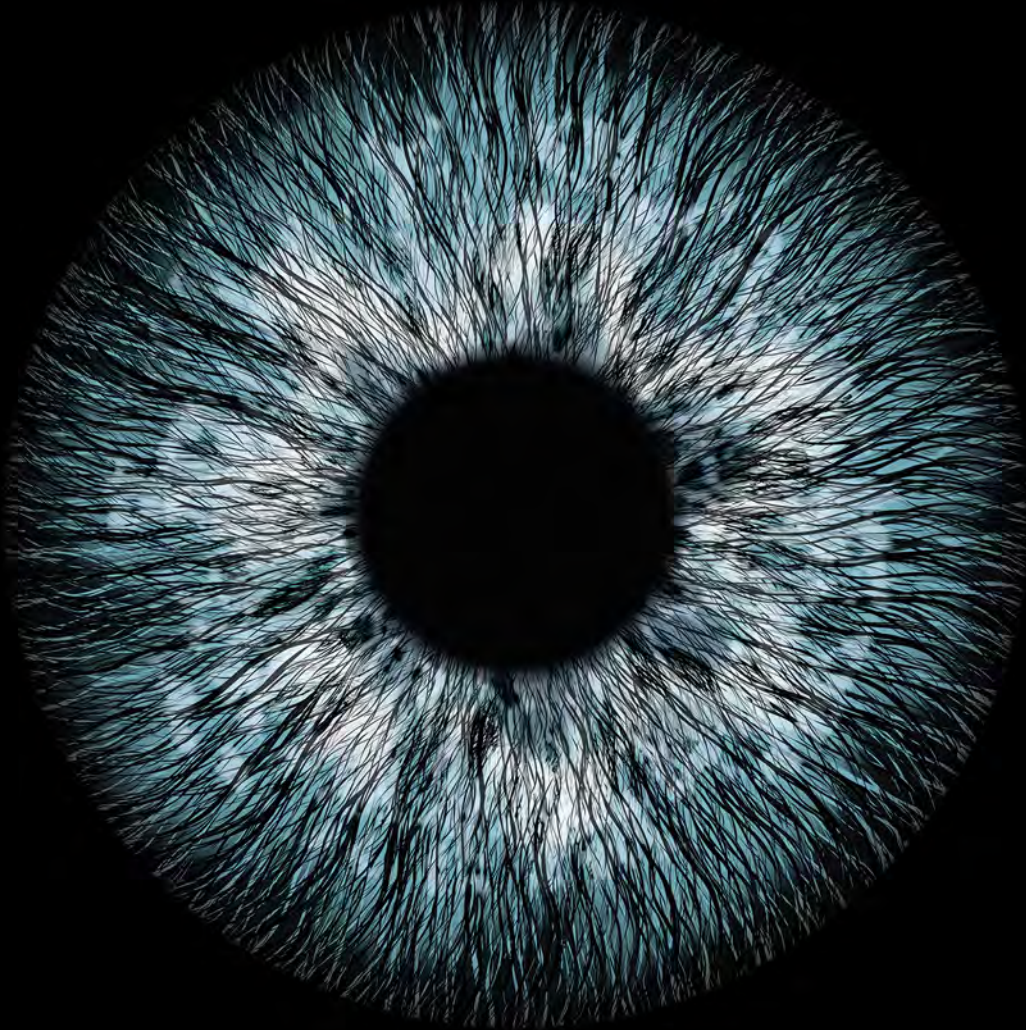


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THE TECHNOLOGY ISSUE

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HUMANIZING SMART TECH IN THE PR 5.0 ERA

WHY MORE CMOS ARE ADOPTING AI

TELLING YOUR BRAND'S INNOVATION STORY

THE VALUE OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS

WHY CYBER STARTUPS NEED PR FIRMS

WHEN YOUR TECH DISTRACTS FROM YOUR STORY

THE POWER OF DATA-DRIVEN STORYTELLING

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AI has a human moment

We knew this was coming. On October 30, President Biden issued an executive order to tame the beast that is artificial intelligence.

The landmark order, the first of its kind in U.S. history, builds on previous commitments made by more than a dozen tech companies to ensure security and safety standards when developing AI systems and effectively amounts to the most ambitious effort by any country to forestall AI's ability to misinform or defraud citizens as well as its potential to disrupt the labor market.

The sweeping regulations create new standards for AI safety, security and trustworthiness, including a mandate that AI developers must share their safety testing with the government and will be subject to Department of Commerce guidance regarding watermarking AI-generated content. It also protects consumer privacy with new guidelines for federal agencies to evaluate AI systems' data-collection and sharing techniques, establishes equity guardrails to prevent AI-based civil-rights violations, evaluates AI's use in healthcare applications, monitors any potential AI-induced labor-market disruptions and promotes innovation and competition by expanding grants for AI research.

The White House isn't alone in its quest to rein in AI—the EU is currently finalizing its own AI regulatory rulebook. This makes sense. In the year since ChatGPT debuted, lightning-fast developments in this technology have resulted in a veritable AI gold rush that has transformed industries and elevated AI to an unforeseen role in our lives. The technology behind generative AI has improved to the point where we're encountering freakishly real deepfakes as well as the birth of incredible text-to-image models like DALL·E, which can render visual art from conversations. Given the potential impacts this heralds for society—provoking debates on everything from workforce disruptions, our inability to discern misinformation, the ownership of content and the safety of AI's role in military operations—a regulatory framework seems to be in order.

While much of the alarmism surrounding generative AI is unearned and our subsequent policy debates surrounding AI have unearthed a lot of erroneous assumptions, still, the fact remains that this rapidly evolving technology poses very real existential threats. We're effectively creating a replacement for human intelligence; a sizeable amount of the online content we'll see in the coming years will be generated entirely by AI. Think the news is untrustworthy now? Just wait until news site copy is supplied entirely by AI instead of human editors. Think misinformation and online radicalization are problems? Imagine what they'll be like when algorithms curate an entire *a la carte* reality for each Internet user. Few of us seem to consider that we're living in the last days of an information ecosystem where most of our content is still made by people.

I'm just not convinced Biden's executive order, while it's a step in the right direction, will solve these problems. First, I'm curious how any government could quantify how much AI has harmed a person, institution or industry. It's one thing if AI threatens to render an entire industry extinct, but if an AI prompt gives someone bad information on, say, the capital of Illinois, how much harm is really caused? Now, consider the harm if millions are led to believe it (or worse, a more spurious claim, like one related to a pandemic). How and when do we decide AI is harming society and isn't just creating algorithmic noise? Where do we draw the line? I'm not a lawyer or legal expert, but I also can't help but wonder how the government can mandate AI systems' "trustworthiness" without at least occasionally wading into territory protected under the First Amendment, as everything I've read suggests that the First Amendment's application to AI-generated speech remains a murky, unsettled area of law still in development. Finally, while Biden's executive order carries the force of law, these regulations could be instantly erased if he isn't re-elected next year. One way to solve this would be to leave it to the tech companies to effectively govern themselves on AI. Suffice it to say, many of us wouldn't be comfortable empowering the corporations that control this technology to dictate how it's used. The most logical solution would be to have AI laws enshrined by Congress, which seems unlikely anytime soon. (I mean, good luck getting Congress to agree on anything these days.)

Policing AI is easier said than done, especially when many of our leaders lack the expertise to understand the technology behind it. There seems to be an implied agreement that we need to get our collective hands around this issue before the technology spins out of control, yet there's also a growing suspicion that the genie already left the bottle and that whatever laws we pass to govern AI will be outdated by the time the ink dries, or worse, that any meddling in the AI markets could stall innovation and effectively hand the baton to China to emerge as a front-runner in the AI arms race. Ideally, we should thread our optimism about AI with the very real challenges it presents without neutering it. In other words, we're facing not only a philosophical challenge regarding how we'll be able to trust future information, but the long-term challenge of ensuring that any efforts to regulate AI don't kneecap innovation or cause other deleterious effects, that our greatest technological advancement in recent history isn't felled by an all-too-human misunderstanding of it. To do so would lend credence to the idea that artificial intelligence, as powerful as it may be, is no match for natural stupidity. ○

— Jon Gingerich

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Lack of trust in U.S. media hits record low

Four in 10 Americans say they've lost any confidence that the U.S. media reports the news in a fair and accurate way, according to a Gallup survey.

By Jon Gingerich

It's no surprise that Americans have long-standing trust issues with the U.S. news media industry. Ever since the 2016 election, poll after poll shows that Americans' faith in newspapers, TV and radio stations to deliver the facts has fallen sharply.

And now? According to a new survey by opinion poll giant Gallup, Americans' confidence in the media to report the news fairly and accurately is at its lowest point on record.

The annual survey, which examines Americans' trust in news media as well as their current attitudes toward the press, found that only 32 percent of U.S. adults said they have a "great deal" or "fair amount" of trust in the news media's reporting, illustrating a clear downward trend from 2022's 34 percent and 2021's 36 percent, according to previous Gallup reports.

Worse, the share of Americans who claim they have no confidence in the news now surpasses the dwindling share of those who say they trust America's mass media institutions: 39 percent said they have absolutely

no confidence at all in the media's ability to report the news in an accurate and fair way. This marks the highest lack of media confidence on record and beats the previous all-time high of 27 percent recorded in 2016.

An additional 29 percent of U.S. adults said they possess "not very much" trust in the news media industry. Only seven percent of those surveyed said they trust the media a "great deal."

As if the news couldn't get any worse, Americans' widespread distrust of the media now appears to be spilling across political lines as well. While Americans who identify as Republican have historically exhibited less trust in the press than those of other political parties, the Gallup poll found that even among those identifying as Democrats—a demographic that has long served as a bulwark of media support—an unfavorable view of the press is gaining ground.

Democrats' trust in the news media fell significantly this year: 58 percent of Democrats said they have a "great deal" or "fair

amount" of confidence in the media. This marks the lowest number since 2016 (51 percent) and also reveals a 12-point slip in trust among this demographic since last year (70 percent).

Republicans, on the other hand, continue to harbor a notably unfavorable view of the press: 58 percent of those identifying as Republican said they have no trust at all in the media, and only 11 percent of Republicans said they have a "great deal" or "fair amount" of confidence in the media.

The partisan gap between Democrats who trust the media and Republicans who distrust the media now stands at 47 points, the narrowest since 2016.

A Reuters Institute survey last year found that the U.S. now exhibits the highest rate of media distrust of any country in the world.

Gallup's report was based on a survey of 1,016 adults aged 18 and older living in the U.S. The sample for the study was supplied by marketing data and analytics company Dynata. The survey was conducted in September. ○

Inflation remains Americans' top concern

Inflation is the number-one issue on Americans' minds, beating out current worries surrounding jobs and the economy, climate change, healthcare and immigration, according to an *Economist/YouGov* poll.

By Jon Gingerich

Current geographical conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East threaten to spill into larger, protracted wars. The United States House of Representatives can't seem to agree on a new Speaker. And former President Donald Trump's legal woes appear to get worse by the week.

Despite all this, the U.S. economy is the issue that remains top of mind for Americans, according to recent findings from the *Economist* and market research firm YouGov.

Inflation/prices was listed as the most important issue facing the country, according to *Economist/YouGov* latest poll, cited by one in five (20 percent) Americans as the top issue, revealing the highest importance level of any of the 15 issues provided in the poll and nearly double the second-most-important issue listed. Jobs and the economy came in second (11 percent), tied with healthcare (11 percent). This was followed by climate change and the environment (10 percent), national security (8 percent), immigration (7 percent), taxes and government spending

(6 percent), civil rights (5 percent), abortion (5 percent), crime (4 percent), education (4 percent), guns (4 percent), civil liberties (3 percent), criminal justice reform (1 percent) and foreign policy (1 percent).

In total, three-quarters (74 percent) of Americans surveyed consider the state of inflation and prices to be "very important"—more than for any of the other 14 issues listed—followed by 21 percent who called it "somewhat important."

Inflation's lingering presence in the post-COVID economy portends trouble for President Biden's 2024 reelection efforts. Despite the fact that inflation has been steadily declining for months from its 2022 peak, it remains stubbornly high compared to pre-pandemic levels, supplying an obvious wedge for the Republican Party to capitalize on as we head into an election year.

Generally, 41 percent of Americans surveyed said they approve of the job that President Biden is doing, compared to 53 percent who said they disapprove. On the

matter of inflation and prices, only 34 percent said they approve of Biden's efforts to tackle this problem, compared to 56 percent who disapprove. Only 42 percent said they approve of what Biden has done for jobs and the economy, compared to 48 percent who disapprove. When it comes to taxes and government spending, only 36 percent approve of the job Biden is doing, compared to 54 percent who disapprove.

The latest Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that many inflation gauges—such as food prices—continue to move downward. However, U.S. consumer price inflation rose slightly more than expected in September. The *Economist/YouGov* report mentions that inflation/prices has topped its list of top concerns among Americans every week since that item was added to its weekly poll in July 2022.

YouGov's findings were based on a national survey of 1,500 U.S. adult citizens selected from YouGov's opt-in panel. Surveys were conducted in October. ○

Fewer Americans follow the news

Americans are consuming less news than they were just several years ago, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey.

By Jon Gingerich

Americans are following the news less closely than they used to, according to a recent survey released by the Pew Research Center.

The survey, which polled U.S. adults about their news consumption habits, suggests that day-to-day consumption of the news is going out of favor. Only a little more than a third (38 percent) of American adults said they follow the news—via television, radio, print publications or digital devices—“all or most of the time.” Compare this to a previous Pew survey conducted in 2016, when more than half (51 percent) of U.S. adults reported that they followed the news all or most of the time.

Instead, it appears a growing number of Americans are now becoming what can only be described as casual news consumers. About one in five (19 percent) said they follow the news “only now and then.” By contrast, only 12 percent of Americans said the same in 2016. Most news followers in recent years seem to be settling into the role of occasional consumers: A third (33 percent) said they follow the news “some of the time,” a number that’s remained virtually unchanged from Pew’s 2016 poll (31 percent).

The number of Americans avoiding the

news altogether appears to be growing as well: 9 percent reported that they “hardly ever” follow the news, compared to 5 percent who said the same in 2016.

These findings fit squarely among other recent studies that similarly suggest news consumption rates are declining in the U.S., due either to changing media consumption habits or a growing skepticism among Americans that national media organizations trade in false or biased information. Lending support to the latter theory, only 15 percent of Americans surveyed said they trust the information they get from national news organizations “a lot” (compared to 18 percent in 2016). On the other hand, 26 percent said they have “not too much” trust in the news (compared to 18 percent in 2016) and 13 percent they don’t trust the news “at all” (compared to 6 percent in 2016).

Pew’s findings also suggest that Americans’ attention to the news in recent years has declined across all age groups, though it appears that younger Americans are becoming especially news averse. Only 19 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 follow the news “all or most of the time” (down from 27 percent in 2016). Among Americans aged 30-49, that num-

ber stands at 27 percent (compared to 46 percent in 2016).

Older adults are more likely to say they still follow the news avidly, but media consumption has dipped among that demographic as well, with 64 percent of those aged 65 years and older claiming they follow the news all or most of the time (compared to 75 percent in 2016). Among those ages 50-64, less than half (46 percent) of Americans claimed they follow the news all or most of the time, compared to 61 percent in 2016.

The Pew survey also reinforces findings from myriad other recent studies suggesting that Americans’ recent decrease in news consumption is particularly pronounced among conservatives. Only 37 percent of those who identify as Republicans or Republican-leaning said they follow the news “all or most of the time” (down from 57 percent in 2016). News consumption habits among Democrat and Democrat-leaning Americans, on the other hand, haven’t changed much at all, shifting to 42 percent day-to-day news watchers from 49 percent in 2016.

The Pew Research Center study surveyed more than 12,100 U.S. adults in July and August 2022. Respondents were drawn from the Pew’s American Trends Panel, a nationally representative list of randomly selected U.S. adults. ●

More CMOs adopting AI technology

A growing number of CMOs are using generative AI as part of their marketing toolkits, according to a report, and while most seem generally optimistic about its potential uses, their excitement is tempered by some inevitable trepidation.

By Jon Gingerich

Chief marketing officers are quickly adopting generative AI technologies for an increasing number of tasks, according to an annual survey by global digital network Dentsu Creative.

The survey, which polled CMOs on the challenges and opportunities facing the marketing landscape today, found that more than a third (35 percent) of CMOs are now using generative AI as part of their everyday toolkits. Other new technologies being adopted by CMOs include social commerce (34 percent), live-streaming (28 percent), virtual brand avatars (28 percent), virtual reality (27 percent), augmented reality (22 percent), blockchain (22 percent), voice (21 percent) and Web 3.0 (20 percent).

An additional 26 percent of marketers reported that they intend to adopt generative AI technologies soon.

Marketers appear to be generally positive about the rise of generative AI and its potential uses in the industry: 87 percent said they believe that generative AI represents the future of advertising and marketing, with 86 percent claiming that AI will improve efficiency and 83 percent saying that AI will enable human teams to take on more creative tasks.

But with change comes inevitable concerns. More than half (57 percent) of the marketers surveyed expressed worry that generative AI might take their jobs, and an even larger number (61 percent) of re-

spondents believe that generative AI will impact society for the worse.

Additionally, there’s the ever-present criticism that AI will never be a substitute for the human touch that’s integral to all communications. More than three-quarters (77 percent) of marketers believe that AI will never create content that truly moves them, and 75 percent additionally said that generative AI will never fully replace the essence of human creativity. Then there’s the consensus that people will always prefer content created by other people: an overwhelming 81 percent said they think customers will always pay a premium for human-created content.

Finally, the survey found that more than half (60 percent) of CMOs believe that the industry doesn’t currently take enough creative risks.

Dentsu Creative’s report surveyed 700 CMOs and senior marketers in the U.S., UK, Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Italy and Spain. Surveys were conducted in May. ●

Telling your innovation story

How PR professionals working with technology clients can land pitches with journalists in a world where every tech company wants to be seen as “innovative.”

By Lou Hoffman

Every tech company wants to be perceived as innovative.

These same tech companies also expect communications to do the heavy lifting in telling their innovation stories and ultimately generating earned media.

That’s a problem.

Hundreds of pitches touting the most amazing advances since the baguette—better than sliced bread—rain down on journalists every week. As you might suspect, journalists have become desensitized to these pleas for coverage of “the next revolution.” The *Wall Street Journal* even devoted an article to the misuse of the word “innovation” and derivatives, calling out companies for including the “i” word 33,528 times in earnings calls over a 12-month period. Now comes the sobering part. That article ran in 2012. The situation is worse today.

Channeling the Total Quality Control brigade, let’s take a systematic approach to breaking down the issue and identifying solutions.

First things first: Spilling forth a bunch of adjectives and adverbs to make the case that your new product or technology is a game changer won’t work. In fact, it has the opposite effect. Inserting words like “breakthrough” or “revolutionary” or, yes, “game changer” into the subject header of the email guarantees journalists will hit the delete button before checking out the actual pitch. Instead, you need to show—don’t tell—journalists so they come to the conclusion on their own, “Hey, this looks like it could be a big deal in advancing the category.”

Staying with a TQC mentality, the root cause for failure isn’t the pitch, though the vast majority of pitches related to innovation are dreadful. Instead, the root cause for failure lies in what happens before the pitch: the sourcing session(s) with the company’s engineers, scientists and other subject matter experts. This is when you dig into the overarching question: “What makes this innovative?” Most PR practitioners understand the makings of a good story, but they move forward with the flawed innovation pitch because that’s all the information they have.

Which brings me to the punchline.

The PR profession vastly undervalues interviewing expertise. It starts in college. Try to find a curriculum for mass commu-

nications or PR that offers a class on interviewing. And once you’re in the working world, whether your role sits in-house or at a consultancy, you’ll find the same absence of how-to-interview training for PR professionals. They expect you to learn on the job. Yet, it’s interviewing expertise more than any other quality that will determine whether that pitch about a company’s innovation lands with journalists.

Toward this end, the following techniques ground our sourcing sessions with clients:

Do your homework. This means not only understanding the topic but also the person or people you’re interviewing. Before meeting an engineer slated for a sourcing session, we found out he had emigrated from Cuba. How did we learn this useful tidbit? Just took a look at his LinkedIn profile. It’s a great icebreaker.

The interview starts before the interview. Email a few questions to the interviewee ahead of time to get the wheels turning. Don’t overwhelm the source. We typically include one question that establishes we’re after a smidgen of drama, not a tutorial in molecular physics. Sometimes, we’ll also include a feature story from a publication, pointing out a passage or two as an example of the type of content we’re after.

The warm-up act. Start with a few easy questions designed to simply get the person talking. This way, you build momentum leading into the tougher questions.

Too many cooks won’t spill the beans. Often, multiple people are involved with a particular innovation. Don’t interview them together. It’s better to talk with each in a one-on-one setting with the content taken from the initial interview building into the second chat and beyond. Such an approach takes more time, but you’ll end up with richer content. Notice the gang on CSI never interrogates multiple people together. Same concept.

Don’t be afraid to push (shove?) the source. For most people from technical orientations—and pursuing content related to innovation often means the sources come from engineering or R&D—opening up and sharing information doesn’t come naturally. If you make sources a little uncomfortable in going places they didn’t expect, that’s okay. Remember, if your pitch

falls flat, blaming the source won’t court empathy.

Improv produces ‘gold.’ Listen to what’s being said. While it’s good to have questions prepared, don’t be married to your questions, determined to go through them one by one. Be willing to explore unexpected areas that come out of the discussion. During a talk with a client CEO, he casually mentioned he was originally hired to figure out if the technology could be salvaged.

That got our attention (i.e., drama in whether the venture would live or die). What was it like asking for employees’ cooperation when their cooperation might mean the end of the line? Was there a single moment when you thought, “This has a chance?” Digging out the humanity always makes for a compelling way to tell the innovation story.

Connect the dots even if you don’t know where they’re headed. Related to the improv, we’ve found that asking a source about point A can move the conversation to point B, which takes us to point C, a springboard to point D where the storytelling gold is buried. You can’t simply jump to exploring point D. The process needs to take you there.

It’s been our experience that these techniques produce the type of fodder that will give you a fighting chance to land that innovation pitch with journalists.

We’ve also taken those pre-interview questions to the next level, creating a workshop called “Helping Sources Become Better Sources.” This has been incredibly—and I’m stingy with the adverbs—effective in helping us tell our clients’ innovation stories. By helping sources understand the “sausage making” of journalism, like the power of an anecdote that can seem inconsequential on the surface, we increase the probability that they cough up the good stuff during the sourcing sessions.

No question, the media sets a high bar these days when it comes to writing about innovation. Yet, they recognize that invention defines tech more than any other industry. PR just needs to construct pitches so journalists can see the path to a story on a major advancement, not incremental improvement.

Lou Hoffman is CEO of the Hoffman Agency, a global communications consultancy that specializes in the tech sector. ●



Lou Hoffman



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The value of integrated communications

When budget cuts and periods of economic instability hit the tech sector, PR agencies can embrace a fully integrated approach that encompasses paid, earned and owned communications to provide value, efficiency and greater impact for organizations across channels.

By Katelyn Holbrook

Even as the post-COVID world marches on, the economic reality for businesses has been one of uncertainty and stagnation. The resulting volatility has led more companies to start tightening budgets, a shift that hasn't spared marketing and communications. In fact, data from Gartner's CMO Spend and Strategy Survey 2023 found that the average marketing budget has dropped from 9.5 percent of company revenue in 2022 to 9.1 percent in 2023.

For communications and marketing agencies, it's critical to have a deep understanding of this economic reality when looking at how to best support clients, pitch prospects and build brands. As companies must spend less, we're increasingly expected to do more: be the owners of the narrative, bring consistency to the story across myriad audiences and execute with impact across paid, earned, and owned channels.

While countless headlines in recent years claimed PR as "dead," those of us in the industry saw what was actually taking shape: a unique inflection point that has paved the way for a modern approach to communications. While agencies are still often respected by their peers and hired by their clients for earned media expertise and execution, the reality is that the impact of programs and the success of partnerships is felt most strongly by the business when complemented with paid and owned strategies.

The impact of strong, integrated communications builds on itself, too. When brands partner with specialized agencies to execute on one element of a multi-pronged communications program, it's tremendously hard to cohesively—and critical in today's climate, efficiently—pull off. In an age where attention is fleeting, audiences are distributed and time is money, technology companies need one trusted partner to strategize and execute all communications in a truly integrated and effective fashion.

For this reason, agencies that may have built their reputation on a strong backbone of media relations—keep in mind that newsrooms continue to shrink—must expand their portfolio of services to reach these marketing goals and realities. Core to that is designing truly integrated communications programs and having the proper suite of supporting services to expand communications across earned, owned, and paid channels.

Integrated communications requires agency-wide commitment

An integrated communications strategy can drive efficiency and make the most of a company's marketing budget. But that's perhaps a short-term benefit that overlooks a greater value: integrated communications is a strategic approach that brings together paid, earned and owned channels to create clarity, consistency and greater impact across channels, instead of a string of disconnected messages and one-off touchpoints. It's an approach that my own firm, V2 Communications, has adopted to build innovative B2B, healthcare and climate technology clients into market leaders.

As part of our approach, we use each component of the PEO mix to support our clients through every stage of their brand-building journey—from company launch to exit and from product awareness and corporate brand-building to shaping market perceptions. Many brands still know and call us for our earned media expertise and execution, but it's the clients who complement those programs with paid and owned media strategies that experience greater impact and partner with us for years longer.

For an integrated communications strategy to work, it requires an agency-wide commitment, down to every member of an account team. It requires a cultural shift, one that encourages our professionals to tap into their knowledge of what makes for a compelling experience with a piece of content, not just a good story, and one that rewards well-orchestrated activations across multiple niche channels with the same enthusiasm of front-page media placement. Agencies should embrace the opportunity to help brands realize the benefits and value of an integrated strategy, even when it takes greater education of and justification to dubious internal stakeholders.

When it comes to getting all these pieces of the PEO model unified in support of their narrative goals, tactics are important but it's equally necessary to break down why, how and when they add value. Ultimately, a strong integrated communications plan that is executed effectively will create awareness of a client's services but also establish credibility and trust as a recognizable brand.

Putting integrated communications into action

The power of integrated communications is hard to ignore. Take the 30-year-old global enterprise software company whose technology is pivotal to millions of business transactions every day, but whose brand was largely unknown outside of its very technical and specific buyer. When business leadership recognized that the company's lack of a strong brand reputation was potentially limiting its growth trajectory, it turned to the communications team to help correct the disparity.

To help tell a bigger story that connected to its value proposition and a broader technology audience, the campaign was built around a central theme many could relate to in today's era: data. The company fielded a survey of IT leaders that focused on the challenges of managing and securing data. The key findings were packaged into a compelling report and timed to be announced with the one-two punch of the release of a new product that addressed said issues. Together, these items became a strong pitch to trade and tech media for earned coverage and were also the source of more than a dozen content assets that spoke to general tech audiences at the top of the funnel and to more discreet buyer audiences needing to address their data issues. The outputs ranged from a series of blogs, infographics and thought pieces, to social media cards, to the subject of episodes on the company's owned podcast that extended the storytelling. These assets were then amplified on owned and paid channels—brand, executive and employee social channels, LinkedIn advertising, sponsored content and more. What historically likely would have been a couple of press releases that resulted in a handful of pieces of coverage instead was elevated to not only a months-long campaign but, more importantly, a multi-pronged engagement strategy that spanned multiple channels and gave the company the brand lift it needed to reach new and



Katelyn Holbrook

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In a crisis, think, plan and practice before you speak

To properly handle and prepare for a crisis, companies require a team of internal and external experts who can ensure that communications mishaps—and not the crisis itself—don't become the main story.

By Matthew Harrison, Scott Moritz and Cari Robinson

If handled well, a crisis can enable a company's leadership to demonstrate their mettle, sincerity and good character to investors, customers, employees and the public. If handled poorly, that crisis can irreparably damage corporate credibility, stakeholder trust and share price. To prepare for a crisis, companies need a team of experts—legal, investigative, forensic and crisis communications—to ensure proper strategy and communications through “make or break” situations.

Securities fraud, corruption, criminal prosecutions, search warrants, executive misconduct, cyber-attacks, data loss, trade secret theft, consumer fraud and mass torts are examples of “make or break” scenarios that tend to play out publicly. It's important to recognize that these are not just legal problems. Treating them as such is both risky and short-sighted. Developing a cohesive legal, investigation and communications strategy requires a thorough understanding of the facts and specialized knowledge of the legal and regulatory issues at stake.

The most effective crisis communication strategies begin with core messaging that's consistent with the facts, transparent and credible. This core narrative is fundamental to message discipline. Message discipline also means designating a spokesperson or spokespersons through whom communications will pass, providing for consistency and reining in the risk of a communication misstep.

Effective response also requires organizational collaboration, discipline, and the ability to anticipate the next stages of the crisis. And it must be sustainable—that is, designed to apply to future communications across all stakeholder groups.

Getting ready ...

Crisis plans should identify the most likely crisis scenarios and provide company executives, communications and other functional key team members with comprehensive procedures and tools that enable quick and decisive action when navigating a crisis, irrespective of the specific details. These plans typically define and systematize the following elements:

Designating and activating crisis response teams. Form internal and external teams who have specialized skills to handle

different situations and define their lines of authority and accountability.

Assessing the situation and gathering facts. When a crisis emerges, convene the crisis team and gather as many facts as possible. Act quickly and carefully to assess the severity and scope of the situation.

Developing key messages. Build strategies for internal and external communications and get a head start by drafting core messaging that applies to any scenario and can quickly be deployed.

Testing and practicing. Conduct regular tabletop exercises, which are simulations of real-life crisis situations designed to test a company's ability to mount an effective response.

Getting set ... when there is no imminent public disclosure

Companies often have little control over the timing and nature of the disclosure(s) that catalyze crises. No matter the situation, crises by their nature are dynamic and require constant monitoring and adaptability.

When a crisis materializes, legal, investigative and communications teams have different mandates, but they must remain aligned. Lawyers and investigators take the lead on fact finding, witness interviews, issue spotting, protection of legal privileges and developing legal theories and defenses. Communications teams must be in lock-step with the legal strategy as it develops while simultaneously identifying critical stakeholder groups and creating credible, compelling and accurate statements and talking points.

If there's no urgent circumstance driving a decision to disclose, companies and their crisis teams should take time to advance the investigation and uncover as many relevant facts as possible. By preparing in advance through mapping and organizing its institutional data and identifying subject matter experts in key areas of its operations, a company's legal team will be better able to pinpoint and access relevant information and handle the issues at stake. Throughout this time, the legal team will also be keeping management—and in some cases the company's board of directors—updated and will stand ready to advise and align on issues like whether any public disclosures should be made or whether the matter under investigation should be reported to the authorities.

Go: the crisis is public!

When stakeholders first learn about a consequential event, they will want to hear from the company quickly: i) what happened, ii) what the harm is, iii) what the company plans to do about it, and iv) how the company plans to ensure the issues do not recur.

If communications are necessary while an investigation is underway and critical information remains unknown, there are still ways to communicate transparently and effectively through a holding statement. An effective holding statement typically involves openly acknowledging the situation, demonstrating empathy for those impacted, and outlining the actions the company has taken and plans to take in the future.

To avoid costly missteps, companies and their response teams should consider the following:

- Never get ahead of the facts and don't minimize or hide the facts.
- Don't make promises that can't or won't be kept.
- Never say anything publicly that could damage credibility.

It's easier to build on a statement later than to dial it back, and it's okay to say things like: We're looking into these allegations; we feel deeply for the individuals impacted; we are taking this situation very seriously; we're devoting all resources necessary to find out what happened and ensure it doesn't happen again; and, we'll give updates as we are able. It's important, however, not to make a hard commitment in an initial statement as to whether, how and



Matthew Harrison



Scott Moritz



Cari Robinson

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AI's implications for tech communicators

Now that AI has gone mainstream, here are some considerations PR professionals with clients in the tech sector may want to consider.

By Thekla Eftychiadou

For years, AI has been a widely discussed and highly anticipated technology trend, often hailed as a groundbreaking innovation. Google's CEO, Sundar Pichai, has gone so far as to liken it to the most profound advancements in human history, surpassing even fire and electricity in its potential impact.

But it wasn't until the momentous launch of ChatGPT that AI finally broke through to the mainstream, captivating the attention of people around the world. Everyone from kids to CEOs got a glimpse of what that impact could look like.

Earlier in the year, my 10-year-old son delivered a speech about Microsoft's Chat GPT to his fourth-grade class. In the corporate world, as per a recent McKinsey Global Survey, one-third of executives use generative AI regularly in at least one business function and nearly one-quarter of C-suite executives use generative AI tools at work. These statistics underscore the imminent revolution poised to sweep across various industries and aspects of our lives.

While there's no doubt that 2023 has marked a landmark year for AI, I often find myself contemplating the implications of AI for PR professionals, especially those in the tech industry. Here are some key considerations:

Lead with the impact

The fact that a product is powered by AI alone doesn't make it news. The AI tech news cycle is at its peak, so it's important to lead by explaining how AI benefits users. Drawing from lessons of the "Cloud War" era, it's crucial to center AI storytelling around its tangible impact on people's lives. Effective storytelling can make complex AI concepts more accessible to a broader audience, including customers, investors and the general public.

Focus on uniqueness

Companies not central to the AI industry should maximize AI's potential to support business goals rather than feeling compelled to join the AI conversation simply because it's trending. For example, there's little benefit to making a public announcement just to inform key stakeholders that you have embedded AI into your business processes or platforms. Why? Because it's now considered table stakes. Instead, use resources to highlight what sets your company apart.

Address the unintended consequences

Generative AI brings along numerous risks, including concerns about job displacement, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, misinformation proliferation and biased AI training models affecting diversity. Companies deeply involved in AI should be prepared to address these issues and actively work to mitigate risks. This could involve training AI models on more diverse data, developing policies that govern the use of generative AI and investing in reskilling and retraining programs. It's important for communications not only to support but drive such initiatives to help control the unintended consequences of this revolutionary technology.

Consider joining or establishing an industry coalition

These alliances can effectively leverage the combined strengths of diverse stakeholders to promote responsible AI advancement and tackle the complex challenges linked to its creation and implementation. Collaborative efforts within these coalitions have the potential to yield more impactful research, enhance governance and ensure the safe and beneficial integration of AI into our lives. Notable examples include the Partnership on AI, committed to responsible AI development and use; the Allen Institute for AI, focused on accelerating AI research and development; and the Global AI Alliance, dedicated to promoting responsible and inclusive AI.

Be mindful of the relationship between AI and ESG

ESG principles and AI can sometimes be at odds when certain AI practices or applications conflict with ESG goals and values. Organizations need to carefully consider how their AI initiatives align with ESG goals and actively work to mitigate any negative impacts. This might involve implementing energy-efficient AI technologies, implementing fair and unbiased AI algorithms, promoting ethical data practices and engaging stakeholders in AI decision-making processes. Balancing the benefits of AI with ESG principles is an ongoing challenge, but it's essential for responsible and sustainable AI adoption.

Be visionary

Continually challenge yourself and your executives to envision what comes next. Each groundbreaking technology opens

the door to the next one. The way the Internet opened the door to the cloud, and then the way the cloud opened the door to AI and machine learning—all within less than 30 years. So, what's the next one? Will quantum be the next household name?

And finally, a tip that applies to all communicators, even beyond the ones working in the technology industry:

Embrace your reinvention

Have you heard the idea that staying relevant often means reinventing yourself approximately every five years? This concept, popularized by well-known blogger and author James Altucher, emphasizes the rapidly changing nature of the world. Without continual reinvention, one risks becoming obsolete. As AI rapidly transforms the PR industry, the time for communicators to reinvent themselves is now.

We've witnessed AI automating tasks like media monitoring and content creation, analyzing vast datasets for audience insights, measuring impact more accurately, and helping with ideation. Some companies even employ cognitive AI to predict audience behaviors. Keeping up with the latest AI-powered tools, experimenting with new applications and refining your prompt writing will be critical for future success.

Are you excited about AI's future? Share your thoughts with us at: Thekla.eftychiadou@finnpartners.com

Thekla Eftychiadou is a Senior Partner in technology at FINN Partners. ○



Thekla Eftychiadou

PR news brief

Ruder Finn acquires Pandan Social

Ruder Finn has acquired Pandan Social, a digital marketing agency based in Malaysia and serving the Asia market. The Pandan Social team will be seamlessly integrated with Ruder Finn's digital arm, RFI Asia. Pandan will continue to provide a suite of comprehensive digital services, including social media management, web production, graphics, video production and influencer marketing.

With the acquisition, Ruder Finn Asia now has 26 offices across the region.

Humanizing smart tech in the PR 5.0 era

AI has revolutionized the ways in which we create content and can be used by PR and marketing pros to minimize monotonous tasks, but as with all new technologies, it's easy to forget that the creative driving force behind them is always people. Now, hyper-personalization will only improve AI's future use in the PR and marketing world, as it harnesses the most powerful weapon in the PR toolkit: the human touch.

By Jamie Kightley

Over the course of 2023, almost all industries have been impacted by artificial intelligence. The AI market has risen to \$100 billion, and the AI boom isn't expected to slow down anytime soon, with the market predicted to reach \$2 trillion by 2030. Much of the recent hype in the mainstream media has surrounded ChatGPT, but it's important not to forget about more specific applications of the technology: from predictive maintenance in aviation to automatic scheduling optimization in service provision and fraud prevention in banking and mobile payments.

Even hardware is struggling to keep up with the AI boom. The global AI chip market is expected to generate nearly \$305 billion by the end of the decade, according to a June Techstrong.ai report, boasting a compound annual growth rate of 29 percent from 2023 to 2030. Microsoft itself has gone on record warning of potential shortages of GPUs, which are critical to underpinning data centers that process AI-driven applications.

PR 5.0 is about to humanize the PR game

Like any new technology, AI is transforming many industries and has left marketing and PR professionals trying to adopt this generative technology into their work processes and understand its impact. According to a recent Prowly State of PR Technology report, for instance, 67.8 percent of PR professionals are already utilizing AI in their work and 52 percent are happy with their current PR tools including AI. But what do these new technologies mean for the future of marketing and PR professionals?

Although Industry 5.0 is still an emerging approach, early understanding is that it's not just the new technology, but a more encompassing approach to the use of technology in a societal environment. This is evidenced by the European Commission Policy Brief that set out its vision for Industry 5.0, "that aims beyond efficiency and productivity as the sole goals and reinforces the role and the contribution of industry to society." It should complement the existing "Industry 4.0" approach by specifically putting research and innovation at the service of the transition to a sus-

tainable, human-centric and resilient PR and marketing industry. The Industry 4.0 approach in PR and marketing was driven by digital communication and technologies and data-driven strategies, which took the industry away from its most powerful tool—the power of the human touch.

Consider what's happened in the manufacturing sector, whereby the end of 2022, 72 percent of manufacturers had pressed ahead with implementing Industry 4.0 and its driving technologies such as IIoT, AI, digital twins and more. Now, the pendulum has swung back towards the human factor in manufacturing operations with Industry 5.0. There's a groundswell around Industry 5.0, particularly how to marry technology developments—including AI—to better complement the working environment of human workers and to support Environmental, Social and Governance initiatives.

Industry organizations have their say on humanized AI

PR and marketing players have been looking at the impact of AI in the sector for some time. A recent Cision webinar featured a panel of experts that assessed the use of AI in PR activity and highlighted its ability to shape strategy so often lacking in a PR agency's repertoire. One of the main topics that the panel discussed was when to use AI and when not to use AI. The overall sentiment from the panel was that AI should be used to help prompt ideas and training over time to extract the correct data. But it shouldn't be used for quantitative and contextualized inferences from trends.

HubSpot produced a report on AI Trends for Marketers to gauge the state of AI adoption across marketing and its CEO's conclusions were in line with ours:

"AI will never replace human creativity and connection. Lived experiences and opinions will never be able to be generated by a machine, and an employee can't be mentored and managed by AI ... AI is a great tool for marketers to use, but would be useless without human knowledge, strategy, and implementation."

Written by humans for humans

Buried within these reports are some eye-opening stats, none more so than

HubSpot's recent findings, which discovered that 48 percent of marketers' top use for generative AI is for content creation. However, the most effective companies will continue to utilize industry pain points for their content creation and thought leadership. This can be reinforced by research which states that 72 percent of marketers see relevant content creation as the most effective SEO tactic, so focusing your content on hot topics and industry pain points will pique the interest of consumers the most.

There's no doubt that AI is getting smarter and more creative, but its content creation often doesn't have that personalized human element. The most effective content creation copies are from the perspective of a human with their views, written by a human with the acknowledgment that it must be fit for consumption by a human, so it must be around a topic that's within the industry at that moment. This is where the main downfalls of ChatGPT and marketing speak for thought leadership come from, as a key element of true thought leadership is that it's written from the perspective of industry experts and aimed at industry experts.

Industry 5.0's hyper-personalization powers

One of Industry 5.0's key elements is hyper-personalization and its ability to be tailored and targeted towards individual consumers. We're seeing this reflected in B2B buyer behavior and the mental cues that are influencing the latest approaches to PR content creation and delivery. This is evident in a 2021 McKinsey survey, which found 71 percent of consumers expect a personalized experience and 61 percent are frustrated when they don't have a personalized experience. This all points to the strengths that can be gained through adopting Industry 5.0 to utilize its hyper-personalization powers.



Jamie Kightley

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THE PR 5.0 ERA

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Mental cues can be identified by looking at key pain points within the target industry and how the product can resolve these issues. These mental cues need to be woven into all brand marketing for consistent messaging. Reinforcing the importance of cognitive resonance in the sale and buying process to become more recognized and trustworthy among consumers and get your organization's message repeatedly trusted and valued.

When end-readers have personal experiences, such as those specific industry pain points or issues that come from a deep

knowledge of their subject, they must be written from a human perspective to ensure they deliver for the consumer a personalized experience. And that's before you factor in those experiences for earned media placements, where the copy will also have to get through a journalist's eyes or their peer review committee. This level of personalization can't be achieved by a robot—even if they're trained with the words of an individual subject matter expert.

Future-proofing new generations for AI and PR 5.0

The AI boom is still unfolding, and its impact on future generations and the job market is yet to fully emerge. In many countries, AI and quantum computing are seen as key to establishing global tech

capital. But according to a recent Coursera report, the UK slid down the global skills proficiency ratings from 38th place last year to 64th place this year. This will only be replicated in other countries.

One thing is for sure: New technologies will continue to filter into the PR and marketing space, but for the foreseeable future, purchasing decisions will continue to be made by humans. PR 5.0 is coming, and the most prudent PR professionals and marketers will learn from the transition of 4.0 to 5.0 in other industries to ensure technology complements—not replaces—their content creation.

Jamie Kightley is Head of Client Services at IBA International, a B2B PR agency serving global technology clients. ○

THINK, PLAN AND PRACTICE

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when the company will report back.

When updates in real time are necessary, don't speak in terms of certainties unless the facts are known and unassailable. Also, be wary that real-time disclosures of facts can derail an ongoing investigation. The same rules apply if a company discloses it's under investigation by a government, reg-

ulator or agency. Sharing that the company is cooperating fully with the authorities can still engender trust and convey that the company is being transparent, without disclosing details the company cannot share for legal or other reasons.

The time to start building a team of internal and external experts is long before a crisis strikes. A company should identify key enterprise risks and think through the kinds of serious events that could occur and impact the organization in advance.

It should map out how it plans to undertake an investigation, make disclosures and communicate to its stakeholders along the way. All these steps will position the organization to respond confidently and avoid communications missteps that make the mishandling of the crisis—and not the crisis itself—the main story.

Scott Moritz is the President of White Collar Forensic LLC. Cari Robinson is a Senior Managing Director at August. Matt Harrison is a Managing Director at August. ○

THE VALUE OF INTEGRATED COMMS.

Continued from page 12

more diverse audiences.

This type of approach will be the new normal for brands that want—and need—to stand out and make the most of their storytelling opportunities, and with it, the tide must shift for communications agencies that have built and marketed themselves as media relations powerhouses. The economic uncertainty that drove marketing budgets to shrink and newsrooms to dwindle has made it abundantly clear that change is needed. Integrated communications must be rooted in clients' business objectives and marketing goals and carefully crafted and executed to elevate visibility and credibility among the stakeholders that matter most, whether those be prospective customers, employees, partners, investors or acquirers.

Katelyn Holbrook is an EVP and Managing Director at V2 Communications, where she also leads the integrated communications firm's B2B technology practice. ○

Meta revenues up 23% in Q3

Meta surpassed revenue expectations for revenue and profit in 2023's third quarter.

Revenue for the quarter was \$34.15 billion, a 23 percent increase from the \$27.71 billion it reported during the same period a year prior.

Net income for the quarter was \$11.58 billion, accounting for a 164 percent year-over-year gain from Q3 2022's \$4.4 billion.

Meta's operating margin for the quarter was 40 percent, double the 20 percent it reported in Q3 2022.

The Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp parent reported that ad impressions delivered across Meta's suite of apps increased by 31 percent year-over-year, even though the price per ad decreased by 6 percent during the same period.

That increase in impressions may be due to strong recent user performance across the company's platforms. Facebook's average daily active users were 2.09 billion for September, a 5 percent year-over-year in-

crease, with that platform's monthly active users standing at 3.05 billion, a 3 percent year-over-year increase.

Austerity measures to reduce expenses also contributed to the social media giant's strong earnings. Meta's costs and expenses totaled about \$20 billion, a 7 percent decrease from the \$22 billion it spent in 2022. Attributing to much of this was a shrinking of the company's staff: headcount for the period ending September 30 was 66,185, a 24 percent year-over-year decrease (or about 21,000 employees) from the staff roster it employed during the same time last year.

In its quarterly report, Meta said it expects fourth-quarter 2023 total revenue to be in the range of \$36.5-40 billion. In a call with analysts, Meta Chief Financial Officer Susan Li said that outlook had been hampered somewhat by the Israel-Hamas conflict, contributing to "softer ads" that the company has observed with the beginning of the fourth quarter. ○

Don't let your technology distract you from your story

While there's an impulse to grab reporters' attention with the newest industry-transforming tech product or service, a back-to-basics approach focused on telling the right stories to the right people is a far more successful way to ensure your technology campaign breaks through the clutter of today's crowded tech landscape.

By Alex Goss

Most PR professionals I know relish the chance to work with truly innovative, game-changing technology that can grab the attention of reporters and readers alike. Bringing a dazzling new tech tool or industry-transforming service offering to a reporter will get you a conversation, if not a feature story. But there's a difference between making a splash and telling a story that supports your client's long-term business goals.

In a crowded technology landscape dominated by buzzworthy topics, where it's increasingly challenging to rise above the din—the inescapability of “AI” being the latest and greatest example—going back to basics to focus on telling the right stories to the right people can be the key to breaking through in a sustainable way. Here are some key questions to ask before you roll out your next tech campaign:

Do your messages align with your company's business goals?

Many tech companies engage with media, run their marketing programs and write thought leadership pieces without first asking a few simple questions critical to an effective campaign. Namely, are we effectively differentiating our business for our most important audiences? And do our stories align with our company's broader communication goals?

Whether you're a B2B software-as-a-service provider or a consumer technology company, your overarching brand messages should inform all your communications activities. For too many organizations, conversations around the brand are separated from those around products and services.

Whether you're a venture capital-backed startup or a public company with a long history, it's imperative to regularly review your messaging architecture against your business priorities to ensure that the two align. You may be launching a new technology that you're excited to share with the world, but has the necessary work been done to connect the dots and explain how the product fits in with your company's vision for the future or even its past? Or, perhaps more importantly, your customers' futures? It's possible that only certain elements fit the business objectives your executive leadership team is focused on.

Identifying gaps between your corporate narrative and your product or service strate-

gy will help you prioritize the right content, increase the efficiency of your communications budget and better position the communications team as a strategic partner to the leadership team. Follow through on this work by setting up complementary KPIs for public relations that align with your company's wider goals and objectives.

Are you able to show the impact?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, newsroom budgets have decreased, reporters have become less reachable and editors are less inclined to greenlight features on niche topics. If you're looking to highlight a technology product or service, it has never been more important to help the media tell that story efficiently and dynamically. This is especially true if the product or service is complex or works its magic behind the scenes, making it less tangible for a reporter.

One way to turn the head of a reporter is by illustrating impact. Are there trends over time that paint an interesting story? Can you use customer testimonials to underscore the game-changing aspects of your technology and how it's disrupting the status quo? Is there anything that might surprise tech experts already familiar with the company? Do you have proprietary research or data to show simulated results or benchmark the product against existing solutions? The numbers don't have to be extraordinary or unique, but they should add heft and depth to the story you're trying to tell.

Many communications programs simply overlook this step because it can require the time and input of other departments and teams. However, these short-term investments can lead to benefits down the road, both in terms of media results and buy-in to the importance of communication from those across the organization.

Who does your business need to reach?

When companies engage with a new agency or conduct internal communications planning sessions, there's typically a moment when someone asks: “If we could appear in an article in our dream publication, what would it be?” Many will answer this question with leading newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*. While appearing in one of these widely read publications would be a big win worth sharing, for many tech companies—especially B2Bs—these are not necessarily the publications that will be most influential

with your target customers.

Every communications campaign should start by identifying the key decision makers the client needs to reach, focusing the team's time and effort on the most impactful channels. Though this may seem like an obvious step, often, the default instinct is to aim for the biggest media target available. But often, media metrics, such as an outlet's reach or unique visitors per month, aren't that helpful and don't paint the full picture. Many tech-specific outlets—including podcasts and daily newsletters—have highly dedicated audiences and are typically more willing to go in-depth on technology topics rather than simply scratching the surface.

Being flexible and open-minded about how your story is told

Now, more than ever, there are numerous formats that tech communications professionals can exploit, including podcasts, videos, written profiles, contributed thought leadership pieces, webinars, roundtables and trend commentary. Each of these channels has a place in a PR program, reaching different audiences and conducive to telling different stories. Moreover, with the proliferation of social media, there are more ways to repurpose and amplify content than ever. A well-thought-out tech campaign is open to integrating various forms of media.

Knowing which pieces of content will help you break through can be more of an art than a science. Sometimes, it takes just one article getting syndicated and reposted to give the program the lift it needs and help you meet your KPIs for the quarter. More often, it's a matter of trying different approaches and building a mass of coverage that moves the needle over time.

By taking a step back to focus on the basics, aligning your messages with your business goals, driving home the impact of your product offerings and remaining open-minded about your tactics, you can maximize the chances of your technology campaign breaking through the clutter and having a real and lasting impact on the business.

Alex Goss is a Director at Stanton. ○



Alex Goss



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The power of data-driven storytelling

How embracing data can allow public relations professionals to craft engaging narratives that cut through the noise.

By Amy Fisher

In modern-day public relations, where information is ceaselessly flowing and attention spans are dwindling, the art of storytelling has never been more paramount. As we navigate a world inundated with news, public relations professionals are challenged not only to capture attention but to retain it. Welcome to the era of data-driven storytelling, where statistics aren't just figures but the building blocks of engaging, impactful narratives.

The evolution of storytelling: from anecdotes to analytics

Most often, storytelling in public relations is an art guided by intuition and experience. Anecdotes, emotion and relatability are the pillars of a successful narrative. While these elements still hold immense value, the digital age has ushered in a new era where information must be both qualitative and quantitative. Enter data: A treasure trove of insights that add credibility and depth to stories and messaging.

Data-driven storytelling reflects a strategic shift from gut feeling to informed decision-making. In a world where news breaks in seconds, hyperbole reigns and trends are temporary, leveraging data allows public relations professionals to craft narratives that not only capture attention but also stand the test of time. The goal isn't just defining which story to tell, but how to tell it in a way that gives perspective backed by data.

The art of unveiling a storytelling catalyst

The beauty of data-driven storytelling lies in its ability to illustrate details that might remain hidden in the jumble of information overload. Every data point is a credibility booster, improving an author's ability to be viewed as a trusted thought leader. From consumer preferences to market trends, data provides a solid foundation for opinions and ideas, helps prove a point and illuminates a path of discovery.

With data woven into a narrative, any story can be enriched with insights. Original or third-party research, surveys, market data and quick polls—all these can reflect current or anticipated customer behaviors, market barriers and even buyer confidence. By weaving these data-backed proof points into a storyline, the narrative becomes not just informative but deeply resonant with the target audience.

The rise of visual storytelling: statistics that sell

Visual content has emerged as a powerful tool for communication, and data lends itself well to visualization. When data visualization takes center stage, complex statistics are transformed into easily digestible and visually appealing graphics. Infographics, charts and interactive digital visualizations become the storyteller's palette, translating numbers into narratives that both captivate and educate.

For instance, instead of presenting a lengthy report on the success of a product, imagine an eye-grabbing infographic that highlights key performance indicators, user testimonials and the journey of evolution. This not only communicates the story efficiently but also engages the audience in a way that traditional text often fails to achieve.

Building trust through transparency: the role of data authenticity

In a time plagued by misinformation, authenticity is an important foundation of trust. Data-driven storytelling offers a sense of professionalism and indicates an authentic point of view, backed by credible and transparent sources. By basing narratives on solid, verifiable data, public relations professionals can more easily build trust. Whether it's highlighting why a buyer should embrace a new technology or addressing a market shift, using data to back up thoughts and opinions reflects the work that has gone into creating the narrative.

Consider a trending topic like generative AI. There are millions of opinions on generative AI, but the ones that are the most relevant are the ones that show how generative AI has been used in practice and what results it delivered for the organization. Saying that generative AI was able to reduce 16 percent of administrative tasks across a retail organization is much more compelling than simply stating that generative AI can help retailers reduce costs.

The future of data-driven storytelling: navigating the technological horizon

As we look ahead, how we deliver data-driven storytelling is rapidly evolving. Emerging technologies such as AI and machine learning already play a big role in analyzing vast datasets, extracting meaningful insights and predicting future

trends. Public relations professionals must understand how and when to use these tools as well as how to leverage AI-generated data in trusted ways.

As public relations professionals, we will always craft stories on behalf of our organizations and our clients. But we have new strategies and tools that allow us to build trust faster, by creating data-backed, more credible, narratives. As we strive to position our leaders as experts, persuade buyers to act on information, generate brand interest and build up reputations, turning numbers into narratives is key to cutting through the noise.



Amy Fisher

By embracing data as part of the story, we create ideas and experiences that resonate with audiences on a deeper level. As we navigate the dynamic landscape of public relations, it's time to embrace data-driven narratives, where every number has a story to tell.

Amy Fisher is Senior Vice President, Technology at Padilla ○

PR news brief

JPA Health acquires True North Solutions

JPA Health has acquired True North Solutions, a Cambridge, MA-based consulting firm with expertise in predictive analytics, AI and data-driven solutions.

Founded by Colin Baughman in 2016, TNS has handled projects in therapeutic areas such as CNS, oncology and infectious/rare diseases.

It focuses on brand strategy, healthcare professional and patient experience, product launches, medical strategy, performance management, KPIs and evaluation, visualization and segmentation and persona modelling.

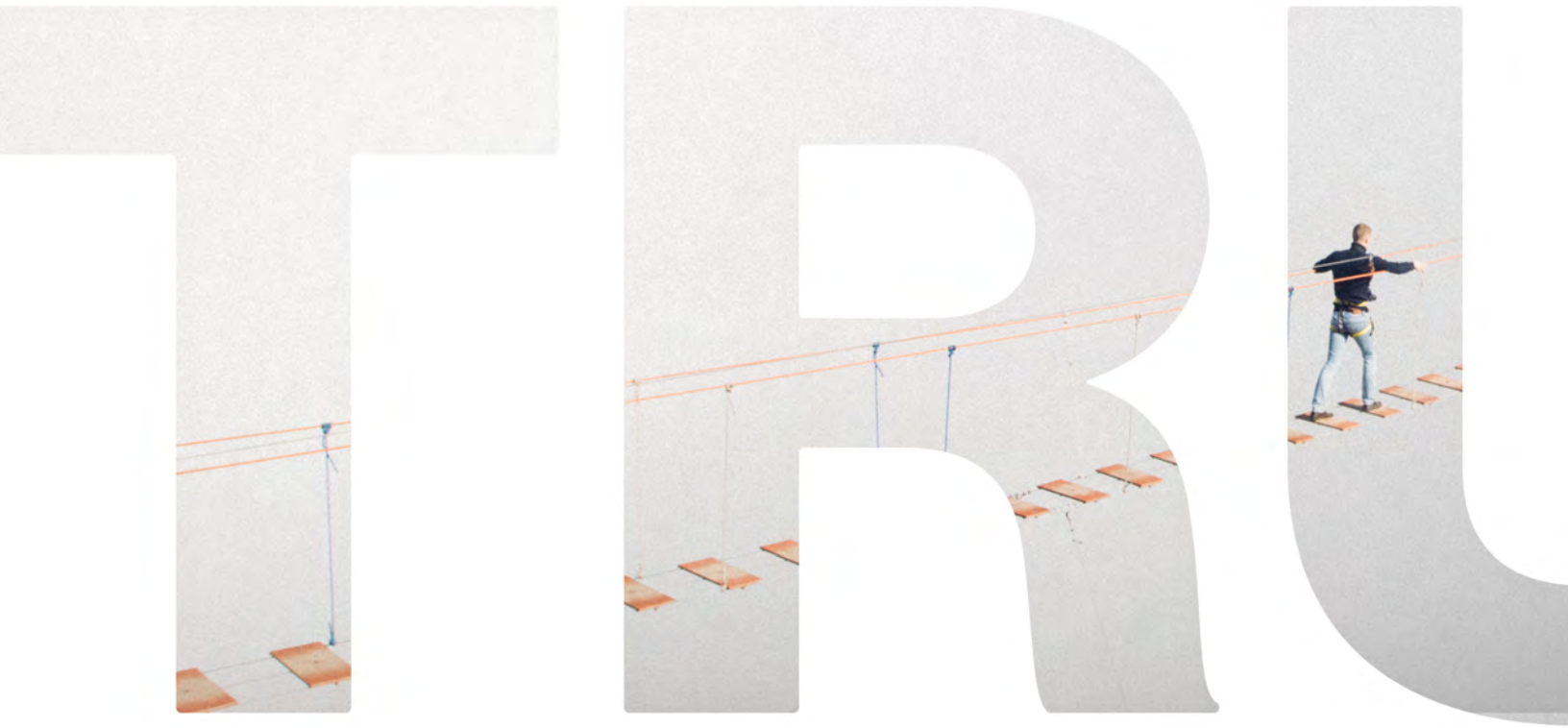
Prior to starting TNS, Baughman was Senior Director, Decision Analytics and Strategic Planning at Biogen; Finance Controller, Biopharmaceutical Process Solutions at Merck KGaA; and Rational Software Pipeline Analytics and Sales Operations at IBM. He will join JPA Health as Executive VP in its Boston office.

The TNS deal is JPA Health's first acquisition since Carrie Jones launched the firm in 2007.

She said the addition of TNS with its "profound expertise in creating custom solutions rooted in data sciences, will help keep our clients ahead of their competition in connecting with target audiences and driving results."



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Why cyber startups need experienced PR firms

How adopting a shrewd PR strategy that raises brand awareness can help cybersecurity companies stand out amid the current noise.

By John Kreuzer

As I once again walked the aisles at the RSA Security Conference in San Francisco earlier this year, I was overwhelmed by more than 3,500 cyber companies feverishly promoting their products and services. With so many confusing messages blaring across both the north and south halls of the expo floor, it was hard to understand how all these companies differed and how they fit into the overall cybersecurity landscape.

For the last five years, the ranks of security startups have swelled to keep up with cybercriminals and their abilities to breach corporate networks. But at RSA, it occurred to me that too many security companies sound too much alike. Buzzwords—such as attack surface, cyber resilience, threat intelligence, cloud security, endpoint security and an endless array of acronyms including APT (Advanced Persistent Threat) and ZTNA (Zero Trust Network Access)—all clamor for the attention of CIOs and IT decision makers across corporate America and globally.

Without a strategy to stand out, and with funding only going to the most elite, many startups remain stuck at a perilous crossroads.

Increasing company awareness will increase valuation

A targeted public relations campaign can help cybersecurity companies pave the financial runway they need to achieve initial lift-off. Startups that adopt a shrewd PR strategy can level the playing field against the big enterprises in their space while also differentiating themselves from smaller competitors chasing the same prize.

Investment analysts expect that the funding window will reopen for initial public offerings and tech mergers and acquisitions in 2024. That's why it's so important to develop and communicate a company's value proposition now to help accelerate growth over the coming year. The impact of a successful public relations program can increase a company's value proposition through quantitative metrics, such as increasing public awareness by regularly surpassing the competition's share of voice with earned coverage by media outlets.

As more articles, podcasts, and broadcast interviews repeat a company's brand message, that widening recognition serves to reinforce the brand's identity for readers,

including potential customers, partners, new hires and especially investors.

PR campaigns can also drive value through softer metrics such as winning industry awards and securing thought leadership engagements for company executives to speak at industry conferences and events. Another tactic to drive brand recognition involves the development of an active social media program that repeatedly inserts the company's name and messages into conversations across all relevant social media platforms. Steady repetition is the key, because readers and viewers may not know exactly what a company does, but they usually know whether a company is regularly "in the news" or not.

Few industries evolve as quickly and continuously as cybersecurity, where fast-moving attackers only need one successful breach to earn a payday, but defenders must succeed against every threat or they risk being compromised. In this high-pressure environment, cybersecurity leaders are facing major technological innovations that are disrupting the field. Cybercriminals are more creative and targeted than ever before through the use of generative artificial intelligence chatbots, such as ChatGPT, which can unleash powerful phishing scams and ransomware attacks at virtually no cost.

Crafting original stories that stand out from the crowd

In large part, public relations efforts come down to good storytelling. The ability to grow market share and succeed against the competition depends on how well a company can articulate and validate its story. For a security company to stand out in such a crowded field, it must present highly compelling stories that make sense of changing market dynamics while offering insights to stay ahead of the latest trends.

For instance, putting out a press release about a new product launch is helpful for buyers to understand the product's functions and features. However, a more effective press release would position the product as the logical solution to address a pressing security concern, with some added context about larger economic or geopolitical issues that could broaden the story's ramifications.

Telling a good story has become a critical advantage amid the rapid consolidation of

the cybersecurity industry. Many large enterprises are snatching up smaller startups to integrate their solutions into broader software platforms. At the same time, some startups are acquiring their rivals to gain market share or enter new markets. Technology buyers need to get a clear understanding of how a company's solutions will solve complex security problems, but also how those solutions will fit into the larger market landscape.

Security vendors may have a difficult time separating themselves from the pack today because the pack has become so large and unruly. The only way to carve out a well-known name is to repeatedly etch it into the public's mind through ongoing media coverage and word-of-mouth endorsements from partners and customers.

Rising above the current noise requires crafting better stories than the competition and then repeating those stories over and over again.

John Kreuzer is Managing Director of ICR-Lumina. ○



John Kreuzer

PR news brief

Joele Frank tends to Rite Aid's bankruptcy

Joele Frank is handling the bankruptcy filing of Rite Aid as the company seeks reorganization after years of heavy losses, failed mergers and exposure to hundreds of opioid-related lawsuits, according to the Wall Street Journal.

Rite Aid contends Chapter 11 protection will enable it to optimize its footprint (e.g., close lots of its 2,100 retail outlets), slash debt, and deliver on its promise to help people achieve whole health for life.

With the reorg, Rite Aid has named Jeffrey Stein CEO and Chief Restructuring Officer. He helms Stein Advisors, which has worked the reorganizations of Whiting Petroleum, Westmoreland Coal, Liberty Steel Group and Philadelphia Energy Solutions.

Stein takes over for interim Rite Aid CEO Elizabeth "Busy" Burr.

Rite Aid employs about 47,000 people.

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher has Michael Freitag, Meaghan Repko, Aaron Palash, Aura Reinhard, Charlotte Burch and Nick Jannuzzi working the Rite Aid business.

Empathy is having a moment

A culture of empathy is gaining in popularity across the business landscape. And one empathetic source leaders can utilize to help build and foster a workplace that empowers, engages and motivates employees might seem unlikely at first: humor.

By Jacqueline Kolek

Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. The concept of being felt and heard by others is undoubtedly gaining in popularity across the business landscape. In fact, empathy is having a moment.

Experts and thought leaders from business, academia and wellness all agree that empathy is the new key to driving growth, unlocking creativity and engaging employees at work. EY's most recent Empathy in Business Survey found that a majority (86 percent) of employees believe empathetic leadership boosts morale, while 87 percent of employees say empathy is essential to fostering an inclusive environment.

This isn't surprising, given the challenges employees have faced over the last few years: from the COVID-19 pandemic and all the physical and mental challenges it created, to civil unrest, mass layoffs, continued economic uncertainty and more recent conflicts and atrocities around the globe.

In fact, 52 percent of employees are experiencing stress every day and 18 percent are angry on a daily basis according to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace: 2023 Report. That report further found that 52 percent of North American employees are quiet quitting and 17 percent are loud quitting and actively disengaged.

It's clear that engaged employees aren't just a nice to have, but critical to enabling organizations of all sizes to weather business headwinds. According to human capital management firm Ceridian, low employee engagement is costing \$664 billion in lost productivity for employers across North America each year.

So, just how do leaders create a culture of empathy and foster truly empathetic leadership that empowers, engages and motivates employees? The answer may seem like a joke, but the business benefits are no laughing matter.

Humor, when applied appropriately in the workforce, has the unique power to build bonds, foster collaboration, enhance teamwork and creativity and increase productivity. In fact, a Hewitt & Associates study found that organizations where humor is part of the culture showed increased shareholder returns of 19 percent.

Humor in the workplace isn't about telling jokes, pulling pranks or roasting employees. Rather, it's the art and science of applying the skills that every comedian has to your individual leadership style. For example, comedians are highly practiced at reading a room to understand if their material is hitting the mark or bombing and—based on whether or not they're met with laughter or silence—learning from that feedback to tweak and adjust moving forward. They're also expert storytellers.

Think about some of your favorite comedians, from Wanda Sykes to Jerry Seinfeld or Sebastian Maniscalco, their material is based on telling stories about things they observe or experience, served up with an unexpected ending. In comedic structure, a punchline is really just taking a story or topic that the audience is familiar with and putting an unexpected twist on it. This surprise element both delights audiences and enables them to retain information better.

Finally, comedians often rely on self-deprecating humor, telling stories about a challenge they have overcome or the time they were underdog in a particular situation. When leaders practice self-deprecating humor, it humanizes them and helps foster connect and trust with their direct reports.

As a senior leader in my organization, I often poke fun at myself by talking about my poorly trained dogs, my love of my InstaPot or my obsession with shows on the Bravo network. As a result, I have an instant connection with my teams. They'll often ping me about the latest episode of the "Real Housewives" or tease me about throwing pressure cooker ideas into every brainstorm. By creating these platforms to connect with my teams beyond account work, they get to know me on a different level and that leads to enhanced empathy and understanding of each other.

Another form of humor that helps to foster empathy in the workplace is the use of improvisational comedy. Improv is an art form where improvisers perform without a script and one which operates with three essential rules:

- The first thought is the best thought.
- Reserve judgment.
- Create a culture of support.

Many of us in the workplace are plagued

by a "yes, but" culture. You've all heard "sure, that's a great idea, but the CEO will never go for it." Yes, but shuts down ideas, demotivates teams, inhibits creative thinking and discourages connection and collaboration. Essentially, it makes people feel like they're not heard and is the antithesis of empathy.

At Peppercomm, we've worked long and hard to instill a culture that embraces the concept of "yes, and." That means accepting an idea and building on it. Improv, when done successfully, relies on active listening, collaboration and ensuring the whole team or ensemble looks good.

In partnership with our Laughing Matters Council members, Peppercomm conducts improv-based training programs for clients that leverage a variety in interactive exercises that help to shift thinking from "no, that will never work" to one of accepting and building, storytelling from different perspectives and audience-centric storytelling.

Throughout these trainings, exit survey data shows that team members feel more comfortable sharing ideas, have enhanced trust across their teams and feel heard. The concept of accepting the first idea and going with it truly builds an empathetic culture where everyone feels their ideas, thoughts and feelings are heard and valued.

Recent research from Catalyst found that 76 percent of workers with highly empathic senior leaders report often or always feeling engaged, compared to only 32 percent of those with less empathic senior leaders. Furthermore, 61 percent of those with highly empathic senior leaders report often or always being innovative at work compared to only 13 percent of those with less empathic senior leaders.

Humor in the workplace can be a superpower to building and fostering an empathetic culture that will engage and motivate employees in both the best and worst of times.

Jacqueline Kolek is Peppercomm's Chief Innovation Officer and EVP. ○



Jacqueline Kolek

The tactical PR pro and the strategic PR pro

There are two types of tech PR professionals. Which one are you? And are C-suite executives making that decision for you?

By Dan Garza

Generally speaking, in the tech world, tactical PR pros are in the majority. They closely embrace traditional PR practices dating back a half-century and live from one press release to the next, and rarely step outside those boundaries. That role has been historically acceptable to many large and small tech companies.

A strategic PR pro, on the other hand, works and collaborates with marketing, sales and engineering colleagues, as well as executives to map out a significant plan that buoys the company's market awareness and visibility.

Every now and then, however, you run into a PR pro with both qualities, meaning a strategic planner and proven content writer who creates and publishes valuable articles supporting a well-planned PR strategy.

Enter the exec

In most cases, sadly, C-suite executives—who are generally not adept at strategic PR—play a hand in whether you're tactical or strategic. Most often, company executives are constantly looking at the bottom line and on how to maintain a healthy stock price. They believe that getting mentions and stories in business publications like the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* keeps their stock prices healthy and alleviates investor concerns.

Those types of execs pressure their PR pros to get mentions and stories in the tier-one press. So, the PR pro spends endless hours trying to connect with those editors and convince them of their stories.

Unfortunately, this misled executive thinking most often isn't effective. Plus, it continually hampers product marketing and sales growth, as well as keeps customers virtually in the dark. The reason: PR isn't being used to communicate valuable product information to the right audiences. Worst of all, the PR pro finds it difficult to get business editors to respond to their story pitches. Stress, anxiety and frustration are the results.

In all fairness, there are those C-suite executives who are highly savvy about technology PR. They understand that a strategic PR initiative starts with the trade press to develop an industry technology leadership perception.

Once that's achieved, those execs know that stories and articles in the trade press serve to keep tier-one press and market analysts well informed, as the basis for probable business articles. At the same time, the

same PR strategy continuously supports their companies' products and keeps customers up to date on their technology advancements and keeps investors happy.

They also know that strategic PR builds market awareness and visibility, as well as captures a larger share of voice. These execs respect PR pros who are adept at strategic PR planning and execution and rely on them to plan the right initiatives without micromanaging them.

With that background, let's now look at the PR pro and profile how he/she is either tactical or strategic.

Let's try this, that and the other

The tactical pro relies heavily on a number of PR activities on an individual and random basis, such as news releases, media inquiry responses, occasional press interviews, getting a spokesperson to speak at a conference and trying to get a story or mention in a leading business publication. In essence, this is the 1950s mindset of just getting ink or "all press is good press."

On the other hand, the strategic PR pro first gets a complete lay of the land. This means he or she takes an audit of the company's products and technologies, the competitive landscape, customer audiences, interviews sales, marketing and company executives to determine the challenges and issues their customers face today and in the future. And then, along with his/her marketing peers, formulates a valuable, unique selling proposition and messages, and subsequently, a plan of action.

That organized plan of action deploys a number of different PR tactics, all woven and blended into the overall strategy. But all those tactics carry the same unique selling proposition and messaging. Depending on a tech company's marketing and sales objectives, such a strategy can be led by a sustained byline article initiative targeting online and print trade press appropriate for a given technology.

What about those misled execs?

As alluded to earlier, there are inexperienced PR execs who falsely think that business editors are allies, serve as a branch of their PR, sales and marketing activities, and feel those editors and reporters are just standing by and eagerly willing to write stories about their companies. One such Silicon Valley PR exec says his strategy is to "call reporters, find out what they need and how our company can fit into their coverage. What do they want to write about and

how can we position our executives to be included in your stories?"

Unfortunately, this faux strategy isn't effective. Most business editors are too busy to answer phone calls or respond to email pitches. It just doesn't work. It's like trying to fit the proverbial square peg in a round hole. Published online articles on the subject even quote some business editors as blatantly saying about PR callers: "They're the bane of my existence," "I absolutely hate them," and "They drive me insane."

There's a better way

A PR strategy is a much better way, not only to continuously and effectively communicate with business and trade media, but also to build a brand, plus sustain market awareness and share of voice.

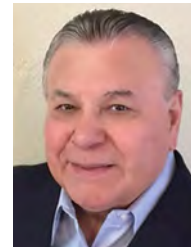
Plus, a well-conceived PR strategy effectively drives the overall PR engine for a company. As cited earlier, the tactical PR pro puts out press release after press release. Not to disparage press releases; they're important, but at times, they're few and far between. Conversely, a well-executed PR strategy driven by contributed byline articles and op-eds produce a "consistent cadence of reputation-building media coverage," as one tech company puts it.

This offers a number of benefits not only to the PR pro, but also to his or her company and to executives. For example, published byline articles are picked up by search engines to give business editors updated technology information. If developed properly, byline articles carry the "grist" that attracts business editors. They can get the lead for a business story and in so doing, probably come to your company for more perspective.

Also, content from published byline articles can be repurposed for social media or as blogs and published on your website, so trade or business press editors can catch up on your advanced technologies. In some cases, editors pull quotes from this public information for their staff-written stories.

But perhaps the best benefit is a high probability of generating a marketing-qualified lead from a potential customer. That individual read the article, appreciates that your company understands his product challenges, learns that your technology can help to resolve them, calls in to find out more and moves up the sales funnel.

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



Dan Garza

Travel PR legend Morris Silver dies

Travel PR legend Morris Silver, who founded M, Silver Assocs. with his wife Virginia Sheridan, died Sept. 24.

Following a stint at the Newark News, Silver opened Morris Silver PR in New York to focus on entrepreneurs and consumer product companies.

On a trip to Bahamas and observing the investment made in the travel market, Silver recast his shop as M. Silver Assocs. with a focus on travel PR and marketing.

His shop represented the Bahamas, Panama, Costa Rica, airlines, cruise lines, and luxury hotels and resorts.

Silver helped Panama restore its tourism business in the aftermath of the ouster of dictator Manuel Noreiga and helped create Costa Rica's eco-tourism push by launching the "Trees for Tourism" effort. He guided Emirates Airlines entry into the US market following the 9/11 terror attacks.

Finn Partners acquired M. Silver Assocs in 2013 as its first acquisition as an independent firm.

Morris and Virginia became managing partners. He retired in 2019, while she continues at the firm.

In an email to his staff, Peter Finn called Morris "a legend in our industry, a highly respected leader who had a powerful, lasting impact on our company's growth and culture." ○

Disney's Adjei moves to CBS Stations

Elita Fielder Adjei, who was VP-Corporate Communications at Disney General Entertainment, has joined CBS Stations as VP-Communications.

Based in Los Angeles, Adjei will support the 27-owned TV stations in 17 markets.

She will work closely with Adrienne Roark, President of Content Development and Integration at CBS News, Stations, and Media Ventures; Jennifer Mitchell, President of CBS Stations; and Mike Nelson, SVP-Communications at CBS Stations.

At Disney, Adjei oversaw National Geo-



Morris Silver

graphic's internal/external communications, issues/crisis management, and executive communications.

Earlier, she directed publicity and communications for Disney's ABC Owned Television Stations Group. ○

Tesla alum Brooklyn joins Hims & Hers

Khobi Brooklyn, who was head of global communications at Tesla and led comms for Nike's Converse division, is joining wellness company Hims & Hers Health as chief communications officer.

Brooklyn was most recently SVP of communications at self-driving technology company Aurora, leading all communications and marketing efforts. She has also served as director, product communications and brand marketing at Square.

At Hims & Hers, Brooklyn will oversee the company's communications function which includes corporate, consumer and internal, reporting to the CEO. ○



Khobi Brooklyn

FCB snags WPP's Cromer for CCO slot

Ad giant FCB has named Martina Suess Cromer Global Chief Communications Officer, a new position at the Interpublic unit.

She joins FCB from WPP, where she was VP-Communications and Stakeholder Engagement for the past four years.

Earlier, Cromer was Global Head of Marketing and Communications at ICrossing, VP-Global Corporate Communications at Wunderman and Program Director at Brand Innovators.

Based in New York, Cromer will develop the agency's overall PR strategy, spark creative storytelling, forge a greater connectivity among its worldwide network of offices and handle reputational matters.

She reports to CEO Tyler Turnbull and Global Chief Creative Officer Susan Cerdle.

Cromer joins the former Foote, Cone & Belding agency as it celebrates its 150th anniversary. ○



Martina Suess Cromer

Edelman alum takes JPA Health post

Tish Van Dyke, a 20-year Edelman vet, is joining JPA Health as an EVP to lead its Public Health and One Health offerings, based in the agency's Washington, D.C. office.

Most recently, Van Dyke was a Founder of fluid-collective, a global network of senior advisors working with organizations tackling communications-intensive business issues. She has also worked with Sound Counsel, a risk, issues management and crisis-focused consultancy.

At Edelman, she oversaw the agency's efforts to build offerings in health and technology and health and food. She served as Chair of the agency's global food and beverage sector, responsible for overseeing and building its food and beverage portfolio and advisory team, as well as directing the development of its food-related intellectual property.

In her new role, Van Dyke will work with clients to expand their visibility and impact to create lasting, positive change that will improve people's health and wellbeing. ○



Tish Van Dyke

Havas Formula founder Olguin calls it quits

Havas Formula Founder and Chairman Michael Olguin has announced his retirement, effective Dec. 31.

Olguin founded Formula in 1992. The agency was acquired by Havas in 2014 and rebranded to Havas Formula. In January 2023, Tara Reid, CEO of Havas Formula, and Adrienne Caden, CEO of Havas Street, took the helm of the agency when Olguin transitioned from CEO to Chairman.

Havas Formula currently has nearly 150 clients, six offices across the country, and a leadership team averaging a 10-plus year tenure.

"One of many things Michael has instilled in us is to never rest on our laurels or become complacent," Reid said. "This has made Havas Formula who we are today, and we have Michael to thank for that." ○



Michael Olguin



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Lori Ruggiero, Managing Partner
& EVP, Corporate & Technology
Dara Busch & Matt Caiola, Co-CEOs

5W has the reach of a large agency, with the expertise of a specialist boutique tech firm. With leaders who have lived and breathed life in a tech company, from Series A through to IPO, our strategies ensure that the media results garnered move the needle for our clients. We also employ media powerhouses—storytellers—who live and breathe different verticals. Our HR Tech, Ad Tech, MarTech, Cyber Security, SaaS and Emerging Technology practice areas are staffed with media gurus who know the reporters, companies, and trends that are making news. Our tech clients see our teams as an extension of their own, and our staff enjoy being partners to some of the world's most pioneering brands.

5WPR is a full-service PR agency in NYC known for cutting-edge programs that engage with businesses, issues, and ideas. Founded 20 years ago, 5W has been named a top US and NYC PR Agency by leading industry publication *O'Dwyer's*, as well as awarded Agency of the Year in the 2023 American Business Awards®, and continuously brings leading businesses a resourceful, bold, and results-driven approach to communication. The agency has more than 300 professionals serving clients in B2C, B2B, Public Affairs, Crisis Communications, and Digital Marketing. In addition to its business accolades, 5W was named to *Inc.* magazine's Best Workplaces 2022 list.

360PR+

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Ali Kavulich, Managing Director,

New York
Mike Rush, EVP & Partner
Laura Tomasetti, CEO

Technology brands and a host of others powered by tech must continually evolve their communications and marketing strategies to build and sustain relevance for customers. 360PR+ can help. With roots in tech PR that extend to our founding more than 20 years ago, our team is passionate and expert in cutting through the complexities to create narratives that connect and position brands and their products as integral to today's consumer lifestyles and as best-in-class enterprise solutions. We specialize in consumer electronics, connected cars, connected fitness, edtech, digital entertainment, entertainment technologies, smart home technology and other categories, and we have the relationships with tech journalists, analysts, influencers, awards and conferences that come as a result of being on the front lines of innovation storytelling for clients like Amazon, Honeywell appliances, Jabra, Cobra, Nintendo, Trek e-bikes and Xperi's DTS sound for home theater and in-cabin entertainment experiences. 360PR+ services span corporate communications, analyst and media relations, awards programs, events, influencer activation, social media strategy, video production and other creative services. Learn more at www.360PRplus.com.

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No matter what your technology is, it can be a challenge to effectively communicate its benefits to each audience to drive your business goals.

Understanding what journalists, influencers, employees and investors want and need to hear is a specialty skill we hone.

cialty skill we hone.

The Abbi Agency has a proven track record of transforming complicated tech jargon into easy-to-understand messages that even a 5th grader can make sense of—because if no one understands your message, what's the point of pushing it out?

With expertise in Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), cloud computing, software, semiconductors, security, IT and IoT and experience across almost every tech sector including medtech, adtech, martech, insurtech, fintech, you-name-it-tech, from start-up to 100-year-old company, we've been there, done that. But don't take our word for it, see what we've done in enterprise and B2B tech here: <https://theabbiagency.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/TheAbbiAgency-TechCapabilitiesDeck.pdf>

With offices in Reno and Las Vegas, Nevada and employees across every U.S. time zone and in both the UK and continental Europe, The Abbi Agency is ready for anything.

While The Abbi Agency got its start in public relations, its services now include creative, social, digital and web development capabilities—a full suite of integrated capabilities under one roof.

The Abbi Agency was named 2022 Midsize Agency of the Year by the Bulldog Awards, recently took home a Platinum Award for creative work at the international Hermes Awards competition, and received a PR Platinum Awards honorable mention in the integrated communications, marketing and PR campaigns category.

BIG VALLEY MARKETING

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Principal: **Tim Marklein**, Founder & CEO

Big Valley Marketing is a data-driven consultancy that helps technology companies grow, win and lead through effective, integrated, expert-driven marketing and communications. We work

with clients from startups to *Fortune* 500s across high-growth markets including software-as-a-service (SaaS), artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, cloud and mobile infrastructure, e-commerce and supply chain, and digital health.

The firm is comprised of a “team of experts” that does what they know and love every day, while providing stellar results, insights and value in an “applied consulting” approach for technology-related clients. Our entire team has deep B2B technology marketing and communications experience across strategic planning, marketing analytics, content marketing, public relations and digital and social media storytelling; and has applied that expertise to a wide range of client scenarios.

Since its inception, the team has provided marketing and communications services to more than 90 clients and helped more than 20 clients to achieve exits worth \$32.3 billion in valuation.

BOCA COMMUNICATIONS

Serving locations across the United States from the West Coast to the East Coast, the Midwest to the South—BOCA covers all timezones and key metropolitan areas.

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Kathleen Shanahan, CEO and Founder

A Digital PR Agency That Thinks Like a Demand-Generation Agency: BOCA Communications is an award-winning digital public relations agency that caters to B2B Tech and MedTech innovators. From VC-backed startups to global publicly traded companies, BOCA is proud of its client roster and long-standing partnerships. BOCA integrates inbound marketing and RevOps principles into its digital PR offerings, helping marketers reach their goal of driving business impact through brand awareness for customer conversion.

BOCA's services are curated to deliver measurable results that build brands, drive profitability

and ultimately grow our clients' business.

An Integrated, Results-Oriented Methodology: BOCA's omnichannel communications approach starts with understanding its clients' business goals and key performance indicators (KPIs). Based on clients' needs, BOCA develops strategic plans with differentiated points of view and executive thought leadership narratives, all with the goal of driving tier-one influencer and media placements.

From thoughtful analyst relations to awards and speaking all the way to social and traditional media, BOCA partners to crush it with our clients.

Category Creation Through AR + Content = PR: PR is instrumental in supporting companies through category creation. It all starts with research—gaining perspective from industry analysts, influencers and stakeholders such as customers, partners and prospects. Then BOCA helps to identify the key issues and take action with a differentiated solution. BOCA partners with our clients to ensure anything and everything we do is high impact, SEO-driven, and amplified across all digital and traditional channels.

BOCA helps clients manifest the category through data-driven research and content, infuse it across the ecosystem and sing it from the rooftops.

Live and Breathe Values: BOCA is made up of a diverse group of digital PR strategists, media relations experts and former journalists. They are dedicated and tenacious professionals whose number one priority is client satisfaction achieved through strong, strategic partnerships and anchored in clear KPIs. A group of genuine people who are fully invested in their clients' success make up the foundation of BOCA. Their team is crazy creative and drives content to engage and entertain key target audiences, ultimately driving conversion.

We treat each and every person with dignity and respect—diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is part and parcel of the team's core. A passion for what we do is infused throughout our work.

Ultimately, BOCA's strategic advisors are savvy—a team with a can do, drive-results attitude.

BOCA is now virtual with a team of advisors across the United States, covering major metropolitan areas. Additional information can be found at bocacommunications.com.



Diffusion PR's U.S. team.

BOSPAR

Serving 15 locations, including: San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Chicago and Austin.
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Chris Boehlke, Curtis Sparrer, Tom Carpenter, Principals
Tricia Heinrich, Chief Content Officer

Bospar can move your business forward through the power of Politely Pushy® PR.

Are you an AI or data startup raising funds? You can bank on Bospar to increase your visibility.

Are you rolling out a new cybersecurity solution? Bospar will alert media and secure coverage.

Are you working to scale your HRtech or retailtech business? Bospar will help you grow.

Are you keen to attract investors, partners, top talent, analyst attention? Bospar is your magnet.

Are you trying to expand your business to the U.S. market? Bospar is ready to fly your flag.

Public relations and marketing are critical to your business success. However, if you are busy—launching a company, raising funds, bringing a product or service to market, winning new business, providing great customer experiences, attracting and keeping top talent, and/or growing your business—PR and marketing may not be front and center. Bospar can help!

Bospar provides clients with bespoke packages that include any or

all of these services:

- Public Relations & Media Training
- Investor & Analyst Relations
- Digital Content & Video
- Crisis & Reputation Management
- Integrated Marketing & Messaging
- Employee Engagement & Change Management

Whatever your external or internal communications needs or business sector, Bospar's award-winning team has the energy, expertise, PR prowess and Politely Pushy® approach to empower you to connect with and get best results from media, investors, employees, ecosystem partners and customers.

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Christine Azzolino, Assistant VP

The world of consumer technology is ever-changing. For example, consumer technology was vastly different a year ago, a month ago, and even just a day ago. Technology has drastically altered the way we live, work and play—creating new opportunities and habits in our everyday lives.

As storytellers, our job is to

communicate how that technology meets consumer needs. Being able to truly understand the nuances between varying technologies and articulating the consumers benefit is key to positioning your product, your brand, and your expertise as industry leaders. We take an integrated, channel agnostic approach to developing effective communications strategies that have helped everyone from established global brands, to leading innovators and tech startups, translate technology into knowledge.

Coyne has represented many of the most prominent and successful consumer technology brands in the world, including AccuWeather, Casio, DineTime, Engadget, Eureka, HARMAN, IMAX, KEF, littleBits, Midea, Signify, VTech, among others.

We've launched countless products, planned and executed scores of events and tradeshow, launched numerous breakthrough campaigns and initiatives, and helped brands navigate significant industry challenges. We live and breathe technology which not only helps us understand the space but enables us to become an extension of the communication and brand teams.

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Daljit Bhurji, CEO & Co-Founder
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— Continued on page 30

DIFFUSION

_Continued from page 29

Kate Ryan, US Managing Director
Ivana Farthing, UK Managing Dir.

Diffusion is an independent, global communications agency founded in 2008, operating a network of wholly owned offices including New York, Los Angeles and London and an international partner network. The core of Diffusion's success is our unmatched ability to constantly strive for work that delivers meaning, purpose and measurable impact for our clients, our team and for society to take on the status quo and transform the future faster. Diffusion offers creative public relations services to clients spanning consumer lifestyle, travel and leisure, enterprise and consumer technology, retail and business services, including GoPro, Ghostery, Rakuten Kobo, Loupedeck, Wysa, WebPurify and more. The Diffusion team is built of early adopters with a deep understanding of technology and how it applies to our everyday lives. Our consumer tech expertise covers everything from gadgets and gizmos to drones and other personal electronics. We fight the relentless battle for market and mindshare in the crowded enterprise tech space, and our passion and expertise spans software, cloud computing, cybersecurity, AI, IT consulting and beyond to overcome barriers to progress, inspire movements that power growth and to defend hard-won advances by protecting reputation.

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Julie W. Koester, Co-CEO/Co-Founder
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Dragon Horse Agency is a multi-award-winning firm and one of the first global ad agencies to identify



Fahlgren Mortine's B2B Peer Summit Series of in-person and digital interactions engages clients and industry thought leaders on forward-looking trends and topics.

the value and the necessity of an integrated business and marketing strategy, delivering customized solutions to clients. Dragon Horse Agency is a fiduciary to brands.

Dragon Horse Agency specializes in all forms of Public Relations and full-service Marketing, providing customized end-to-end solutions.

Since 2015, Dragon Horse Agency has offered an industry-leading digital and social media artificial intelligence platform called DragonIQ bundled with a data analytics.

DragonIQ's A.I. is a precision optimization platform enabling companies and brands to drive tactical engagement 24/7, worldwide, with multiple campaigns running in unison across all platforms.

Dragon Horse Agency's business strategists and creative architects are a leading next-generation agency integrating the synergies of business and marketing analytics and strategy into one powerful solution called DragonONE.

Dragon Horse Agency is led by a highly experienced team of partners with over 60 years of combined professional experience in business and advertising.

Dragon Horse Agency is your architect for a successful business marketing foundation, leverage the highly skilled professional team of Dragon Horse writers, creators, designers, technicians, Internet/social media experts, camera and film professionals, tv/radio/print producers, media buyers, brand man-

agers, analysts, business strategists, and more all under one company.

Contact Dragon Horse Agency today for a free business and marketing analysis. Dragon Horse, laying the foundation for the successful growth companies of tomorrow.

Dragon Horse Agency is committed to the vigorous pursuit of exceptional business marketing predicated on integrity, excellence, experience, and execution.

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

Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle).

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Fahlgren Mortine helps business-to-business brands get to precisely what matters by combining data, design and creativity to build, deploy and measure integrated communications campaigns. Our buyer-centric approach delivers impact-centered strategies and tactics demonstrating a deep understanding of our clients and their customers, and the business triggers that create demand for our clients' products and services. Fahlgren Mortine provides clients with deep knowledge and versatile resources to deliver across a full range of services 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: industrial and manufacturing, logistics, data center, software and building products.

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Henry Feintuch, President
Doug Wright, Vice President

Tech PR is one of the most fascinating segments in the PR industry and our team is proud to have played a critical role in introducing technologies which continue to shape the market as well as new, cutting edge breakthroughs which will define tomorrow's marketplace.

Yesterday's bag phones are today's bendable smartphones. Proprietary and luggable Commodore 64 and Kaypros have been displaced by light as a feather iPads, PCs and MacBooks. Noise canceling headphones? We introduced them for NCT. Power over Ethernet? We partnered with Israel's PowerDsine to establish the IEEE PoE standard.

The pace of change is quickening and not every new product enhancement is market changing. But as story tellers, marketers and advocates for our clients, we know how to position, launch and build market awareness in a cluttered market.

Current tech clients include ClassWallet (purchasing and reimbursement platform for public funds), HDMI Licensing Administrator, NCSolutions (ad/marketing tech), Leclanché (cleantech energy storage and e-mobility solutions), SurgePays (fintech & telecom) and ZeeVee (AV signal distribution).

Preparing to launch a green technology to help fight global warming? Or introduce a new enterprise platform? Looking to get analyst coverage or determine how to tell shareholders why a security technology, biotech development, retail tech enhancement or fintech algorithm may change the world? Let's talk!

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Hands-on PR support gets real at trade shows like InfoComm 23 in Orlando where Doug Wright (left), Vice President, Feintuch Communications, joins long-term AV tech client ZeeVee in running its show activities.

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FINN is a global, independent and full-service communications and marketing agency. We help clients navigate business complexity, crafting tailored solutions that are strategic, integrated and designed for business impact.

We are experts at translating the business and operational impact of technology, from AI, machine learning and cybersecurity, to mobility, transportation, supply chain and sustainability. Our team exposes the real-world implications of your technology, and showcases the genius and passion of the people and teams who bring them to market.

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Edward M. Yang, Managing Partner

Firecracker PR helps you get known, period. Our proven 5-step process—"Ignites"—has helped numerous technology companies rapidly scale their awareness from Day 1. Deep expertise in SaaS, AI, machine learning, cloud, mobile, health tech, smart homes, digital transformation, cybersecurity, consumer electronics, startups and more.

Companies we have worked with include Fujitsu, SRI International, Boeing, HP, Microsoft, D-Link, TP-LINK, Beyond Limits, Baylor University, the American Heart Association and many others.

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Eric Fischgrund, Founder
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Ashley Willis & Rob Kreis, VPs

FischTank PR is a communications and media relations firm known for its ability to understand our clients' business objectives and achieve results that fuel growth. FischTank works primarily in industries steeped in science, technology and innovation. This includes but is not limited to climate tech/sustainability/renewable energy, B2B/B2C tech, real estate and proptech, fintech, emerging tech, healthcare and others. First and foremost, FischTank PR is known for its results-driven approach to getting its clients' media coverage.

Incorporating an integrated strategy consisting of media relations, content writing, corporate communications, SEO/ORM, digital/social media, copywriting, and outbound marketing, FischTank helps clients amplify their message with results that impact their bottom line. In 2021, 2022, and 2023 FischTank was named to the *Inc.* 5000 by *Inc.* magazine as one of the fastest growing companies in America and was also named to the 2023 *PR News Agency Elite Top 100*.

The January issue of O'Dwyer's will profile crisis communications firms. If you would like to be profiled, contact Associate Editor Steve Barnes at 646/843-2089 or steve@odwyerpr.com

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Rick French, Chairman & CEO
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Natalie Best, Chief Operating Officer / Principal

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, a distinction it has held since 2001. Headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., and founded in April 1997, FWV has received 30 National Agency of the Year honors over the past 26 years. Its professional services practice area is ranked 16th in the country.

FWV has developed countless PR campaigns and communications strategies to help brands and innovative start-ups stand out in a complex marketplace. From using data to insert clients into conversations about the Internet of Things (IoT), creating media events to demonstrate their expertise or developing clear messaging around a complex product or issue, our work is often the foundation on which category leadership is built.

FWV's tech PR experience includes work done on behalf of 3Flow, A4 Health Systems, ABB, Airwayz, AutoFi, Dunn Solutions Group, Foresight Corporation, Freedom Solar, Hercules Electric Mobility, Lenovo, Lumos, MDeverywhere, Neopatents, Net Virta, Reflexion, Saft, SAS, SunCom, Time Warner Cable and Wolf-speed. In addition to these more traditional tech brands, the agency also has experience with sports-tech clients such as CapTech and Skytrak, as well as entertainment/lifestyle tech clients including Fliptix and ReverbNation.

In addition to its diverse range of technology clients, FWV's passionate team of expert storytellers works with many of the world's leading companies and brands, including Wrangler, Proximo, Melitta, Volvo Trucks North America, Teen Cancer America and the N.C. Department of Transportation, just to name a few.

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

ture film development imprint Prix Productions. FWV employs more than 130 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C., headquarters and offices around the country.

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Defining communications broadly to include digital, content marketing, thought leadership as well as traditional PR, The Hoffman Agency knows how to differentiate brands and deliver air cover for sales. With heritage in the technology sector, the firm specializes in multi-market programs which leverage content and thinking across geographies. While campaigns vary by client and industry, all share one theme: the creation of content that reflects the tenets of storytelling. This means developing narratives (www.storytelling-techniques.com) that prompt journalists to write and target audiences to read—a far cry from the “corporate speak” that satisfies internal stakeholders. Toward this end, the firm conducts storytelling workshops for internal communicators, executives and employees.

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Stephanie Pastorelli, Global Head of People & Culture
Matt Oakley, Global Head of Data & Analytics
Kevin Dulaney, Head of Technology and Innovation

Hotwire is the tech PR, communications, and marketing consultancy. Globally, top technology brands partner with us for expert consultancy to scale and support their businesses. Found at the intersection of technology and humanity, our 400+ people in 11 countries weave global experience and local expertise to define, measure, and repeat success across reputation, relationship, and revenue campaigns.

Follow us to see how 20+ years at the forefront of communications and marketing help Hotwire make the technical, irresistible: www.hotwireglobal.com.

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ICR brings equal parts business acumen, technology expertise and media savvy to clients spanning all business stages—from startups seeking to increase market share or raise additional capital, growth companies with an IPO or acquisition 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 experts, ICR offers a unique combination of sector experience, media and industry relationships and creativity that helps technology companies generate the types of stories that both capture mind share and grow market share.

The firm's Technology practice is one of its largest sector groups,

representing organizations across Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Information Technology, Digital Payments & Ecommerce, Fintech, Martech & Adtech, Data & Analytics, EV & eVTOL, and IoT. In May 2023, ICR acquired Lumina Communications, an award-winning B2B technology-focused PR firm specializing in Cybersecurity, Enterprise Software and IT Infrastructure, doubling its Technology PR practice size in both revenue and headcount and broadening its service offerings. Embracing a roll-up your sleeves approach from senior members to associates, the team delivers results across media, content, social, event speaking, awards and more. ICR maintains offices in New York, Connecticut, Boston, Baltimore, San Diego, San Jose and Beijing.

Clients: Darktrace, EVgo, HARMAN, Keysight, Marqeta, Menlo Security, Mobileye, Qualys and QuantumScape.

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Additional offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, California and global reach covering all key markets around the world

Julie Karbo, Founder & CEO

Karbo Communications is a top ranked, integrated 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 elevating brand identity, scoring top tier media recognition, attracting funding and staffing, deploying content marketing strategies, driving traffic, building communities, or strengthening partnerships. We've pioneered digital marketing and PR efforts across categories and industries, such as cloud/SaaS, data/analytics, AI/machine learning, High Performance Computing (HPC), security, infrastructure, the IIoT/IoT, social communities, consumer apps, semiconductor, data center, and virtual and augmented reality. Our teams are experts in virtually every vertical market, including fintech, healthcare, green tech, e-commerce, CRM, Web3/crypto,



Karbo Com's Courtney Stack providing counsel.

ed tech, smart cars and cities, energy, supply chain/logistics, legal, telecom, manufacturing, pharma, government, HR, retail, gaming and more. Karbo Com efforts target media, analysts, IT and business decision makers, developers, VCs, influencers, employees, consumers, government and more.

The Karbo Com team has worked extensively with both B2B and consumer tech companies, including Apple, AppDynamics, NerdWallet, Snowflake, TIBCO, Hootsuite, Equinix, Cisco, Bugerowd, Defense.Net, Juniper Networks, Cisco, DarkTrace, GoDaddy, Airbnb, Logitech, Oracle, DemandBase, TDK, Real Time Innovations (RTI), 500 Startups, Intel, NVIDIA, Meta, Treasury Prime, Subtext, Cornelis, Timescale, Stytech, Shipup, Inseego and more. Our clients range from stealth startups to billion-dollar global brands. When it's make or break, you want the best. You want a team that's seen it all, yet knows the latest and greatest trends, technologies, and tools. At Karbo Com, we have a track record of delivering revenues, industry-leading stature, partners, employees, and funding.

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LaunchSquad is an award-winning creative communications and public relations agency with offices in New York, San Francisco, Boston and Chicago and employees working flexibly across 20+ states and three continents. We are a group of 100+ dynamic storytellers who specialize in creating and sharing the stories of fast-growing,

change-the-world companies.

Over the past 23 years, our work has helped clients raise billions of dollars in funding, fueled IPOs and multi-billion dollar exits, and taken countless upstarts from unknown brands to market leaders, as well as helped propel growth from large, established brands. LaunchSquad takes a holistic approach to storytelling through earned, owned and paid media for consumer and B2B brands across diverse industries including climate/energy, healthcare, transportation, consumer and enterprise technology, entertainment and media, e-commerce, finance, retail and more.

Clients include: Anyscale, Climeworks, Cohere, General Catalyst, Goodwill Finds, ICF, iHeart Media, Netflix, On Running, and Uber.

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Montieth & Company is a global specialist communications consultancy that provides a fully integrated set of communications services and solutions that deliver high-value, measurable outcomes for organizations across sectors and global money and media markets.

Montieth & Company's flexible, integrated, and budget-efficient cross-border business model enables us to reach multiple media markets via our global hubs in New York, London, Hong Kong, and our affiliates around the globe.

Our clients include companies for whom emerging technologies and innovation are central to their strategies to achieve global growth.

Our sector expertise includes renewable energy, online trading, fintech, proptech, insurtech, blockchain, and a range of AI applications. We also advise clients in asset management, investment research, risk-focused data and analytics, business intelligence/knowledge process outsourcing, cyber and physical security, compliance, law, and corporate shareholder services.

We help these clients achieve influence, realize their ambitions and solve their most critical problems. Central to our value-add is supporting key client corporate initiatives. These range from corporate finance, M&A, seeking private equity investments, making strategic acquisitions, and moving into new global markets to expand profitable market share.

The firm offers clients a full suite of PR services, including marketing communications, corporate and financial communications, issues management and crisis communications, litigation PR, and public affairs and government relations.

M&Co also provides branding and website design and development, multi-media marketing, influencer strategies, as well as video and podcast production.

NEXTTECH COMMUNICATIONS

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Janine Savarese, CEO and Founder
Erin Harrison, Senior Vice President

NextTech Communications is a women-led, integrated marketing communications agency for companies that break barriers and redefine boundaries. Built for the business of technology, NextTech brings bold thinking and agility to help its clients—from startups to *Fortune* 500 companies across a wide range of industries—navigate change while advancing their brand missions, amplifying their stories, and achieving impact through tangible results.

NextTech is an integrated, boutique communications agency with deep expertise in the world of technology—and beyond. NextTech's technology practice is steeped in the world of B2B enterprise technology—from end-to-end solutions and as-a-service models to hardware, software, and professional services, leveraging data to design media strategies that reach key decision makers, from the C-Suite to individual data scientists, app developers, and more.

NextTech is independently op-



NextTech Communications CEO and Founder Janine Savarese (left) and Senior Vice President Erin Harrison.

erated and owned by The Bliss Group, a founding member of The Next Practices Group.

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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, big data/analytics, mobility, 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 technology brands of all sizes including 3M, Rockwell Automation, Wesco, Battelle, R3 Continuum, Crisp and Direct Source.

Padilla is a full-service public relations agency that transforms brands and organizations through strategically creative communications. Our work across deep areas of sector expertise in agriculture and environmental sciences, food, beverage and nutrition, health, technology and financial services, is consistently recognized by industry partners such as *PRWeek*, *PRovoke* and *PRSA*, among others. Padilla operates in seven cities in the U.S. through its family of brands which includes, *SHIFT*, *FoodMinds* and *Joe Smith*. As an *AVENIR GLOBAL* company and

a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, the agency provides services to clients through 155 offices worldwide. Transform with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

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PAN Communications is a leading integrated marketing and PR agency trusted by B2B tech and healthcare companies to build brand, generate demand, and ignite growth across markets. Recognized as a 2x Tech Agency of the Year, the firm's insights-driven approach helps clients transform ideas into captivating stories. PAN



PAN Communications President & CEO Philip A. Nardone.

strives to help today's marketers by integrating a combination of services to better engage target audiences, drive revenue, and move markets.

Bring your story to life. Let's move ideas, together.

Clients Include: Algolia, Am-docs, Apptio, athenahealth, Aurora Solar, Bitdefender, Booz Allen, Botify, Brightside Health, CivicPlus, ClosedLoop AI, Clarify Health, Commure, DISCO, iCIMS, LeanTaaS, Loyal Health, NTT Data, Nuance, OMI, Qualtrics, Salucro Healthcare Solutions, Thales, ThreatX, Toshiba/Americas, UPS Capital, Veeam, Venti and Vercara.

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Ben Haber, Executive Vice
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The communications landscape is in constant flux, rife with challenges—and opportunities—for brands. Racepoint Global (RPG) is an independent integrated communications agency that helps tech-forward clients succeed by shaping and leading the conversations that matter. RPG crafts customer-centric narratives and creates multi-channel communications strategies that influence, engage, and reach target audiences in authentic ways. For twenty years, RPG's work has established competitive differentiation and driven business impact. To learn more about how we can help you shape conversations that matter, visit racepointglobal.com.

SOURCECODE COMMUNICATIONS

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Rebecca Honeyman, Co-Founder
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Greg Mondschein, Co-Founder and
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Giles Peddy, Managing Director,



Tier One helps turn technology organizations into category leaders.

UK & EMEA
Kristen Stippich, Executive Vice
President, Client Services
Katie McGovern, Vice President,
AdTech & MarTech
Cori Cagide, Vice President,
Consumer
Meghan Matheny, Vice President,
Enterprise
Jeanne Hernandez, Vice
President, Human Resources

Since its inception in 2017, SourceCode Communication's philosophy has centered on changing technology conversations by injecting humanity, empathy, and an emphasis on storytelling back into technology communications. We believe that if we can make the end user emotionally connect with a brand, we can more effectively change perceptions and behavior. Over the last four years, SourceCode has used this philosophy to fuel its growth into an award-winning communications marketing agency delivering measurable business impact to brands across D2C, Health & Wellness, Consumer Lifestyle, Consumer Technology, Financial Technology, Mobile, Cloud & Telecoms, Insights & Engagement, Analytics, and Enterprise Technology. The agency also

proudly runs the Diversity Marketing Consortium™, a 501c3 using communications to amplify Black-, female-, and other minority-owned businesses. For more information, please visit www.sourcecodecommunications.com.

STANTON

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The Stanton team has a distinguished track record of helping leading tech companies and emerging innovators tell their story so that media not only understand it, but also want to write about it. We excel at creating simple, compelling explanations of complex technologies and demonstrating the real-world impact that media want to see. This approach connects cli-

ents with the business and financial audiences critical to strong brands. From launching new companies and products to cultivating relationships with business partners, industry thought leaders, analysts and influencers, our work helps tech clients capture mindshare and build leadership. Our experience spans AI and machine learning, fintech, proptech, healthtech, legaltech, cybersecurity, networking, software development, and SaaS enterprise software.

TIER ONE PARTNERS

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TIER ONE PARTNERS

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Now in our 20th year, Tier One Partners is a woman-founded and led full-service PR, digital, and content marketing agency. We are an award-winning team of strategic thinkers, trendspotters, creators, and digital changemakers who are agile and proactive by design. But, even more vitally, it's our deep, mind-meld-like connection with our clients that enables us to act quickly, decisively, and in unison to seize the moment—turning good into great.

The collective talent, work ethic, and heart we put against our clients' businesses is the foundation of everything we do. Our unique agile communications approach turns technology companies in software/SaaS/cloud, data and analytics, security, supply chain, energy tech, marketing tech, and other specialties into category leaders by steadily aligning their missions to the most pressing challenges and opportunities of our time. Our earned media, creative content, and digital marketing strategies, combined with our relentless pursuit of results, bring our clients' visions and missions to the forefront—and keep them there.

Tier One's unique Agile Insights practice keeps our clients one step ahead of national and industry conversations. We use cross-agency tools to recognize and predict emerging macro trends in real time so our clients can capitalize on the most relevant thought leadership opportunities. We immerse ourselves in our clients' businesses and go beyond what's expected to deliver outstanding outcomes.

Co-headquartered in Boston and Chicago, Tier One is a certified women owned business. We're proud of our work to build awareness and category domination for B2B and B2C technology leaders including 24M, 55, Altair, GHX, iProov, Level Ex, Prophix Software, Tango Analytics, Toggled, Waterfield Tech, and more.

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Founded 20 years ago, in the wake of the dot.com crash, Trev-

elino/Keller has established itself as one of the region's most relevant technology firms. With a strong technology pedigree in the start-up space, it has played a critical agency role in the launch of brands like Carvana and exit strategies for companies like FactorTrust, Paymetric and NextTraq. The firm is also sought after by firms looking to rebrand or reposition themselves in the market, including work with Relatent, Valer and CIOX. The firm has also successfully leveraged its experience across its practices—healthcare [SOCTelemed, Biocept], financial services [FDX, FactorTrust], food and beverage [Tillster, Franklin Junction], environment [Lehigh Technologies, WinCup] and lifestyle [QBTech, Tagger Media].

One of Atlanta's leading tech industry segments in the last 10 years has been the transformation from a payments processing hub to a broader fin-tech marketplace. As a result, Trevelino/Keller has served as agency of record for Fin-Tech South, the annual conference backed by the Technology Association of Georgia. Also of note is the firm's successful work with consumer-tech, including its long-standing work in the used car market with Carvana and tech-powered nurse staffing platform, SnapNurse, 2022's #2 Inc. 5000 company. The firm has also established depth in the fleet management space with brands like Michelin Connected Fleet, Wheels and its more traditional transportation and logistics client, Werner.

Of course, the firm remains heavily focused on the deep technology industry, including the AI, representing brands like Groupby, SilentEight, RMS and more. Within Atlanta's technology ecosystem, Trevelino/Keller is the most visible firm working with organizations such as Atlanta Tech Village, Atlanta Tech Angels, TechAlpharetta, and Raise Forum. Not limited by geography, its emerging, middle market and national technology clients can be found coast to coast.

V2 COMMUNICATIONS

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Larry Smalheiser, Associate Vice President

V2 Communications is the integrated communications firm that builds iconic tech brands. V2's team of business-minded communications consultants partner with B2B, healthcare, and climate technology companies to shape markets and make leaders.

V2 Communications' approach to integrated communications is rooted in its clients' business objectives and marketing goals, carefully crafted and executed to elevate visibility and credibility among the stakeholders that matter most—prospective customers, employees, partners, investors, shareholders, or acquirers. Companies rely on V2's deep industry experience, trusted communications expertise and counsel, and proprietary methodologies to stand out as first-movers and category leaders.

V2 Communications has extensive experience working with a wide range of technology companies, from the AI, cybersecurity, and fintech sectors, to companies innovating battery storage and net-zero buildings, to home-based healthcare and benefits administration businesses. Clients include UiPath, CalypsoAI, Rocket Software, and Nova Credit.

(W)RIGHT ON COMMUNICATIONS

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We're an agency that speaks XR, kWh, Gbps and more. We're storytellers, strategists and creatives. And we're standing by to evangelize your extended reality, cleantech, wireless and other technology breakthroughs. Named one of America's Best PR Agencies by Forbes, (W)right On Communications is a strategic communications partner who keeps pace with technology trends and PR best practices for our client partners. Our B2B and Tech group is led by seasoned professionals. (Let's just say that this is not our first hackathon.) We lean into your world to become an extension of your team and bring the benefits of your technology to life through media outreach and events, thought leadership, analyst relations, social campaigns, video and digital design. From the trade show floor to the speaker's lectern, from beta to the next generation, our media professionals get your message right and in front of the right people. Via our worldwide agency network, IPRN, we have reach into global markets with localized communications support. And (W)right On Communications also offers experienced crisis communications, issues management, media training and presentation training plus in-house branding, design and digital productions. Connect with us at www.wrightoncomm.com. ○

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

TOP TECHNOLOGY PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2022)	Firm	Net Fees (2022)
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$224,795,000	40. Bliss Group, The , New York, NY	\$1,621,663
2. Hotwire , New York, NY	59,715,022	41. Rally Point Public Relations , New York, NY	1,599,093
3. Finn Partners , New York, NY	51,600,000	42. Firecracker PR , Brea, CA	1,500,000
4. ICR , New York, NY	37,723,092	43. CommCentric Solutions, Inc. , Tampa, FL	1,416,120
5. Zeno Group , New York, NY	37,587,559	44. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	1,350,075
6. Highwire PR , San Francisco, CA,	34,007,410	45. Landis Communications , San Francisco, CA	1,128,000
7. Walker Sands , Chicago, IL	30,502,958	46. Virgo PR , New York, NY	1,100,000
8. Ruder Finn Inc. , New York, NY	29,230,000	47. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	1,032,000
9. Hoffman Agency, The , San Jose, CA	26,344,000	48. Tier One Partners , Boston, MA	1,012,849
10. Wachsman , New York, NY	25,371,403	49. Feintuch Communications , New York, NY	1,000,894
11. PAN Communications , Boston, MA	24,869,766	50. Berk Communications , New York, NY	788,767
12. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	23,600,000	51. Bellmont Partners , Minneapolis, MN	731,160
13. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	17,487,677	52. Havas Formula , New York, NY	704,047
14. Clarity , New York, NY	16,972,073	53. Superior PR , Chicago, IL	688,265
15. Bospar , San Francisco, CA	16,949,211	54. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	639,538
16. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	16,400,000	55. Milk & Honey PR , New York, NY	569,866
17. MikeWorldWide , New York, NY	16,138,813	56. Stanton Communications , Washington, DC	475,850
18. Matter Communications , Boston, MA	16,137,000	57. Otter PR , St. Petersburg, FL	431,591
19. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	15,874,093	58. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC , Annapolis, MD	394,191
20. Merritt Group , McLean, VA	14,638,103	59. Comms. Strategy Group (csg) , Denver, CO	386,451
21. Hunter , New York, NY	14,600,000	60. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	360,000
22. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER), Columbus, OH	10,075,150	61. Beehive Strategic Comm. , St. Paul, MN	352,694
23. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA,	8,785,000	62. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	285,978
24. SourceCode Communications , New York, NY	8,475,000	63. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	282,500
25. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	8,230,000	64. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	260,780
26. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	7,494,261	65. Red Thread PR , Philadelphia, PA	256,827
27. Crenshaw Communications , New York, NY	5,536,338	66. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	214,000
28. V2 Communications , Boston, MA	5,371,178	67. Slide Nine Agency , Columbus, OH	211,762
29. TruePoint Communications Dallas, TX	4,724,825	68. BoardroomPR , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	200,000
30. Idea Grove , Dallas, TX	3,824,623	69. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	200,000
31. Treble PR , Austin, TX	3,586,231	70. BLAZE , Santa Monica, CA	155,749
32. Alloy , Atlanta, GA	3,467,326	71. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	141,000
33. Kiterocket , Phoenix, AZ	3,255,278	72. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	118,820
34. Karbo Communications , San Francisco, CA	3,155,705	73. Zapwater Communications, Inc. , Chicago, IL	82,150
35. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	2,750,000	74. Marketing Maven PR , Camarillo, CA	76,557
36. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	2,557,852	75. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	60,629
37. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	2,348,548	76. Lavidge , Phoenix, AZ	32,035
38. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	2,244,061	77. Judge Public Relations , Tampa, FL	23,075
39. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	1,753,739	78. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	17,781

John Kirby: the real White House press secretary

By Fraser P. Seitel

The nominal White House Press Secretary is a perfectly likable woman named Karine Jean-Pierre, who likes to talk passionately about her justifiable pride in being the first Black and gay woman to hold this important position.



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*.

A year and a half into her tenure as President Biden's Press Secretary, Ms. Jean-Pierre has demonstrated the danger of planting an under-qualified candidate into the highest-stress public relations position on the planet. In the face of withering and often unfair badgering by a rabid

White House press corps, Ms. Jean-Pierre continues to be unsteady at best and unnerved at worst. It doesn't help matters that she must defend an aging President who's purposely sheltered from the media, or that she succeeded the eminently capable Jen Psaki, who was not only more experienced in the hot seat but also much closer to the President she served.

For all these reasons, in the days after Ms. Psaki's departure, the Biden Administration wisely sought an "insurance policy" should Ms. Jean-Pierre falter in her new high-stakes job. So, a week after Ms. Jean-Pierre's historic appointment as White House Press Secretary, a former Navy admiral named John Kirby, who had previously served as Chief Spokesman at both the State and Defense Departments, was quietly recruited to slide in as the National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications.

Mr. Kirby is a public relations pro's pro, experienced, knowledgeable and confident in answering any question at any time on any subject within his area of responsibility. Today, with wars in Ukraine and Israel dominating the Biden agenda, Kirby is the one whom the media and the public turn to for answers on Biden policy, principles and practice.

In other words, Mr. Kirby has become the de facto White House Press Secretary. And the Biden Administration couldn't be happier or more relieved that it's Mr. Kirby and

not Ms. Jean-Pierre in the wartime public relations crucible.

Public relations professionals who deal with the media can learn much from Mr. Kirby. He takes on all comers, including dreaded Biden media enemies. Typical are the media interview lessons embedded in this excerpt from Kirby's Fox News interview in the days after Hamas' vicious attack on Israel.

First, deliver your "key messages."

The primary responsibility for any media interviewee is no matter what they ask you, make sure you quickly and clearly lay out the "key messages" your employer needs you to deliver. In the case of the Biden Administration relative to Hamas, one burning early question was the U.S. response to Iran's alleged involvement.

Initially, the U.S. disagreed with media reports that Iran masterminded the Hamas attacks, and Biden spokesmen tiptoed on blaming Iran. Here's how Mr. Kirby dealt with Fox interviewer Martha MacCallum on this delicate issue.

MM: "One of the big questions is why there seems to be a hesitance or curious deference to calling out Iran's involvement in all this. What would you say to people like former Defense Department Secretary Mark Esper who find this puzzling?"

JK: "I would tell the former Secretary of Defense that we're looking hard at the intel stream and just haven't seen any specific, tangible intelligence that the regime in Tehran was a witting resource participant in these specific attacks. But I also want to make it clear that we absolutely believe in the broad complicity of Iran here."

Second, back up your key messages with hard factual evidence.

Most people are dubious about politicians and public relations mouthpieces for good reason. Much of the time, they speak well but say little, preferring to deal in generalities rather than backstopping their arguments with hard facts.

Here's how Mr. Kirby scuttled Ms. MacCallum's skepticism with evidence.

MM: "What's the difference, John? What's the difference?"

JK: "We understand that without Iran, there would be no Hamas, there would be no Hezbollah. But what I'm saying is we're looking at it, but we haven't yet seen the direct evidence. And if people are looking at us and saying 'you've gotta hold Iran accountable,' my goodness, Martha, take a look at what we've done in just two-and-a-half years. More than 400 entities in Iran sanctioned just by this Administration, 300

of them in the last year. Heck, we just did some a few weeks ago, and some of that was directly tied to entities that support their support of terrorist networks. We've bolstered our military presence, not just in the Eastern Med but in the Gulf region as well. We're keeping a close eye on Iran ... and we're gonna keep doing that."

Third, don't get defensive, but also don't give away the store.

Often, the reason someone's hired as a spokesperson is because there are some questions your employer simply wants no part of. They expose sensitive conundrums in which the organization finds itself with no clear answers. Such questions are the last thing your CEO or plant manager or President wants to be confronted with, so she/he hires you to do it.

The trick—as Mr. Kirby illustrates here in response to the Biden Administration agreeing to unfreeze \$6 billion of Iranian deposits—is to answer without getting defensive while avoid saying too much, which would lead to additional problems.

MM: "We have this issue of the \$6 billion and why the White House won't come forward and say that money is absolutely not available, not that it hasn't been touched but that if it were requested, it would be denied."

JK: "Yeah, we're watching that money like a hawk, as you might imagine Martha. And you're right, not a dime of it has been spent. And we're watching it very, very closely. That's about as far as I'm gonna go on that today."

Fourth, speak conversationally not robotically; say it like you mean it.

Most politicians are glib—they essentially talk for a living—but they're not credible. That's why most people despise them. They repeat platitudes and canned phrases, rather than engaging in real back-and-forth conversation. Indeed, media training teaches novice interviewees to engrain in their minds those few key messages that they need to repeat over and over again.

While that approach might suffice for unsophisticated media participants, a spokesman in the hot seat like John Kirby can't expect platitudes and pronouncements to win the day. (That's part of Ms. Jean-Pierre's problem.) Rather, a believable, successful spokesman must be able to mix it up with a savvy interviewer and elaborate, risking all the what-ifs, hypotheticals and possibilities that real conversations entail.

MM: "Why not just say they will not be permitted to tap into any of the \$6 billion,

— Continued on next page

Navigating current market trends in 2023

By Dominic Rovano

There are a number of market trends currently impacting modern PR firms. As you might expect, many of those trends are labor-centric, but new services and internal initiatives continue to make a splash.



Dominic Rovano, CPA, is a Partner at Armanino LLP with significant experience serving professional services firms. He focuses on delivering excellent client service as he helps clients satisfy their financial reporting requirements by providing tax, assurance and other advisory services

Digital PR growth continues to be strong and should be an active component of a modern PR firm's plans today. As we head into the tail end of Q4 of 2023, spend some time assessing your business plan against these important trends.

Tight labor market and Gen Z

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment of public relations specialists is projected to grow six percent from 2020 to 2030, faster

than the average for all occupations. The BLS also projects that about 31,000 new jobs for public relations specialists will be added from 2020 to 2030.

This is due to businesses—finally—realizing the importance of managing their reputations and communicating with the public. This is leading to increased revenue for PR firms and increased demand for qualified PR professionals. However, this increased

demand is going to come at a cost. The costs of operating a PR firm are rising, due to factors such as inflation and the tight labor market. This is putting pressure on PR firms' margins. Coupled with a tight labor market, maximizing the effects of this increased demand can be stressful for today's PR firm owners.

How to attract and retain Gen Z talent

Gen Z is the most diverse generation yet, and they're entering the workforce at a time when the PR industry is facing a labor shortage. To attract and retain Gen Z talent, PR firms need to focus on the following:

Values: Gen Z values organizations that are making a positive impact on the world. PR firms can offer opportunities for Gen Z professionals to work on campaigns that make a difference in the world they live in, such as campaigns that promote social justice or environmental sustainability.

Work-life balance: Gen Z values work-life balance. PR firms can create a more flexible work environment for Gen Z employees by offering hybrid or remote work opportunities, unlimited paid time off and other perks such as pet insurance, dependent and elder care programs and concierge services.

Training and development: Gen Z wants to learn and grow. PR firms can invest in training and development programs to help Gen Z employees stay up-to-date on the latest trends and technologies in the PR industry.

How to compete in a concentrated industry with digital PR

The PR industry is becoming increasingly concentrated, with a small number of large firms accounting for a large share of the market. In addition, digital PR is becoming increasingly important, as businesses focus

on communicating with their audiences online. This is leading to increased investment in digital PR services by PR firms.

If you're not one of the largest firms in the industry, how do you compete? Focusing on high-value services—such as digital PR—can help to make you more competitive. According to a 2023 report by Cision, digital PR spend is expected to grow by 12 percent in 2023, outpacing the growth of traditional PR spend.

Here are some tips for competing in a concentrated industry with digital PR:

Focus on a niche. Specializing in a particular industry or area of expertise can help you to stand out from the competition.

Invest in digital PR services. Offer a wide range of digital PR services, such as social media marketing, content marketing and search engine optimization.

Use data and analytics. Use data and analytics to track the performance of your digital PR campaigns and identify areas for improvement.

Build relationships with influencers. Partner with influencers to reach a wider audience and promote your brand.

Make time to evaluate your business plan now that we are in the last quarter of the year. Budgets should be drafted—if not final—for 2024 and hopefully you've budgeted items for internal programs to attract Gen Z as well as making investments in Digital PR. Don't forget to assess your clients. Do they pay you timely? Do they compensate you appropriately for out-of-scope work? Do you like dealing with them? If the answer is no to any of the above, cut them loose. Focus your efforts on the right clients and make sure you're addressing current market trends to have a great 2024. ○

WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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rather than you're watching it. That sounds like you could watch them come access some of it."

JK: "Even if they did try ... Let's say they tried to access it last week with an approved transaction. What would happen is, Martha, we would validate if it was an approved request for food, medicine, crops, that kind of thing, and then we would select the vendors who would go buy that stuff and then ship it into Iran directly through humanitarian organizations to get to the Iranian people. The regime in Tehran would never see a dime of it. I want to make it clear to your viewers that when we say 'access,' it's not like they get to cut a check and the regime gets that mon-

ey. They never ever get it."

Fifth, finish with "the vivid air signed with your honor."

That's how the Greeks put it. It means, "end strong." Don't let the interviewer browbeat you into giving an inch. Stick to your beliefs and the rightness of your argument. And finish up memorably, reprising your key messages.

Here's how Mr. Kirby concluded his contentious interview with Ms. Mac Callum.

MM: "It feels like there's a reluctance to step on the toes of Iran, John."

JK: "No ma'am. I'm sorry Martha, I just don't agree with that. Not at all. I've gone through a lot of it. We've issued 400 sanctions against Iran. We've improved and increased our military posture in the region.

We've responded swiftly when they attacked our troops in Iraq and Syria. We've got the longest truce ever in Yemen's history. We're not in discussions about the Iran deal anymore since they weren't negotiating in good faith. We are not losing sight of the threat that Iran poses."

Historically, the best Presidential press secretaries—Ari Fleischer and Tony Snow to George H.W. Bush, Robert Gibbs and Josh Earnest to Barack Obama, Ms. Psaki to Mr. Biden—weren't only trusted advisors but also supremely confident and competent media spokespeople.

John Kirby is rapidly earning his place on this short list of history's greatest White House Press Secretaries. Even if, technically, he isn't one. ○

JPA Health to support national mental health, addiction campaign

Healthcare agency JPA Health announced that it has been awarded a multi-year, multimillion-dollar contract from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

SAMHSA is a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that promotes mental health, prevents substance misuse and works to improve the availability of treatment and rehabilitative services for Americans facing substance abuse and mental illnesses.

JPA will support the Maryland-based federal agency's efforts by helping to develop and launch a National Recovery Campaign aimed at encouraging young adults to seek or continue their recovery efforts for substance use disorder and/or mental illness.

As part of its work, JPA will focus on three main efforts: conducting research to better understand the needs for and barriers to accessing treatment and recovery supports; creating and developing messages and materials that support public education efforts highlighting the issue of recovery; and monitoring and measuring the campaign's messaging reach.

According to SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, nearly half (46 percent) of adults in the U.S. between the ages of 18-25 faced either a substance use disorder or a mental illness within the last year.

"This important work builds off our proven track record at SAMHSA and other federal health agencies addressing suicide prevention, mental health and substance misuse prevention efforts," said JPA Health CEO Carrie Jones. "We are excited to offer our expertise to SAMHSA as the agency communicates evidence-based strategies to improve the behavioral health of our nation."

Washington, D.C.-headquartered JPA Health, which was founded in 2007, accounted for nearly \$20 million in healthcare-related fees last year, according to *O'Dwyers*' rankings of PR firms. The agency maintains additional offices in New York, Boston and London. ○

Ex-rep Bustos, son top tanks with E15 gas

Cheri Bustos, the former Illinois Congresswoman who co-Chairs Mercury Public Affairs' DC office, and son, Nick, represent the Renewable Fuels Assn. as it works to make the sale of E15 ethanol gas available throughout the year.

The Environmental Protection Agency had banned the sale of E15 gas during summertime due to concerns that it contributes to smog during warm weather.

The Biden administration temporarily lifted the ban this past summer and supports year-round sales beginning in 2024. The President, though, conceded that only a few thousand gas pumps currently offer ethanol fuel.

The five-term Democratic Congresswoman, who also heads Mercury Public Affairs' midwestern region, joined the shop in January 2023.

Nick, who is based in Chicago, signed on as Senior VP in May after an eight-year stint as VP-Marketing at Calmer Corn Heads, a maker of agricultural machinery. He also worked in the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. ○



Cheri Bustos



National security pro joins FGS Global

Chad Ensley, a national security and tech expert who has worked for the CIA, Pentagon, White House and State Department, comes on board at FGS Global as Partner, based in Washington, D.C.

Serving as a Senior Program Manager overseeing work on emerging technology and liaising with the private sector, Ensley has helped implement programs producing analytic research and insights on such critical sectors as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, financial services and quantum computing.

He began his career in national security immediately following 9/11, serving as an Intelligence Analyst at the Pentagon. As a senior leader at the CIA, he developed, analyzed and synthesized intelligence on strategic technology and geopolitical competition. He is also CEO and co-Founder of Khyros, an artificial intelligence startup that has developed analytic software to automate geospatial intelligence analysis.

Carter Eskew, FGS co-Chair, said Ensley will help the firm develop scalable, data-driven products that will help meet the increasingly complex needs of clients. ○



Chad Ensley

FGS burnishes green credentials

FGS Global is providing D.C. representation to the Environmental Defense Action Fund, the advocacy arm of the Environmental Defense Fund.

EDAF supports moves to tackle the climate crisis, address environmental justice, improve public health and accelerate the transition to an economy powered by clean energy.

FGS is focused on issues related to the Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act.

EDAF has praised the IRA as "the biggest investment that our nation has ever made to transform our energy economy and address the climate crisis."

Grant Leslie and Jacquelyn Schneider, FGS Partners and co-heads of its food practice, lead the account.

They are supported by Kevin Bailey, Managing Director; and Jenny Hopkinson, Director. ○

Penta maps Brazil's tourism plan

Embratur, which is the Brazilian Agency for International Tourism Promotion, has signed Penta Group to help position it in key overseas markets.

Penta will carry out research and strategy consulting to identify target audiences through statistical analysis. It will receive \$315,000 for its work on behalf of Brand Brazil in ten major markets.

The U.S. ranks as Brazil's No. 2 tourist market, trailing Argentina.

Embratur is a major exhibitor at IMEX America 2023 in Las Vegas from Oct. 17-19. IMEX is the largest trade fair in the USA for the global event and incentive travel sector.

Penta has Lauren Morgan, Partner-Intelligence; Lauren Blake, VP-Brand Marketing; and Julie Decerega, Director-Strategy, working for the Brazilians. The firm reports to Marcelo Ribeiro Freixo, CEO of Brazil's Ministry of Tourism.

Washington-based Penta, which calls itself the "world's first comprehensive stakeholder solutions firm," launched in September 2022 via the merger of six firms, including Hamilton Place Strategies and Ballast Research. It's backed by Charlotte-based private equity firm Falfurrias Capital Partners, which was founded by Hugh McColl, former CEO of Bank of America, and Marc Owen, ex-CFO at BoA. ○

Libyan parliament calls Vogel Group

The Vogel Group has agreed to provide government affairs and media consulting services to Libya's parliament, which is based in the eastern city of Tobruk and backs general Khalfi Hafthar

It has a \$1.1 million, one-year contract that went into effect Oct. 1.

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.

Chartwell Strategy Group, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Sept. 19, 2023 for Tech Island Limited**, Taipei City, Taiwan, regarding working on behalf of Terry Gou, an independent candidate for the presidency of Taiwan, including providing media relations and public affairs consulting services in the United States.

Foster Garvey PC, Washington, D.C., **registered Sept. 12, 2023 for Global Guardian Trust**, Tokyo, Japan, concerning providing analysis and monitoring services with respect to the U.S. fisheries industry, and congressional, administrative, and judicial actions of U.S. government affecting U.S. or foreign fisheries industry.

Scribe Strategies & Advisors, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered Sept. 26, 2023 for The Federal Republic of Ambazonia/The Southern Cameroons**, Buea, Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia, Cameroon, regarding providing advocacy services, strategic consulting and public relations and government relations services, among other services.

Lobbying News



NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT FILINGS

Below is a list of select companies that have registered with the Secretary of the Senate, Office of Public Records, and the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Legislative Resource Center, Washington, D.C., in order to comply with the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. For a complete list of filings, visit www.senate.gov.

Capitol Meteorologics, Washington, D.C., **registered Oct. 23, 2023 for National Weather Service Employees Organization (NWSEO)**, Washington, D.C., concerning CJS appropriations, reauthorization of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act.

Cassidy & Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered Oct. 16, 2023 for California Forever LLC**, Los Angeles, Calif., regarding providing introduction to DoD officials, relevant congressional defense oversight committees, and members of California delegation.

O'Brien, Gentry & Scott, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Oct. 12, 2023 for Snowbird Technologies**, Jacksonville, Fla., regarding defense policy and acquisition matters; atmospheric water generation and mobile additive manufacturing.

Waller Consulting LLC, Palmer Lake, Colo., **registered Oct. 20, 2023 for Logan County Colorado**, Sterling, Colo., concerning increased funding for disaster relief and other infrastructure improvements in the county.

Vogel Group will conduct outreach to the White House, State Dept., Treasury Dept., U.S. Agency for International Development, think tanks, and public policy groups on behalf of the Libyans.

It also will reach out to print, broadcast, and digital media outlets and support press conferences.

Alex Vogel, who was counsel to former Republican Majority Leader Bill Frist; and General Counsel to the National Republican Senatorial Committee, oversees the work. He's assisted by Samir Kapadia, head of Vogel Group's trade practice and former Aide to Virginia Democratic Senator Mark Warner and Republican Congressman Frank Wolf. ○

Teneo preps Abu Dhabi Oil co. for UN climate confab

Teneo hauled in \$1.6 million for three months of communications counsel and strategy development work for Masdar, the renewable energy unit of Abu Dhabi National Oil company.

The representation concerned the United Nations climate conference (COP28) that's set for Nov. 30 to Dec. 12. It is to be held in United Arab Emirates (Dubai's Expo City). Teneo's COP28 effort included email outreach to Mike Allen (Axios), Ben Smith (Semafor), and Daniel Lippman (Politico).

Geoff Morrell, President of Teneo's Global Strategy and Communications practice, led the PR that began in July following receipt of a \$700,000 sign-on payment. He was Executive VP-Communications and Advocacy for British Petroleum, serving in London and D.C. While posted in Washington, Morrell led the PR effort to rebound from the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

Prior to BP, Morrell was Pentagon Press Secretary. He joined Teneo from Walt Disney Co., where he was Senior EVP and Chief Corporate Affairs Officer. ○

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Employees: 105. Founded: 2005.

Agency Statement:

A global communications agency with a specialization in public relations, social media, content creation, partnerships, and digital marketing. With 105 employees across four U.S. offices including New York City, San Diego, Los Angeles and Nashville, one international office in London, plus a presence in Toronto, Denver, Arizona, Boston, Chicago, and Florida, J/PR is a trusted leader in integrated media relations, social media and brand strategy, trend forecasting, guest programming, brand partnerships, experiential activations, influencer engagement, and crisis communications.

Established in 2005, J/PR has consistently risen as a leader in the travel and hospitality spaces. Today, the agency's growing



Jamie Sigler O'Grady & Sarah Evans

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

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

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

Wed., Dec. 1, 2021

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

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

Mon., Nov. 8, 2021

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

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

Tue., Oct. 26, 2021

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