fifty-percent owned by Russia's Gazprom, the 760-mile NS2 pipeline would transport natural gas from eastern Russian to Germany. Royal Dutch Shell and Germany's BASF are among Gazprom's partners in the project.

Sens. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) have introduced a bill that would slap sanctions on "certain vessels involved in the construction of Russian energy export pipelines."

Allseas is using BGR for strategic guidance and counsel regarding issues and legislation regarding European energy security.

BGR founding partner Haley Barbour (former Chairman of the Republican National Committee and Governor of Mississippi) heads the lobbying team. **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.

DLA Piper LLP (US), Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 9, 2019 for Azerbaijan Railways CJSC, Republic of Azerbaijan, regarding assistance related to US sanctions on Iran that affect the transport of oil, gas and other petrochemical products that originate in third countries and that transit through Iran.

GR Pro, LLC, Oklahoma City, OK, registered Oct. 8, 2019 for Prosperity Today, Ontario, Canada, regarding education of Canadian citizens about free-enterprise and market-based solutions for growth.

Sanitas International, Inc., Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 17, 2019 for Nicaraguans for Security & Prosperity, Chicago, IL, regarding creation of a media and outreach campaign that highlights the need for free and fair elections in Nicaragua.

Husch Blackwell Strategies, LLC, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 2, 2019 for China National Forest Product Industry Association, Beijing, China, regarding issues involving the importation of plywood from China into the US and possible Congressional action.

Holly Strategies Inc., Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 4, 2019 for Hong Kong Exchnages and Clearing Limited (HKEX), Hong Kong, regarding communication with US government officials concerning the proposal by HKEX to bid to purchase the London Stock Exchange and the impacts it may have on the American economy.

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.

Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz/The Daschle Group, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 24, 2019 for International Olympic Committee, Lausanne, Switzerland, regarding athletics, foreign policy, health issues, environment, communications/broadcasting, immigration and human rights issues related to international sports and the Olympic Games.

38 North Solutions, LLC, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 21, 2019 for Coalition for Green Capital Action Fund, Washington, D.C., regarding National Climate Bank Act of 2019 designed to support achievement of the climate goals of the Green New Deal.

ACG Analytics, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 21, 2019 for American Trade Association for Cannabis & Hemp, Washington, D.C., regarding cannabis/hemp issues and the banking industry.

The KPM Group DC LLC, Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 23, 2019 for Opiant Pharmaceuticals, Santa Monica, CA, regarding issues related to opioid addiction.

Jamison and Sullivan, Inc., Washington, D.C., registered Oct. 21, 2019 for Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, New Market, VA, regarding preserving and protecting civial war battle sites.

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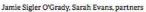
letstalk@jpublicrelations.com www.jpublicrelations.com

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 trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success.



Locations:

New York

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

San Diego

2341 Fifth Ave., San Diego, CA 92101

619/255-7069

Los Angeles

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

14 Gray's Inn Rd., 3063, London, WC1X, 8HN, UK

(011) 44 (20) 38905838

Sampling of highlighted clients:

Adare Manor, Ireland

Adventures by Disney (project work)

Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort (project work) Chateau du Grand-Luce, France

Chewton Glen, UK Cliveden House, UK

Discover Baja California

Four Seasons Resort Lana'i

Golden Oak Development by Walt Disney World Resort Grace Hotels

Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Lake Como

Gurney's Resorts - Montauk & Newport

Helena Bay, New Zealand Hotel del Coronado

InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown InterContinental, Washington DC - The Wharf

Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts

Newport Beach & Company

Rancho La Puerta

Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa

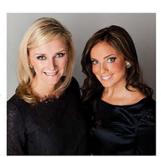
Regent Seven Seas Cruises (project work)

Relais & Châteaux The Palms and The Shore Club, Turks & Caicos

The Private Suite at LAX

The Resort at Pedregal The Ritz-Carlton Hotels (15 properties)

Vail Resorts Hospitality Vail Mountain Resorts



Jamie Sigler O'Grady & Sarah Evans, partners

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