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THE HEALTHCARE ISSUE

USING AI FOR DEEPER HEALTHCARE INSIGHTS
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SUCCEEDING IN HEALTHCARE'S EVOLVING SOCIAL SPACES
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THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE MEDIA AND AI



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PR agencies struggle to win new business in 2023

2023 has been a tough year for PR agencies. According to the latest findings in an annual report released by business development firm RSW/US, PR agencies this year have struggled on multiple fronts, citing smaller budgets, slower referrals and longer sales cycles as ongoing themes in 2023. And that's not even the worst of it.

RSW's annual report surveyed executives at marketing services firms and PR agencies in an attempt to take the temperature on industry trends and challenges as well as to gain insight regarding how business efforts have fared this year.

According to the report, 58 percent of agencies said obtaining new business this year has been harder. That's a big leap from last year (when only 43 percent said business was tougher) and 2021 (when only 28 percent expressed difficulty finding new business). In fact, this year's numbers are closer to 2020 levels (67 percent), a year when the industry was subjected to COVID-induced lockdowns, budget freezes and extreme economic uncertainty.

Only seven percent of agencies said it's been easier to obtain new business in 2023, versus 17 percent who said so in 2022 (and 38 percent in 2021). More than a third (38 percent) of agencies also reported a decrease in new business opportunities, whereas only 26 percent said the same last year. Only 29 percent said their agency has witnessed more new business in 2023, compared to 32 percent who said the same in 2022.

When asked if they've seen the dollar volume of new business opportunities increase, decrease or remain the same this year, 41 percent of agency executives reported a decrease, compared to 31 percent who said new business dollar volume remained flat and 27 percent who reported an increase. By contrast: in 2022, 37 percent of agencies reported an increase in new business dollar volume.

It's also taking longer for agencies to close deals. Most agencies reported that the average amount of time it has taken for them to move from a first meeting to the dotted line in 2023 was somewhere between one and six months, which is more or less consistent with findings from previous iterations of RSW's annual survey. However, the percentage of agencies reporting that it took them longer than six months to close a deal rose significantly in 2023, to 18 percent (from five percent in 2022), indicating that, like money, business timeframes are getting tighter as well.

So, what's behind this slowdown? In the immortal words of James Carville: "It's the economy stupid." Or at least it *could* be. While it's impossible to say exactly how much of the PR world's downturn can be directly attributed to the current state of the economy, the RSW/US report revealed that many agencies at least *see* an obvious link. Despite early signs of improvement, stubborn inflation and ongoing fears of a forthcoming recession make it clear that the bounce-back that characterized agency activity during the post-COVID years of 2021 and 2022 is a thing of the past. Nearly half (45 percent) of agency executives believe that business is down at their agency due to the economy. Less than a third (28 percent) said they don't think the economy has anything to do with it, while 19 percent cited the economy as a factor that has boosted their business.

Another indication that the economy has at least something to do with the marketing world's current doldrums is the seemingly widespread belief that client budgets are down. When asked why it has been harder for agencies to obtain new business, most (61 percent) cited fewer client opportunities, followed by prospect budgets being too small (55 percent). Coming in at third was prospects being too hard to break through (47 percent). These responses break a years-running trend—as documented in previous versions of RSW/US's annual report—where breaking through to prospects had always unilaterally been the biggest obstacle for obtaining new business. The fact that it comes in third place this year—with fewer opportunities coming in first for the first time, followed closely by shrinking budgets—is another suggestion that larger economic factors could be at play.

Other reasons agencies gave as to why business has faltered this year included prospects going dark (37 percent), an inability to connect with the right person (15 percent), clients not having a communications/marketing process in place (13 percent) or having no time to develop one (11 percent) and an inability to make the investment (five percent).

Referrals came in as the number-one new business generator for PR agencies this year. More than two-thirds of new communications business in 2023 has come from referrals (69 percent), followed by picking up business from existing clients (50 percent). Interestingly, a comparison with last year's data reveals that referrals—which were 64 percent in 2022—have gone slightly down this year, and business from existing clients—59 percent in 2022—has gone up.

Other ways that agencies found business in 2023 included networking (46 percent), followed by conferences, presentations or speaking engagements (28 percent), organic search (20 percent), inbound marketing programs such as HubSpot or SharpSpring (15 percent), emails (14 percent) and paid search (seven percent).

The RSW/US 2023 "Agency New Business Report" surveyed 3,000 agency executives in the U.S. and Canada. The survey was conducted in September. ○

— Jon Gingerich

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AI, misinformation top concerns for beginning journalists

The next generation of journalists view artificial intelligence and misinformation as two of the most significant challenges that lie ahead, according to a new report.

By Jon Gingerich

Cespite expressing optimism about the future of their profession, the next generation of journalists believes artificial intelligence and misinformation are two of the top professional challenges facing them as they enter the workforce, according to a new study released by Chicago-based B2B communications agency Greentarget.

Greentarget's report, which surveyed 100 young journalists—including current journalism students as well as reporters just entering the workforce—to gauge their perspectives on where they think the profession is heading, found that half (50 percent) believe that the introduction of AI poses a threat to journalists as well as those in related careers. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) also think AI or automated journalism will have a significant impact on their industry.

That said, the next generation of journalists also generally view AI as a useful tool, and the majority admitted they've already used AI technology in their reporting in some form or another. More than half (52 percent) said they've used AI translation tools, 43 percent have used AI writing tools,

39 percent have used AI research tools, 21 percent have used AI copy-editing tools and nine percent have used AI organizational tools.

Additionally, 57 percent reported that AI—or at least its potential impact—has been or was a component of their education.

A bigger perceived threat seems to be the ongoing spread of fake or inaccurate news. An overwhelming number of beginner journalists (91 percent) believe that misinformation and disinformation have negatively impacted journalism. And many expect the problem to get worse: nearly half (47 percent) said they believe the prevalence of fake news will only grow in the next year.

That said, only 25 percent said the prevalence of misinformation and/or disinformation has diminished their interest in journalism, while a majority (55 percent) said it has actually reinforced their devotion to the profession.

Most journalists believe that the factor mostly responsible for worsening the future spread of misinformation will be social media platforms (76 percent), followed by election campaigns (61 percent), geopolit-

ical tensions (56 percent) and presidential administrations (45 percent).

A majority of respondents (67 percent) said they believe it will fall mainly on the shoulders of journalists to identify and combat inaccurate information circulated by both news outlets as well as social media. This was followed by fact-checking websites (65 percent), editors (63 percent), social media companies (55 percent), the government (48 percent) and cybersecurity companies (42 percent).

Nine out of 10 journalists surveyed (91 percent) said they plan to do what they can to combat the spread of misinformation or disinformation in their profession.

Despite the myriad technological advancements that have disrupted how journalists get story ideas and vet information, traditional journalistic methods still reign supreme for young reporters. Reporting in the field (94 percent), drawing from primary-source networks (92 percent) and looking to experts and think tanks (92 percent) remain the most widely-cited resources for new journalists.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the next generation of reporters appear positive about where journalism is heading, with 72 percent saying they have an optimistic outlook regarding the future of their profession. ○

Communicators boost role in corporate decision-making

Communications leaders are playing a larger role in companies' decision making process, according to a new Edelman report.

By Steve Barnes

Communications leaders are playing a larger role in every aspect of a company's decision making, according to a newly released report from Edelman.

"The Future of Corporate Communications" surveyed 218 heads of communications to get a look at how they think their jobs—and the overall state of corporate communications—are changing.

The big takeaway: CCOs are taking on duties that go far beyond what was once expected of them. Survey participants reported that they now spend close to one-fifth (18 percent) of their time "advising the CEO on non-communications activities." More than half think of themselves as strategic partners or advisors to their organization's business leaders—up from slightly over a third who said that two years ago.

A key function of the expanded role is that communications leaders are being brought into the conversation about im-

portant business decisions at an earlier point. More than a quarter (27 percent) say they are consulted before a decision is taken, with 64 percent saying they are asked to weigh in on tentative decisions as a way of gaining perspective on stakeholder considerations. Just nine percent said they are not asked until after a decision has been made.

Heads of communications are also taking a bigger role in managing the tools and talent required to fuel more data-driven decision making. Close to half (44 percent) said that they are investing more heavily in communications technology than they did last year.

The rise of the importance of employees as stakeholders has also impacted the jobs of communications leaders. That's especially important when it comes to a company's stance on social issues, where employees are putting the most pressure on organizations to act. Comms leaders say they are

expected to drive culture and employee experience through such strategies as ensuring clear communications and transparency, as well as maintaining a positive and supportive work environment.

Because of that, survey respondents say that comms. leaders will be a key factor in shaping the next phase of stakeholder capitalism. More than three-quarters (76 percent) say ESG considerations are "mostly or fully" integrated into their communications strategy. They add that helping move those considerations forward will require better data and analytics, increased enterprise action and increased comms. budgets.

However, those increased budgets may not be on the way. While 55 percent of those surveyed in 2021 expected comms. budgets to grow over the next year, that number slid to 40 percent in this year's study.

The Edelman study was initially fielded in June of this year, with extensive interviews being conducted in July and August. ○

Priorities differ for PR agencies, in-house comms. teams

While PR pros stationed at in-house comms. teams and those working for agencies share many of the same objectives, they also have markedly different top priorities, according to a recent report.

By Jon Gingerich

Communications professionals who work in-house at a company's comms. department and those employed at a public relations agency revealed several different priorities in a new survey published by PR analytics and insights platform Memo.

The report, which sought to better understand the role that communications plays in today's corporate landscape by surveying PR pros on their job duties, priorities and who they report to on the leadership level, discovered marked differences in the priorities and objectives between communicators working in-house and PR pros who work for an agency.

According to the report, the objectives held between PR pros working at agencies and those stationed at in-house comms. teams are more or less closely aligned, with communications pros everywhere listing building awareness, increasing coverage volume and boosting community engagement as the top priorities for their organization.

However, those identifying as internal communicators in a communications department reported slightly different priorities. In-house PR pros were more likely to list changing perceptions of the company they work for (43 percent), followed by increasing share-of-voice (42 percent) and improving the marketing pipeline (41 percent) as their top three objectives.

Meanwhile, those working at PR agencies steer more toward boosting community engagement (41 percent, versus 39 percent of in-house PR pros), building awareness (41 percent, versus 39 percent of in-house PR pros) and changing perceptions (38 percent, versus 35 of in-house PR pros) as top priorities they strive to meet for their clients.

In-house and agency PR pros appear to be more closely aligned on other priorities, such as increasing coverage volume (37 percent for in-house teams, versus 36 percent for agencies), amplifying specific key messages (37 percent versus for in-house teams, 36 percent for agencies) and combating misinformation (35 percent for in-house teams, versus 34 percent for agencies).

According to all the PR pros surveyed, communications leaders (those designated as VP or above) reported their work is mainly dedicated to handling marketing campaigns (73 percent), internal communications (73 percent) and executive commu-

nications (65 percent) duties. Those under VP also typically say that working on marketing campaigns (81 percent) is their top responsibility, followed by social media (75 percent) and proactive media relations (70 percent). VPs and above also commonly find themselves handling proactive media relations efforts (65 percent), as well as social media (64 percent) and brand design (63 percent), while those below VP also of-

ten offer their services to brand design (67 percent), as well as internal communications (60 percent) and social responsibility efforts (57 percent).

Memo's "Evolving Role of Communications" report polled 1,000 full-time comms. pros who work either in-house at a company or at a communications agency with at least 100 employees. The survey was conducted online in June. ○



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The art of earning attention in health communications

Storytelling isn't one-dimensional. In today's chaotic attention economy, we need to understand our audiences and authentically speak to them through stories, content and messages that connect with them in meaningful ways.

By Shannon Moylan

However you start your morning, the influx of information probably begins pretty early. It could be scrolling the latest Reel from an influencer you follow—or the accompanying ads—or perhaps an email newsletter you subscribed to so long ago you don't remember. Maybe you're old school and you watch the morning news with your coffee. Regardless of where you start, we're all constantly bombarded almost from the moment we open our eyes. In a chaotic attention economy, you can't just pay your way to the right people and hope to penetrate; you need to earn it.

But where to begin? If we're stuck in this chaotic attention economy, how do we break through and get attention for ourselves or our clients? We all know reporters are spread thin, often being asked to be experts on a million topics at once. How do we get back to telling meaningful stories that matter enough for a reporter to write/produce it and an audience member to consume and retain the message?

We do this by starting with the person we're trying to reach. Who is that person? In healthcare, it's easy to lump healthcare providers, patients and caregivers into the same bucket. They all want the best health outcomes, right? But they all come at the problem from a different side. What matters to them? What influences them? What cultural vectors are driving their decision-making? By building a salient narrative that connects with those forces and identifying the right moments of opportunity to deliver them, we can authentically earn their attention and create impact beyond impressions.

The head and the heart

One of the ways we like to draw these compelling stories out from clients and others we work with is the idea of the head and the heart. Most of us can be drawn into an issue with a valid argument full of compelling facts. Particularly when speaking with physicians and other HCPs, the science of an issue is paramount. These professionals stake their reputations on validated data and form most opinions and recommendations based on facts (we hope).

That said, put a photo of a cute puppy or a child in need in front of all but the coldest of us, and we melt. Hearing a patient's plight is often just as compelling in helping someone understand the value of a treatment, new medical service or other organizational value proposition. In short, the head (science/

fact) and the heart (human interest) must be balanced for the audience, and in the most captivating instances, each can add a degree of depth that can't be ignored.

The audience is king/queen

You can't pigeonhole a particular audience into one side of the head/heart equation. It's a natural instinct to lead HCP communications with the relevant data; it's often considered table stakes. While we certainly hope all of our HCPs are compassionate, caring individuals with meaningful bedside manner, data is and will continue to be most important in our communications. But, as the saying goes, HCPs are people too. They may have less time to consume gossip rags and Instagram than the rest of us, but they're consumers and part of society. They're patients and caregivers themselves. They can be swayed by patient success stories, as long as there is hard evidence backing up the win. And approaching and speaking to them in a human manner may help break through the clutter of journal articles and sales rep visits.

On the flip side, we can no longer attack potential and current patients and caregivers with images of smiling people skipping out of their doctors' offices and hope they'll blindly trust whatever treatment modality we are promoting. A recent Humana commercial brought this point home. In a send-up of "typical insurance" commercials, two crew members—who also happen to be seniors—are seen rolling their eyes at the aqua-aerobics scene they're helping to film. While lamenting the tired tropes of "smiling seniors golfing, hiking ... antiquing," these still-working seniors didn't see themselves, or feel seen, in these ads. They didn't want to be lumped into a stereotype, and they weren't responding to the same generic messaging we've seen for years.

It's on us as communicators to do the research on our audience, to stay up-to-date on the latest channels and outlets and to push clients—whether it's agency clients or internal partners providing key information for communications efforts—to give us the critical data and stories needed to make a compelling story that will truly earn attention. Sometimes that means tough love for those partners, telling them we can't achieve our mutual goals if we don't have the data—and not just internal sales data—and the stories—and not just some anecdote from someone in the Midwest region—that

touch an actual, pitchable person.

Embracing all channels

In a tale as old as the Internet itself, the general public is increasingly informed about potential conditions and their possible treatments. This thirst for information is so prevalent, it has a commonly accepted name: Dr. Google. And while searching for medical information online can lead down a dangerous path of misinformation, more often than not, patients still seek out their physicians even after an online search. Moreover, they actually tend to be more trusting of their physicians' recommendations after having done at least a cursory bit of research themselves. Regardless of the result, as communicators, we can't ignore this trend of increasing self-reliance among patients. It's still important to speak to patients in lay terms they can understand without a medical degree, and they may still be swayed by smiling, healthy faces in ads, but they're no longer the simpletons doing aqua-aerobics in the pool.

Brands shouldn't talk at people, they must talk with them. In the communications ecosystem full of paid and earned opportunities, brands must speak the language of their audiences and enter that conversation in an authentic and purposeful manner. This includes building stories, content and messages that deliver on these influencer vectors for the targeted audience and show up where they are (not where the brand wants to be). By starting with earned-led storytelling, we're forced into authenticity that will earn a placement in more traditional media and also be more compelling and resonate better when the story is translated to paid platforms.

What influences the audiences in health communications is more than the standard demographics but a complex matrix of cultural, generational and psychological inputs. All these pillars impact the overall experience with a brand. Beginning with mutually-beneficial narratives provides brands with the right platform to leverage data, technology and experiences that connect with each audience in a deeper way.

Shannon Moylan is Senior Vice President of Public Relations at imre. ●



Shannon Moylan



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Succeeding in healthcare's evolving social spaces

Why social media marketers need to adapt their strategies when communicating with today's dynamic healthcare audiences.

By Laurie Roma

With the rise and evolution of the social media industry over the past 25 years, social media marketers have had to evolve at breakneck speed. Well beyond the tidal shifts in the industry, be it a new platform or function, privacy issues, advancements in artificial intelligence, leadership changes or corporate transactions, audiences have changed the way they're using platforms and consuming content—particularly in the healthcare space. We must be cognizant of how these changes affect an already very regulated industry.

As the landscape has become more diverse and competitive, our role as healthcare communicators is more deeply steeped in algorithm updates, channel features, audience experience, user behaviors and content curation performance. What can't be overstated is the impact of integrated messaging: unifying marketing and public relations efforts within social media strategy to create a cohesive effort resulting in strategy and content consistency while driving long-term impact.

I'm often asked about the keys to succeeding in this dynamic environment, and like the industry, it's an answer that's constantly evolving. For today, I'll say that social media marketers should focus on the following aspects: mastering relevant platforms, personalization in content creation, embracing video creative and developing influencer and thought leadership strategies. These are the key elements of a successful social media marketing strategy going into 2024 (and beyond).

Master relevant platforms before adding more. While it's tempting to create accounts on all social media platforms and share similar content across the board, it's important to strategically master the channels most important to brand audiences and build a strong following and engagement before expanding to a new platform. In the healthcare space, it's also critical to understand your audience and how they're using social media, as not every message is appropriate for every platform. Are you hoping to engage consumers who are looking for disease-specific information? According to PwC Health Research Institute, one-third of consumers in the United States turn to Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) to research medical conditions, treatments and health plans. LinkedIn is best for reaching professional stakehold-

ers, such as investors, healthcare industry thought leaders and professionals.

How to get started: Connect with your public relations and marketing teams to best determine target audiences to develop social media channel-specific strategies, with a focus on growing audience and engagement. Brands concerned about losing a user handle should claim the account and complete set up with links and branding, then monitor to see if platform usage is growing. Are followers finding the brand account on that account and following the channel, despite that lack of content being shared to the feed? Are conversations relevant to the brand taking place without participation on the platform? If so, it's time to add that platform to the brand's social media repertoire.

Personalize brand content. As healthcare social media audiences become savvier, they become increasingly interested in engaging with content that has been tailored to their interests and needs. How important? 41 percent of social media users are making healthcare decisions about doctors and 34 percent are using social media content to make medication-specific decisions. Additionally, they're interested in connecting with individuals going through shared experiences and seeking companies that offer innovative solutions to complex issues. Developing personalized, meaningful content is essential to reaching new and existing audiences, maintaining interest in future updates and important to building trust and loyalty while driving engagement and conversions.

How to get started: Through data and analytics and communicating with public relations and marketing teams, social media managers can segment audiences and develop buyer personas to help customize brand messages accordingly. When developing copy and creative, remember to align with marketing and public relations messaging for cohesion. Also keep top of mind that audiences appreciate content that is timely, highly visual and easily shareable. Brands can also leverage niche industry platforms to further tailor their messaging, such as Doximity for healthcare professionals, to deliver personalized content to a more nuanced audience.

Embrace video content. According to Sprout Social, 54 percent of marketers say video is their most powerful form of content, with 55 percent of patients polled

sharing that they prefer video content for essential updates. It's not surprising that the use of video has skyrocketed in recent years and is now one of the most popular and effective forms of content shared on social media, as it meets platform algorithm preferences, improves placement in feed, drives engagement, conveys emotion and communicates meaningful information in an easily digestible and highly shareable manner. Video has another upside: It can also improve search engine optimization, as search engines favor video content. Short-form videos—such as Stories, GIFs and TikTok—are hugely effective at creating dynamic, engaging and entertaining content that highlights your brand's personality and value proposition.

How to get started: Collaborate with your marketing and public relations team to develop an attainable video strategy for your team's capabilities and budget. Remember the importance of video quality—particularly lighting and audio—when capturing your subject. Familiarize yourself with platform video aspect ratios and timing limitations.

Collaborate with industry influencers. A recent survey by Sermo and LiveWorld found that 57 percent of U.S.-based physicians have changed their opinion of a medication or treatment based on social media content. It's not surprising that 90 percent of the pharma marketers surveys have implemented social media plans this year, with 50 percent increasing their budgets targeting physician audiences. Influencer marketing is a powerful way to reach new and niche audiences, increase your credibility and generate word-of-mouth referrals. Partnering with healthcare content creators who share your vision and values can help drive traffic to your social media accounts and website, as well as increase brand awareness and conversions.

How to get started: Work with your marketing and public relations team to determine whether or not the brand has previously worked with healthcare influencers. Research influential content creators in



Laurie Roma

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The essential elements of thought leadership

Five ways that successful thought leaders are made.

By Fern Lazar and Arielle Bernstein Pinsof

We live in a different world from just a generation ago. As the climate has changed drastically, so has the communications environment. This includes the opportunities—and expectations—for executives to step forward as thought leaders.

While it was once enough for leaders to focus on balance sheets and quarterly earnings, these basic, public-facing, corporate communications duties no longer provide a platform to elevate the visibility, nor to distinguish the reputation, of the individual or their organization. Rising above the fray of business dealings and beyond the value proposition of product and service offerings, true thought leadership ties executives and companies to their purpose—and in so doing, creates consumer affinity with their causes and brands.

It's proven that companies that align business strategy with culture and purpose outperform other companies, and this is a key insight for executives seeking to step forward as leaders. In our thought leadership programs, success is created by viewing the work through the lens of changing the world. The leader of an organization sets the tone for the culture and purpose of the enterprise, but one of the things that's happened in this changing environment is that corporate leaders have become hesitant to take strong public positions. When we look at those leaders who are willing to do so—and to discuss these positions strategically through key campaignable themes—we see executives whose sustained communications programs are building trust and reputation in the wider community.

This doesn't happen by accident or through lucky alignment; it takes intentional preparation. Here are five ways thought leaders are made, and how their leadership can align organizational culture and build brands.

Authenticity requires depth and alignment. Being authentic isn't just about speaking from personal belief and conviction, though that's essential. Authenticity comes together when an executive's passion and personal belief are aligned with business imperatives to drive real, measurable action on behalf of a key societal issue. For example, longtime Merck CEO Ken Frazier, through his public positions, principled actions and alignment with company purpose, won the respect of those who

were openly critical of the pharmaceutical industry.

Unite around campaignable themes. To best coordinate the thought leadership of multiple executives and ensure their activities and writings ladder up to the company's purpose and key differentiators, it's essential to first define campaignable themes that align to business objectives as well as mission. Then, define "swim lanes" for each executive that differentiate their areas of focus and ensure that each complement each other while supporting the company's overall commitment to advancing issues that contribute to societal good.

Create emotional connections with essential audiences. When executives are provided the guardrails of their unique swim lanes, they can feel a remarkable freedom of head and heart in connecting with a company's most important values, and thereby its most important audiences. Each executive can speak to the patients and providers their company serves, but they also have the ability to address those with whom a company needs to connect in the wider ecosystem, including policymakers, payers and others, to rally support for critical issues. Leaders who tell stories that tap into the emotions of their audience, whether hope, empathy or determination, foster trust and a sense of shared purpose. By sharing personal stories of their own struggles, failures and triumphs in seeking to affect change, leaders show they've faced challenges and have persevered, making them more approachable and stirring others to overcome their own obstacles.

Bring a face and human voice to science. Science has been politicized for partisan purposes with the result that the public increasingly views scientists with skepticism and even distrust. Putting a human face on science is essential to winning hearts and minds in the current communications environment. By conveying the humanity of those who are committed to improving life through medical research, it's possible to re-establish trust and build better relationships. U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy's recent, candid assessment of the potential harms posed by social media to America's teens and young people conveyed a humane, responsible, scientific voice, unafraid to speak out on behalf of patients.

Choose platforms wisely. A thought

leader's words should be presented clearly to be understood and their arguments delivered to persuade readers to act. This requires careful consideration of the channel and platform. Accessibility is valuable, but so too is positioning a thought leader to convey their viewpoints with clarity and impact, unfiltered by an editor's judgment or the confusing flurry of personal opinions that inevitably follow social media posts. To communicate thought leadership effectively, consistently and compellingly, our strategies favor opinion pieces over interviews, and blogging on LinkedIn and Medium over posts to X.

There's an old adage: Don't listen to what they say, watch what they do. The ability of committed executives to share thoughts that stake out a strong position—validated through company policies for change, creates a bond between exec/company and constituents. Aligning passion and purpose allows thought leaders to build stronger relationships with audiences and win the respect of even the most critical pundit.

For years, CEOs were judged by performance alone, but those days are past. Performance is table stakes: Executives today must take actions that build trust and demand respect.

In the health sector, this is all the more essential. Lives, and quality of life, are at stake. Stepping apart from the crowd with authentic and differentiated points of view is the key; simply being quoted in a press release about earnings or regulatory milestones isn't enough. While these announcements speak to progress and performance, executives are often left wondering why their quotes and interviews aren't memorable, why they're not building reputation. They forget that every other executive out there is saying much the same thing, sharing the same buzzwords about patient-centricity and innovation.

At its heart, thought leadership is about effecting positive change. Thought leaders are those who speak honestly and authentically, take a position on an important issue



Fern Lazar



Arielle Bernstein Pinsof

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Three sectors shaping the healthcare media landscape

A PR prescription for healthcare brands to differentiate their message, drive the conversation and effectively position themselves as changemakers.

By Nicole Das

For those of us who live and breathe healthcare PR, we know this past year has been a rollercoaster. From major developments in healthcare policy to evolving payment models to the explosion of generative AI, these moments in time have created a crowded news cycle, keeping us on our toes and challenging us to get creative. As PR practitioners, we've seen the growing emphasis on diversity and inclusion in media, which is reflective of a larger societal push for representation and equitable opportunities. This is also an important narrative in healthcare.

Let's explore trending media topics across three particular health sectors—women's health, telehealth and behavioral health—and consider how healthcare brands can differentiate their message and drive the conversation.

Closing the gap in women's health with technology

The past few years have brought many changes in healthcare policies and regulations that affect women's access to healthcare services, insurance coverage, reproductive rights, maternal health and more. These recent developments have sparked conversations in the media around women's healthcare accessibility in the U.S., health equity and how health technology companies can bridge gaps to improve care outcomes. According to a recent media conversation analysis from PAN Communications, the overall media landscape for women's health experienced a 74 percent year-over-year rise in total mentions, a promising sign that meaningful discussions around improving women's health are happening and will likely continue.

Historically, society has subscribed to an outdated vision of women's health and as a result, health measures commonly used to monitor women's health represent only a small part of women's needs. The good news is that more attention is being put on diseases that only impact women, which have historically been underfunded areas of research. Additionally, motherhood can be an important aspect of healthcare for many women, resulting in increased media conversation around how to support related aspects, from menstrual tracking to fertility. Celebrities such as Chrissy Teigen and Adele have become champions of traditionally under-represented areas of maternal health, such as post-partum depression. Beyoncé, among others, has also

continued to advocate for improved maternal healthcare and has been vocal about the high maternal mortality rates, which disproportionately affect Black women in the United States.

The evolving discussion around the impact of work and societal expectations on women's health, including stress, burnout and the need for supportive work environments, continues to be a common media theme. Many brands are committed to updating their vision for women's health and what this means for women of the modern workforce. Companies that challenge the status quo and continue to elevate solutions that support women in their unique healthcare journeys while helping to address gender inequity will rise above the noise.

Telehealth is here to stay

We all know the use of telehealth exploded in 2020 and has only continued to grow. Already this year we've seen big moves that have impacted the market, including the introduction of Amazon Care, UnitedHealthCare's \$5 billion investment in virtual health and Teladoc's deeper integration with BetterHelp—all stories that dominated headlines. According to Fortune Business Insights, the global telehealth market is projected to exhibit a compound annual growth rate of 19.7 percent by 2030, which means we can expect new entrants into the space through the end of the decade.

In addition to the milestones above, much of the conversation has centered around the COVID-19 public health emergency, outlining the "new normal" of a post-pandemic era with potential impacts on telehealth reimbursement. While provisions for temporary extended coverage for telehealth have been put into place, physicians, patients and stakeholders alike have become accustomed to the convenience and personalization that telehealth can provide and are still advocating to permanently expand virtual care coverage.

Looking ahead, we see an opportunity for brands to facilitate a "rebrand" of sorts for the telehealth market, highlighting the true impact that technology continues to have on how patients access whole-person care, including routine consultations, mental health support and more. Brands that put themselves at the center of conversations around how patients and physicians should be thinking about telehealth going forward will be able to differentiate themselves in

this increasingly competitive sector of digital health.

Prioritizing behavioral health and mental wellness

The media conversation around digital behavioral health has shown continued momentum, beginning well before the COVID-19 pandemic. The prioritization of mental health continues to have its moment, thanks to brave politicians, athletes and celebrities, who are opening up and sharing their struggles, inspiring others to share their own stories and get the help they need.

We see this change reflected through growth in the behavioral health market. Recent data from Fortune Business Insights projected the U.S. behavioral health market to grow to \$105.14 billion by 2029. The stress brought on by the global health crisis in large part continues to fuel the need for virtual behavioral health services, a prevailing narrative in the media conversation, which grew by 23 percent year-over-year, according to the same conversations analysis report mentioned above. The ongoing behavioral health workforce shortage is creating a perfect storm of coverage signaling rising costs and collective concern that access to care may only continue to become more challenging.

While the healthcare ecosystem may not be able to solve this crisis overnight, stories that present solutions to alleviate some of the burden on healthcare professionals and include their voices in the discussion will continue to educate and move the conversation toward improving care outcomes and providing support for patients.

Practice what we preach

The healthcare landscape has experienced seismic shifts, and the corresponding narratives playing out in the media—centered on these three sectors in particular—continue to evolve rapidly. Healthcare brands play a vital role in advancing care delivery by advocating for inclusivity, fostering innovation and more. Differentiating in an increasingly crowded market will require healthcare companies to actively monitor the trends important to their stakeholders to adjust their strategy accordingly. Doing



Nicole Das

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Building the hybrid office of the future—today

How to maintain a vibrant culture, build a bond with team members and foster productivity in today's new work environment.

By Sharon Reis

The way we work has completely changed. People who have spent their careers commuting to the office five days a week now greatly value the freedom of new work-from-home and hybrid policies. Younger people who have spent most of their careers working from home with great flexibility see this as the new normal. So, how do you build a high-performance team, a vibrant culture and a dynamic company in this new environment?

This is the cultural challenge we're all facing in setting new norms in a post-COVID workplace. According to The Center for Creative Leadership, "Team norms are a set of rules or operating principles that shape team members' interactions. Norms establish how the work will get done and what team members can expect from one another."

This is our strong new focus at The Reis Group: creating new norms while continuing to build trust and respect in a post-pandemic, hybrid-all-the-time workplace. Most importantly, we're creating the future of our healthcare PR agency together.

Recently, I made a somewhat bold decision to renew the lease for our office space in Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C., even though we come to the office only two days a week. This decision surprised some people. Why would I saddle us with a long-term lease when we rarely use the space?

The fact is, I strongly believe I need to be in the presence of the team on a regular basis. I want interpersonal connections. I want to be able to read non-verbal communication. I want to have idle conversations standing in the kitchen while getting a coffee or heating up my lunch. I believe these relationships create a bond, help further meaning and purpose and strengthen the team.

I'm fully aware that our colleagues are just as productive working from home. I don't question that at all. In fact, several of our most-valued team members are full-time remote. But what I value most are relationships, especially with early career colleagues. I want the ability to mentor and train them in person. I believe this creates

loyalty, fosters sharing, builds emotional connections beyond work and provides a sense of belonging to something larger. Without that, jobs become merely transactional, with people working for the highest bidder.

"Having in-person connections contributes to growth in every way—the team, the culture and the personal and professional relationships. I've seen it firsthand," said Kathleen Petty, TRG Senior Vice President. "Being able to feel the pulse of the office; knowing which clients are hot; and who might be having a bad day are all important for supporting and valuing each other."

While renewing our lease, we're also making a significant change. We're renovating and, more importantly, shrinking our office space. When I made this announcement to the team, I was met with many questions. Are we not growing? Will we still hire new team members? My answer was yes and yes. Consolidating office space is strictly economics. I couldn't justify renting a larger space that gets used only twice a week. Clients aren't traveling like they used to, so face-to-face meetings are not a daily occurrence anymore.

into the office and spend the whole day in back-to-back virtual meetings," said Stacy Skelly, TRG Senior Vice President. "So, we are consciously planning professional development and team-building experiences for the in-office days. And the team seems pretty excited about using our time together to build ties that go beyond client work alone."

"What stands out to me in a positive way is the chance for professional development and career progress," said Molly Ashmore, a second-year account executive, "I love how much TRG invests in us to make us the best PR professionals we can be. I really feel like I have grown exponentially and I'm learning new skills every day. For an entry-level professional, it's been great."

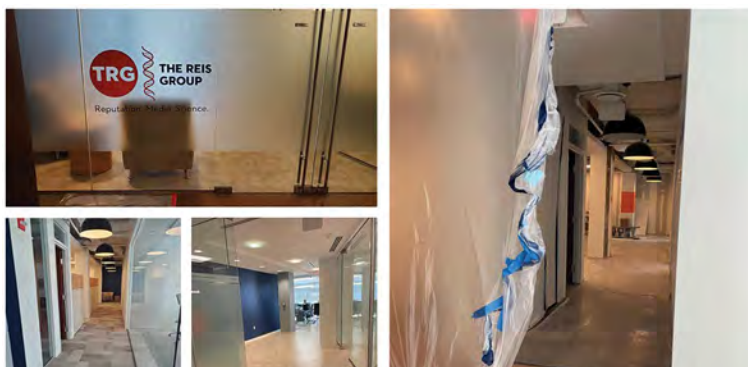
"The hybrid work environment has been a big advantage for me. I've been fully immersed in the firm's culture for nearly two years," said Matthew Porter, Account Executive. "I've actually been thinking about relocating to another city, and keeping my job isn't a factor. With a strong sense of the agency culture and the client experience, I can work from anywhere."

The hybrid, flexible work environment has also changed how benefits are perceived. Several years ago, we decided to eliminate sick leave and merge those days into PTO so everyone received the benefit and the time to focus on their health and well-being, without having to explain their time off.

Longtime team members understood and appreciated the flexibility, but a younger, newer colleague was upset by it. She'd become accustomed to the freedom of hybrid work over most of her five-year career, but now she was irritated and wanted to know why her doctors' appointments needed to come out of her PTO time.



Sharon Reis



Currently under renovation: The Reis Group updates its office space to meet the needs of a hybrid workforce.

Team members don't want to commute every single day, and neither do I. Why spend hours stuck in traffic or on the Metro, when I can spend that precious time walking the dog, working out, preparing a meal or maybe sleeping later? So, how do we make the most of the two days that the team spends together in the office? How do we make it different than working at home?

"The last thing anybody wants is to come

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TOMORROW'S HYBRID OFFICE

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“What we are seeing is a need to address and explain benefits in greater detail during our monthly team meetings,” said Andrea Holmes, Director of Operations at TRG. “The hybrid, flexible and decentralized work environment needs to have parameters and boundaries for employees to thrive.”

We’re also reevaluating some of our customary practices. “If your flexible workday ends at 5:30, we’re telling people not to send colleagues an email with a detailed to-do list or a document for review until the next morning,” said Lauren Musiol, TRG Senior Vice President. “We’ve also

heard from the team that getting an email or a Teams call for a new project late on Friday afternoon can cause undue stress over their weekend. This is a prime example of why we’re focused on creating new norms together. We want it to be perfectly clear to everyone that unless one of our clients is in a crisis, we want to be respectful of people’s lives outside of the office,” she said. “We now strongly encourage the use of the delayed-delivery messaging option in Outlook.”

One of our veteran senior employees has been caring for a sick parent living in another state. Several times this year, she has needed to pick up and take turns helping organize his care. Our agency policy is that as long as you have high-quality Wi-Fi so you can effectively participate in virtual client and team meetings and access need-

ed files, we’ll make it work. We don’t allow working in public spaces because much of our client work is confidential. We’ve had some bumps along the way with implementing this policy. Some have tried to work from trains and airports instead of taking PTO. Bad Wi-Fi connections can make their work time more frustrating than productive and diminishes the client experience significantly.

In building the healthcare PR agency of the future, we’re creating new norms and shared expectations for how we work with each other. I’m excited about the future, although I recognize that change is hard; super hard. Yet when I think about what our agency workplace and culture will be by this time next year, I couldn’t be happier.

Sharon Reis is Principal of The Reis Group in Washington, D.C. ●

HEALTHCARE’S SOCIAL SPACES

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your brand’s space. Determine a match for your brand and reach out to them or their representative to learn more about their post reach and engagement, as well as rate fees. Be sure to discuss goals and expectations before entering a contract, including how many posts will be shared, what type of content will be created, posting dates and deadlines.

Establish an executive thought leadership program. Social media thought leadership is an often overlooked and highly effective resource that can be used to establish executives as authoritative voices in their field and amplify executive visibility through shared expertise, insights and opinions while also improving brand

recognition, credibility and trust. Executive thought leadership can also enhance reputation, attract new leads, differentiate oneself from competitors and attract media opportunities. Engaging industry thought leaders who are working on initiatives with your brand can further lift these efforts and lend additional credibility to your organization and priority messaging.

How to get started: Meet with your public relations team to determine which executives are attending congresses, speaking on panels and podcasts or are sought after for interviews. Research competing executive social media performance to shape recommendations, such as posting cadence. From there, identify topics that matter most to your executive thought leaders and build a content calendar written in their style and tone. Be sure to measure follower growth and engagement, as well as any speaking or media opportunities

that may arise because of this initiative.

As the social media industry is changing rapidly and shaping how healthcare audiences consume and interact with content—as well as how they make decisions—it’s imperative that social media marketers in the space keep up with these changes in user behavior and adapt their strategies to continue developing relevant content tailored to audience interests and preferences.

Moreover, social media users are becoming more sophisticated and discerning, demanding more value, authenticity and engagement from the content they consume. Social media marketers, now more than ever, need to be integrated with public relations teams, while staying creative, agile and data-driven to craft effective strategies that align with their goals and resonate with their target audiences.

Laurie Roma is SVP, Social Media, at ICR Westwicke. ●

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

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and act to help solve that issue. Expressing thought leadership is the chance to share what you believe, to take a position on a

high-level issue, to outline how that issue can be effectively addressed and to rally society, colleagues, co-workers and specific stakeholders to solve that issue. And by rallying support to drive change, a successful corporate thought leader elevates their

brand by actually making a difference in the world.

Fern Lazar is Global Health Practice Leader at Finn Partners. Arielle Bernstein Pinsof MPP, is Senior Partner at Finn Partners. ●

HEALTHCARE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

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so will help them more clearly communicate why they’re uniquely positioned to solve the problems impacting their respec-

tive sectors. By demonstrating how they’re embracing technology, fostering diversity and inclusion and championing new approaches, brands can effectively position themselves as changemakers, ultimately shaping a future that is both innovative and

equitable.

To explore some of these trending conversations further, visit pancommunications.com

Nicole Das is Senior Account Supervisor at PAN Communications. ●

Getting healthcare tech coverage in a crowded market

As healthcare tech companies vie to stand out in an increasingly competitive and saturated market, there are three sure ways to capture media interest and get clients the coverage they want.

By Curtis Sparrer

The digital explosion has impacted industries everywhere, including healthcare, and it shows no signs of slowing down.

According to Grand View Research, the global digital health market size was valued at \$211 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 18.6 percent from 2023 to 2030. The firm also notes that “increasing penetration of smartphones, improved Internet connectivity with the introduction of 4G/5G, advancement in healthcare IT infrastructure, rising need to curb healthcare costs and the increase in accessibility of virtual care all helped fuel the market growth.”

As the healthcare tech sector’s digital growth trajectory continues to rise, so does competition in the sector. Every company is vying for the same awareness from the same outlets, which can make standing out in a crowded media landscape more challenging. But as the saying goes, “only the strong survive,” or in this case, the ones with the strongest PR team behind them.

At Bospar, my team has successfully broken through the noise and made waves for our healthcare tech clients, getting them both trade and top-tier coverage, which is no easy feat in today’s saturated market. While there’s no one-size-fits-all solution to getting media coverage, I’ve learned some key ways to catch editors’ eyes and convince them to cover healthcare tech clients.

Here are a few of those ways:

Focus on your client’s “wow” factor

“If you want to attract a journalist’s attention, you’ve got to bring something that’s a little new, unique or even just a much better version of something that already exists,” said Cody Toombs, Editor of Android Police. This is especially true for healthcare clients. Health-related topics like COVID-19 continue to dominate journalists’ attention, especially the attention of those whose beat isn’t health-focused and especially in light of recent resurgences. This leaves little room for non-coronavirus health news.

As PR professionals, we must focus on what makes our healthcare tech clients stand out in order to get those journalists invested.

For example, some healthcare companies are embracing generative AI to transform the way they do healthcare. One of my cli-

ents has a first-of-its-kind app that uses AI to allow users to refill their prescriptions and measure their vitals simply by taking a picture with their smartphone. This streamlines cumbersome healthcare tasks and enables users to check their blood pressure, heart rate, blood oxygen and respiratory rate anytime, anywhere, which could end up saving their lives. Tap into the unique ways your client’s company uses technology to improve healthcare in order to create an engaging story that reporters will cover.

Coupling what makes a healthcare tech client unique with recent research can make their “wow” factor stronger and timelier. My team used a University of Southern California study that stated, “64 percent (of Americans) expressed confidence in their understanding of blood pressure numbers—but only 39 percent actually knew what normal or healthy blood pressure is.” We were able to show the current need for our client’s app, given the public’s lack of knowledge surrounding blood pressure, generating interest from the media, like FOX Health and AARP.

Tie your client into topics that have media hype

Healthcare is complex, to put it lightly. This can make it difficult to get buy-in from journalists who don’t usually cover health and aren’t privy to its terminology, which leads to a lack of coverage. We must speak the same language as journalists and explain our healthcare clients in a way non-healthcare individuals can understand and, more importantly, be interested in. One way to do this is by tapping into the hot trend of the moment.

Let’s return to AI at a slightly different angle. ChatGPT’s rapid rise continues to captivate media outlets everywhere, leading many to cover stories related to generative AI solutions. My team used this to our advantage by tying our healthcare tech client, whose workflow AI system is able to identify first-in-class lead compounds six times faster than traditional approaches, into the ChatGPT and generative AI conversation.

My team developed a PR pitch for our client, asserting that “generative AI will save your life one day.” This pitch highlighted how drug discovery and generative AI can be used to fight disease and ease the pain of patients worldwide. By connecting our

client to a current topic, our pitch caught the attention of *Forbes* and Spiceworks, successfully exposing the client to a wider audience.

Go beyond traditional media outlets to expand opportunities

While getting coverage from traditional media is great and every PR professional’s goal, there are other ways to build awareness for healthcare clients. One method is using podcasts, a growing hub for healthcare industry news and often where health decision-makers find new technologies to implement.



Curtis Sparrer

Choose charismatic and knowledgeable speakers from a healthcare client’s lineup when looking for a spokesperson who would be the best fit for podcasts. We utilized a client spokesperson—whose telehealth platform serves nearly every corner of healthcare—by having them share how telehealth was helping patients and healthcare providers during the pandemic. This helped to promote the client’s organization in a compelling way while informing listeners of the power of telehealth.

Another solution to consider is influencer marketing. Because healthcare is a sensitive topic, it’s essential to work with reputable healthcare influencers who have built trust in their space and have a connection to what your client does. When reaching out to influencers to promote a healthcare tech client, we choose those with solid professional backgrounds and with audiences who matter to our client. This helps to strengthen the credibility of our client’s telehealth platform within and outside of healthcare influencer spaces.

Getting media coverage in an increasingly saturated digital market is tough, but it’s not impossible. By focusing on what makes your client unique, tying them into greater conversations that have media hype and going beyond traditional media outlets to expand opportunities, you can cultivate a winning formula that can increase your healthcare tech clients’ visibility and help them stand out in a crowded market.

Curtis Sparrer is Co-Founder and Principal at Bospar. ○



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How to build partnerships that amplify your impact

Four tips for cultivating partnerships that help extend reach, deepen engagement and maximize the resources of health communications efforts.

By Cecily N. Dumas

Humans are cynical. But in our defense, we need to be.

Every day, we're bombarded with information: whether we're online or offline, when we're at work or off the clock, while we're using our discerning minds or enjoying mindless entertainment.

Maybe our doctor's office sends an email reminding us to schedule a flu shot, a parent pointedly reminds us that we should be getting at least seven hours of sleep a night or a wellness influencer raves about a smoothie delivery service, with a direct link to purchase the product.

We need to quickly decide what we believe is true, relevant to us and worth acting on. We have only so much time and energy, and we can't give our attention to all the messaging and calls to action that demand it. So, how do we decide?

When faced with a barrage of messaging, the information source becomes a cue we use to determine whether to believe and give weight to what we are being told. This is just one reason that engaging trusted voices and organizations is critical to the success of health communications programs.

As health communicators, we have to figure out what will reinforce the credibility of our programs and motivate audiences to adopt our calls to action.

Robust, meaningful partnerships are an essential strategy to this end.

And if done effectively, partnerships can help us achieve so much more. They can enhance our programs, expand reach and engagement among audiences, maximize resources and improve program sustainability.

Below are four approaches to help ensure that everyone—including you *and* your partners—get the most out of your partnerships.

Understand your audiences and engage partners that are most credible to them

While we all can agree that not everything we see or hear is true, that's where the unanimity stops. Our unique experiences—our culture, community, social circles and countless other factors—impact what we view as credible, relatable sources of information.

Use formative research to identify whom your audiences trust and look to for information. Then place those trusted sources

and the organizations that serve them among your priority partners. As you plan your partnership efforts, take care to also consider the appropriateness of the messenger based on the health issue you are trying to affect. Would communication about your health topic feel aligned coming from the organization or person—or would it seem incongruous with their own mission?

By engaging trusted partners to disseminate your messages and align their name with your program, you can increase the likelihood that your audiences will pay attention to and act on your messages.

Engage partners early and often

Bring partners to the table as early as possible in your program planning. The greater opportunity partners have to take part in your planning and establish a presence within your program, the more invested they're likely to feel in the program's success. Don't be afraid to even bring in priority partners from the "ground floor" by allowing them the chance to provide input as you establish your program's goal and brand.

Not only does this go a long way to cultivating a mutually beneficial relationship, as the partner feels—and rightly so—that their own interests are being considered—it also can be a huge boon to your planning, because it helps you uncover areas for collaboration, address gaps and reduce redundancies with what your partners are already doing.

Then, once you have partners at the table, keep them there with regular contact. Give them opportunities to share with you and other program partners their team's impact and present their best practices. This also provides other partners an opportunity to see new approaches that they may like to apply to their own efforts.

Partners who see themselves and their goals reflected in your program are more likely to give their own time to further your impact.

Apply the Golden Rule to your partnerships

Think about all you hope to achieve through partnerships—maybe it's expanded reach and deeper engagement among audiences, improved credibility, maximized resources or program sustainability. What can you offer in return? The stron-

gest and most enduring partnerships are mutually beneficial.

Don't enter any partner conversations with only asks. Be prepared to share what your partners will gain by collaborating with you.

Perhaps it's promoting their activities through your own communications channels. Or it could be sharing your expertise, such as having your subject matter experts join them in a presentation.

Take care to consider what the organization may find valuable and tailor your offerings accordingly.

Tailor your outreach and asks to the individual partner

Not all partners are created equal. And thank goodness! Do your homework and customize your collaboration ideas based on the capacity and goals of the partner.

For example, don't assume that a constant ask among your partners will be for them to disseminate your resources via their social media channels. Some organizations may have a strong social media presence among your audiences, while others may be able to connect you with subject matter experts or even audience members to feature in your program materials and outreach.

If you activate your partners in the ways that best fit their own capabilities and interests, they'll see that you recognize the unique value they bring to the program and feel galvanized to continue supporting you.

That's just the beginning

These four approaches are just the beginning when it comes to building robust, lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships. The list is far from comprehensive, and though it takes time and care, partnership development brings great value to our health communications efforts. We're stronger together, and together with partners, we can amplify our impact and achieve wonderful things.

Cecily N. Dumas, MA, is a Vice President in the Health Practice at Hager Sharp in Washington, DC. ○



Cecily N. Dumas



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Handling the journalist, communicator disconnect

How communications pros can meet the needs of journalists and find common ground in a storytelling landscape characterized by disruption.

By Lisa Arledge Powell

Healthcare communicators who understand what's happening in the journalism industry, who adapt to changes in the media and search for new ways to add value, will always come out ahead.

Like many of us, my experience in communications started well before my dive into public relations. I'm a journalism lover at heart and started my career in broadcast news, where I fell in love with storytelling. It's also where I gained the journalist perspective.

Today, I work alongside journalists in my role as the Founder and President of MediaSource, a healthcare public relations agency that helps healthcare organizations elevate their reputation and boost their bottom line. My goal has remained the same over the decades: Tell stories that promote science and medicine, research and boost reputation. That means riding the continuous waves of change that characterize the journalism industry.

For more than three years, journalists and communicators found common ground during the pandemic. Unprecedented levels of stress, burnout and job instability shook the nation. The toll it took created a sense of uncertainty, especially among those close to the epicenter, including healthcare journalists and communicators. Through our shared concerns, we worked together to keep the public informed and educated. Back then, journalists needed us as much as we needed them.

But today, in 2023, we're in a different place. Times are changing and so are the needs of journalists. The "2023 Health Care Journalist & Communicators Survey," conducted by my team at MediaSource, highlights a disconnect in today's media environment between communicators and journalists about the topics they want to cover.

Journalists have issues that they need to report on, and some of those are topics we may not want to talk about as healthcare brands. The media reported high interest in covering politically-coded health stories, including reproductive health (45 percent), gun control and mass casualty events (43 percent) and gender-affirming care (25 percent).

While in many cases journalists are seeking sources to provide an evidence-based perspective, this is still a difficult position

for health communicators. In fact, many of these political topics were among the top issues that communicators said their leadership would find difficult to talk about externally with the number one off-limits topic being reproductive health.

Most health organizations are primarily focused on providing care, wellness and education to patients and their families. A political issue that distracts from this focus may put the organization in a negative light in the eyes of patients, staff or other stakeholders and could lead to a loss of trust.

The lack of interest in addressing some of today's challenging issues can put a strain on the communicator-journalist relationship. If communicators are consistently unable to connect journalists with sources for these topics, it could make getting coverage of a healthcare organization's key topics more difficult.

However, there are ways for communicators to elevate their brand's stories and experts and meet the needs of journalists without stepping into a political minefield.

Promote your solution

While no healthcare brand wants to discuss the problems they may face in challenging areas such as healthcare costs or access to care, if your organization has a solution to a challenging political topic, consider proactively seeking media coverage built around your solution. Before approaching the media, create a roadmap of your ideal story so that you have a guide for working with the journalist. Provide the media with data that showcases your success.

Tout your expert

If your organization feels confident speaking about a challenging issue, a compelling thought leader can bridge the gap by connecting your leadership and point of view to the deeper issues impacting the healthcare industry. For these hot-button stories, it's more important than ever to have a media trained expert who's educated on your organization's message and who understands how to redirect a conversation with a reporter.

Know when to say no

When you encounter a media request that you simply can't accommodate, you should decline the opportunity as quickly as possible. This shows respect for journalists, allowing them adequate time to look for other sources.

Now here's the good news. Many of the issues that journalists said they want to cover aren't politically charged. The top five topics that healthcare journalists said they want to cover today include mental health, the cost of healthcare, access to care, feel-good health stories and equity in healthcare. This provides an opportunity if your key products and services align with topics that journalists want to cover.

Communicators and journalists also share common ground in their desire to improve diversity, equity and inclusion in storytelling. How are communicators doing in providing journalists the diversity that they need?

In the report, 55 percent of journalists said PR professionals are supportive partners in telling diverse stories. However, 30 percent think communicators can do a better job in this space in terms of offering more diverse spokespeople, story topics and expert opinions.

The communications industry is making strides to change the decades-long neglect of these perspectives, and we continue to look within our organizations with renewed perspective to find ways to tell these stories. Promoting diversity and inclusion through storytelling is—and will continue to be—an opportunity for communicators in 2024 and beyond.

What we can take away from the "2023 Health Care Journalist & Communicators Survey" is that while there's opportunity for communicators to be part of stories that their institution seeks to promote, there's a good chance you'll be asked to join the conversation on some less desirable topics. Therefore, you'll need to have a strategy in advance for when and how you will respond.

If you're interested in reading more findings from the survey, such as the state of journalism, content creation, the healthcare communications industry and more, you can download the free report here: mediasourcetv.com/index.php/surveyresults

Lisa Arledge Powell is the President and Founder of MediaSource, an award-winning communications agency that specializes in helping healthcare brands reach their business goals through strategic communications. ○



Lisa Arledge Powell

Meta still dominates social media landscape

Meta-owned properties command the largest social media audiences worldwide and remain a go-to for people's favorite social media activities, according to a recent report. But thanks to Gen Z, popular competing platforms are slowly beginning to edge them out.

By Jon Gingerich

Despite increased competition as well as experiencing a slight dip in monthly users in late 2020, Facebook still leads the pack as the most widely used social platform, according to a report conducted by audience research company GWI.

GWI's flagship report, which highlights trends in the global social media landscape, found that Facebook still accounts for the lion's share of social media activity worldwide among almost all generations. The lone exception to this comes from members of the Gen Z demographic, who cite Instagram as their favorite app by a significant margin. (Gen Z members are also by far the most likely to name video platform TikTok as their favorite app).

Facebook also enjoys the most usage overlap among users with social media accounts elsewhere. For example, 87 percent of LinkedIn users also have a Facebook account they use at least once a month. The same can be said among 83 percent of Twitter users, 83 percent of Snapchat users, 83 percent of TikTok users, 82 percent of Instagram users and 81 percent of Pinterest users.

The only other platform that comes close is Meta-owned property Instagram. 88 percent of Twitter users also use Instagram monthly, as do 88 percent of Snapchat users, 86 percent of Pinterest users, 84 percent of LinkedIn users, 81 percent of TikTok users and 78 percent of Facebook users.

When breaking out people's preferred uses for each platform and what content they turn to when they use these apps, Facebook once again proved itself to be a top performer for users' favorite social activities. 69 percent of Facebook users said they primarily use the mainstay social network to message friends and family, while 61 percent said they use it to post and share photos or videos. Surprisingly, however, news gathering remains a big selling point for the site, as more than half (53 percent) said they use it to keep up-to-date with news/ and events occurring around the world.

Once again, Facebook's photo-sharing cousin Instagram came in second place. The same number of Facebook users who use that site to message friends/family use Instagram to post and share photos or videos (69 percent), while two-thirds (66 percent) use it to find funny or entertaining

content. Instagram remains especially popular with brands, as 58 percent of users said they turn to the platform to research and discover more information about products.

However, TikTok is closing the distance. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of that platform's devotees use it to find funny/entertaining content, effectively placing it neck-and-neck with Instagram. The platform remains mostly unpopular when it comes to finding information about brands, however, as only about a quarter (26 percent) of its users use TikTok for that purpose. Scrolling seems to be a bigger pastime than posting on the site, as only 26 percent of TikTok users like to share photos or videos.

Twitter remains popular despite its myriad troubles under the leadership of Elon Musk. More than half of its users (59 percent) said they use it to keep up-to-date with the news and goings on around the world, while more than a third (37 percent) use it to find funny and entertaining content and 36 percent use it to research information about brands.

Messaging app Snapchat is most commonly used to post and share photos and videos (41 percent) or message friends and family (41 percent). But more than a third also said they use that site to find funny and entertaining content (36 percent).

Community site Reddit bottomed out the list. Finding funny or entertaining content is that site's most popular attraction (38 percent), followed by keeping up-to-date with news (34 percent) or discovering information about brands (29 percent).

As countless other recent studies have

discovered, the GWI report found that Gen Z's social media habits are far different from other generations. For example, while older generations typically use social media to keep in touch with friends/family, fill spare time or read news stories, Gen Z bucks this trend, as they're more interested in seeing what's trending or being talked about, as well finding content and looking for inspiration for things.

A growing number of Gen Z respondents also said they use social media to discover products more than they use search engines.

Gen Z members are also more likely to be active on more social media platforms. The average Gen Z user has seven social media accounts, while the average Gen X user has six and the average Baby Boomers has five.

And it should come as no surprise that Gen Z is also online far more often than their older counterparts. Across every region worldwide, Gen Z members spend more daily time on social media: an average of almost three hours (two hours and 51 minutes) every day.

Perhaps as a result of this, Gen Z are also 30 percent more likely to say they worry about the amount of time they spend on social media, as a third (33 percent) of these respondents said they now try to limit their time on social media, a 15 percent increase from last year.

GWI's "Social: Behind the Screens" report was based on figures drawn from its internal annual research of more than 950,000 Internet users between the ages of 16-64 across 52 global markets. ○

Social media preferred venue to make friends

Many young people today now prefer social media platforms over face-to-face interactions for the purpose of making friends, according to a recent survey by livestreaming platform LiveMe.

The report, which focused on the livestreaming and social-media habits of people between the ages of 18 to 35, shines a light on just how much the online world has caused a seismic shift in societal behaviors—namely, the ways in which we socially connect with others and our ability to make friends. It suggests that social media platforms don't simply foster face-to-face interactions nearly inasmuch as they're re-

placing them, that social media is now the preferred public square for people to build and maintain real-world connections that lead to meaningful friendships.

According to the report, 80 percent of young people surveyed think it's easier or preferred to make friends online rather than meeting them in person.

An additional 70 percent of respondents said they feel more connected to people they meet online than those they interact with in person.

The LiveMe report polled 849 LiveMe users ages 18 to 35 in the U.S. The survey was conducted in September. ○

Leading the conversation on health equity

Healthcare organizations have an opportunity to break barriers and play a critical role in shaping the ongoing conversation surrounding health equity.

By Jen Dobrzelecki

The path to health equity isn't a new story. It's a deeply rooted issue that has persisted for generations and remains at the core of the missions of many healthcare organizations today. From addressing disparities in healthcare access and quality to health outcomes among various racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups to how the COVID-19 pandemic magnified the issue, the need for action is more urgent today than ever before. But with so many organizations, public health advocates, policymakers and health influencers talking about it, is there still an opportunity to build meaningful and distinguishable thought leadership around it?

While it seems like everyone in the healthcare industry is talking about health equity, we must recognize that not all conversations are equal. Some are driven by genuine commitment, backed by real action and investment, while others might appear to be "lip service." And although it seems like the industry is saturated with points of view from individuals and organizations alike, there's still plenty of room to be part of the conversation in an authentic and ownable way. But to do so, one must understand the role that health equity plays in a communications strategy and how the story has and will continue to evolve, as well as embrace some best practices in telling an impactful story.

Talking about health equity is good for business

In the world of healthcare communications today, having a clear and ownable point-of-view on health equity is a necessity for healthcare organizations and their leaders. Prioritizing health equity as a story pillar doesn't only offer an opportunity to build thought leadership. More importantly, it also helps drive real business impact, including:

Values alignment. Demonstrating a commitment to health equity aligns to the social impact values that many organizations operate by, as well as the values that are increasingly important to patients, healthcare professionals, public health experts, policymakers and other industry stakeholders.

Improved reputation. Sharing contributions toward health equity can enhance an organization's reputation and credibility, both internally and externally.

Attracting talent. People want to work for organizations they can stand behind and where they feel like they're contributing to the greater good. A strong commitment to health equity can help attract top talent in an increasingly competitive hiring environment.

Competitive advantage. A distinctive perspective—backed by impactful initiatives—can set an organization apart from competitors and help win the hearts and minds of stakeholders.

Positive impact. Telling stories about health equity can help drive the awareness and action needed to affect positive change in underserved communities.

The next chapter for health equity

The current health equity narrative is multifaceted, focused on themes ranging from socioeconomic, racial, ethnic and gender disparities to access to education and advocacy to diverse representation among healthcare professionals and the healthcare workforce, and more.

As we look to the future, the health equity conversation is poised to evolve, with emerging topics coming to the forefront, including:

Digital equity. Ensuring that all populations, regardless of their socioeconomic status or technological literacy, have access to and can benefit from the innovative digital healthcare solutions of today and tomorrow.

Mental health equity. Recognizing and addressing disparities in mental health access and treatment, particularly in marginalized communities.

Environmental health equity. Tackling environmental factors, such as air and water quality, that disproportionately affect the health of underserved communities, potentially contributing to respiratory conditions, cancer incidences and other health issues.

Education equity. Highlighting how health outcomes can be linked to education, as those with lower levels of education often have less health literacy, leading to less likelihood to seek out preventive care, a lack of understanding of treatments and a greater probability of engaging in risky health behaviors.

Global health equity. Pushing the discussion beyond national borders to address global health disparities and drive a

unified international movement.

Building thought leadership with impact

With so many healthcare organizations and experts competing for share of voice in the health equity conversation, building a thought leadership program on the topic requires a strategic approach that takes into account several core tenets:

Pick a lane. Healthcare organizations that focus on specific areas that align with their health equity mission—rather than trying to boil the ocean—create more meaningful stories with greater impact and a bigger opportunity to be known for something specific and memorable.

Use the right storytellers. Carefully selecting the individuals, either inside or outside the organization is key, those who will lead and share the story. Thought leaders, experts and advocates who look like and represent the communities most impacted create legitimacy.

Authenticity matters. When an organization's commitment to health equity is embedded in its culture and business model, thought leadership on the topic is perceived as genuine and trusted.

Leverage data. Shaping stories around proprietary data and research offers an opportunity to create distinctive and ownable insights, observations and calls for action.

Embrace omnichannel. Tell stories across an integrated channel ecosystem, with messages tailored to resonate with each audience, delivered through the spectrum of platforms where they access and consume information and news.

Showcase real-world impact. Share examples of the work the organization has done and the measurable impact it has made through its health equity initiatives.

Tell stories with heart. Narratives that focus on the human element of health equity can be powerful, meaningful and lasting—and inspire and motivate others to support the mission. Find ways to genuinely share stories of the people and



Jen Dobrzelecki

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The future of media and AI

Artificial intelligence has rapidly accelerated the flow of information, but it hasn't changed the art of storytelling. At least not yet.

By Gloria Vanderham

Artificial intelligence is a consequential technology that many of us are hearing about on a daily basis, and its technological advancements are shaping our industry at an unprecedented pace. There are many ways to evaluate the progress of AI, but one dear to our hearts is how stories are told and news is created by or with it. Let's take a closer look.

AI in newsrooms

The media has gone through a decade of change marked by everything from news deserts and avoidance to layoffs. Now AI is in the newsroom, and content is quickly evolving. Almost two thousand online media professionals recently gathered to discuss that very topic at the Online News Association meeting following the release of the Associated Press guidelines for AI usage.

AI in media can broadly be categorized into two buckets: generative and supportive.

Generative AI generates content and can curate content as well but has a large impact on what people see based on preferences and the algorithms used. An example would be AI writing a basic sports story or quarterly earnings article for AP.

Supportive AI augments and streamlines processes to simplify tasks. An example would be an AI machine transcribing a video. Supportive tends to be more common with 67 percent of journalist respondents saying their newsroom uses AI for recommendations, according to a Reuters study.

The "human" element remains a critical part of storytelling even as AI fundamentally reshapes how newsrooms operate and even becomes a helpful tool. Its technology can parse through analytics to understand audience behaviors, automate transcriptions, sift through large amounts of documents, turn data into text for simple sports or business coverage and streamline tedious communications tasks. All of which gives reporters more time to focus on stories that require extra time and attention.

For instance, AI is now being used by AP to generate more than 3,700 earnings articles each quarter and Reuters says that it handles a whopping 30,000 financial stories a day with AI globally.

New times create new roles. In the newsroom, this may include data scientists, AI specialists, software engineers and staff dedicated to optimizing newsletters, not to mention a new reporting beat that is more

nuanced and emotive. *USA Today*, for example, is looking for "modern storytellers" adept in print, audio and visual journalism. This is welcome news for Swifties, according to recent news that Gannett will be hiring reporters to cover both Taylor Swift and Beyoncé.

AI and communications

From a corporate communications perspective, AI presents its own unique set of challenges and opportunities.

If AI algorithms begin to influence the topics that journalists cover, then corporate communicators need to understand what topics are trending and the vernacular that's recognizable to AI gatekeepers.

Many times, we're speaking about the same topic but not using the same language. AI can offer insights on specific vernacular that will make pitching journalists more effective and the content more engaging. Axios reported that writing staff were three times more likely to respond to pitches with the term "generative AI." But that won't last. Creativity and a great story will always do better than all of us repeating each other's actions.

We're already seeing "no AI-generated responses" on reporter queries and in email pitch conversations, which shows there is no substitution—yet—for good old-fashioned communications.

Not all uses of AI are good, of course. It's equally important for corporate communications leaders to recognize and prepare for how bad actors use AI and social media, alternative media, the dark web and app communities to plan their targets and execute attacks. These bad actors are improving their game at the same time we are.

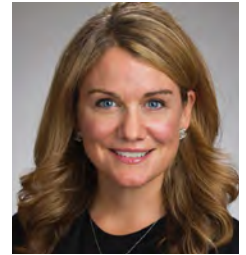
And back inside our companies, we know that 85 percent of communications professionals are concerned about the potential legal and ethical issues that come with generative AI technologies, while only 11 percent of companies

currently have policies or guidelines in place to guide responsible engagement with generative AI tools in the workplace. That isn't a surprise. It takes time to get governance right, build training programs and educate teams inside our organizations. Patience is a virtue here.

Additionally, as we begin to master where AI can make the most impact, new roles will emerge on our teams. Prompt engineering experts, recast search engineers, analysts and software engineers will operate, regulate and ensure the technology runs smoothly. This creates opportunities for corporate communications leaders to evaluate where their team members can make the most impact and align their skills with the corporation's goals.

While AI lays the foundation for advanced marketing strategies to reach key audiences and continues to evolve by the minute, stay calm and carry on. It doesn't hurt to have a strong partner who's staying current on what's next in this space and you can help take it to the next level.

Gloria Vanderham is CEO of Bliss Bio Health and NPG Health. ○



Gloria Vanderham

HEALTH EQUITY

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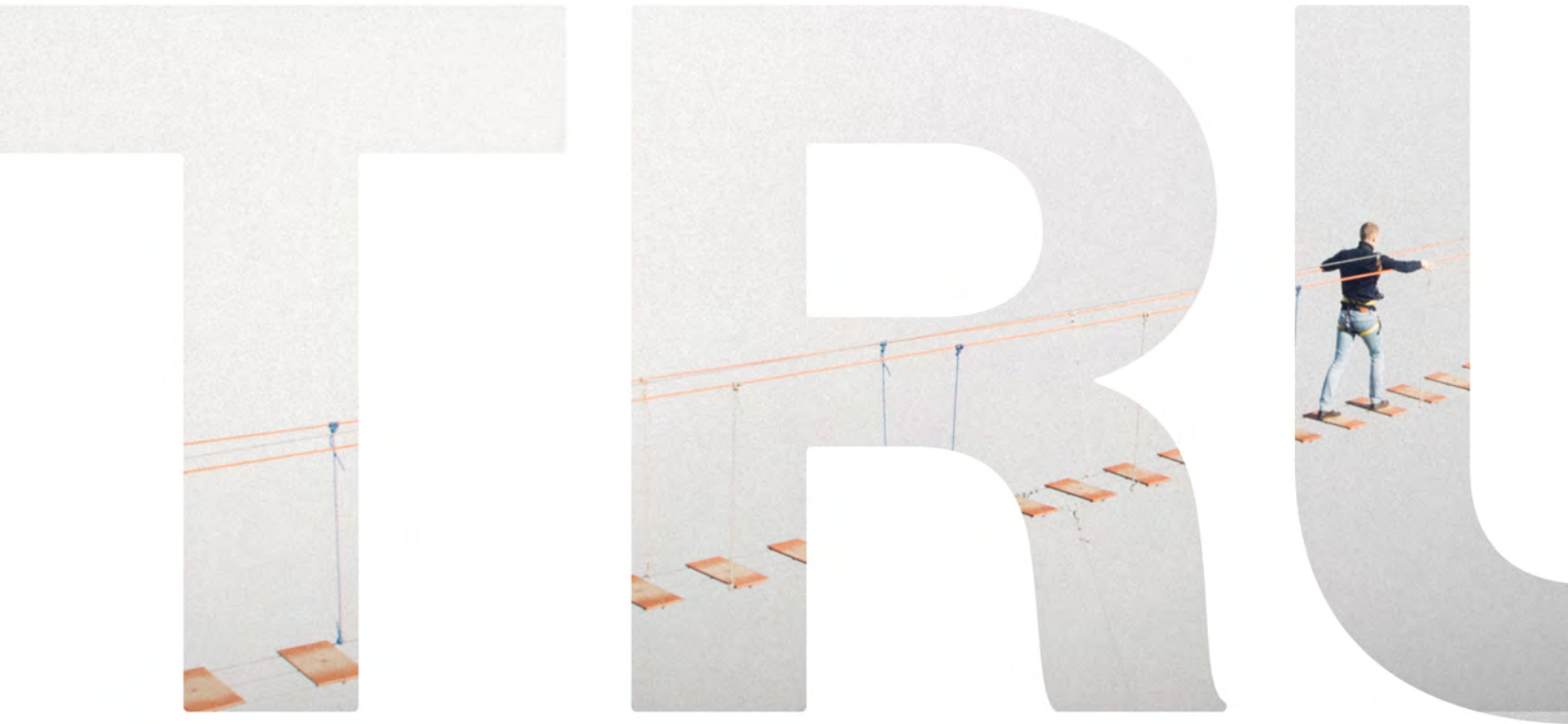
communities whose lives have been transformed by the organization's efforts.

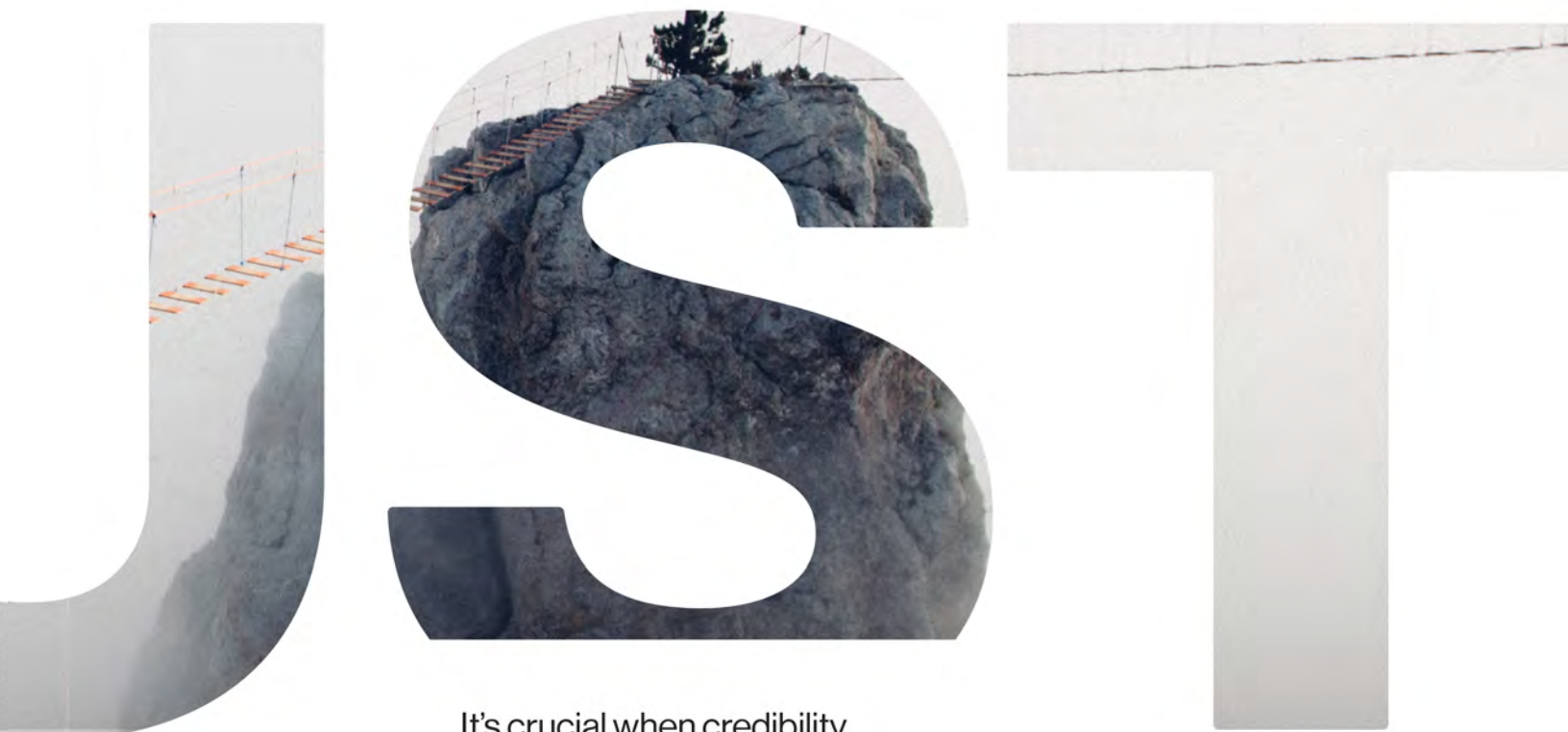
• **Put your money where your mouth is.** Merely talking about health equity isn't enough. To drive thought leadership on the topic, organizations must first make an investment in programs, initiatives and partnerships that contribute to health equity and have tangible results to share.

At a time when healthcare is at the center of the political landscape, policy discussions, the economic climate and the news

agenda, the need to address health equity has never been more critical. Healthcare organizations, including pharmaceutical companies, medical device companies, hospitals, health tech firms and nonprofits, have a unique opportunity to play a pivotal role in shaping the narrative around health equity. By telling stories that humanize their missions, build trust and inspire action, they can drive meaningful change—ultimately contributing to a legacy of equity and inclusivity in healthcare that will benefit generations to come.

Jen Dobrzelecki is Senior Vice President and Health Group Lead at Padilla. ○





It's crucial when credibility
is questioned.

It's the best insurance against
competitive disruption and
consumer indifference.

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Medical excellence in the state of Texas

The Lone Star State's recent victory in landing a \$2.5 billion ARPA-H federal biotech research hub shouldn't come as a surprise. Texas is a global biosciences and medical research powerhouse.

By Thomas Graham

On September 26, the White House announced that a new \$2.5 billion biotech hub would be located in Dallas as part of a Biden Administration initiative to accelerate U.S. biomedical and health research.

The physical core of the new Texas biotech center—one of three national “hubs” announced in September, will be Dallas’ Pegasus Park—but Austin, San Antonio, College Station and Houston will also be supporting the effort. The Dallas center, as the ARPA-H proactive “Customer Experience” hub, will be richly funded and will focus on health solutions, clinical trials and equity in health outcomes for all.

The foundation of today’s success was built over the last decade by a Texas state bond fund, voted in years ago, committed to cancer research, which led to the creation of the powerful Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas in 2007. The institute uses its \$6 billion in funding to award quarterly grants to Texas universities, scientists and companies in several categories. It still represents the largest state cancer research investment in U.S. history.

CPRIT’s CEO Wayne Roberts acted as a principal evangelist and an important leader of the successful coalition to bring ARPA-H to Texas. Roberts had the enthusiastic support of executives from the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and the University of Texas System who had all been beneficiaries of the CPRIT funds in the past.

The Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, known as ARPA-H, will have management over the three national hubs: Dallas, Washington D.C. and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The new ARPA-H is modeled after the U.S. Defense Department’s incredibly successful technology incubator, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. DARPA has been instrumental in almost every major defense tech advance since 1958, including the Internet, hardened electronics, drones and stealth technology.

Just over a year old, ARPA-H hopes to accelerate breakthrough technology in medicine and health—advances that can’t readily be accomplished through traditional commercial or research activity.

The success of Texas in winning its share of the ARPA-H award will come as a bit of a surprise to some. Most think of the more likely centers of med-tech and biotech excellence to be Massachusetts on the East

Coast, California on the West Coast—with some occasional surprises from mid-country med centers in states like Minnesota where the extraordinary Mayo Clinic continuously pioneers new approaches to care and therapy.

I, for one, wasn’t surprised at the new ARPA-H award for Texas. We were a proud partner this year in the coalition to win the ARPA-H competition. But early in our public relations agency’s history we took on the equally daunting task of organizing and promoting the bid of the entire State of Texas and Texas A&M University System to compete for an improbable \$283-million federal biodefense grant, which we roundly won.

That single victory, which came in June 2012, represented the largest federal healthcare grant in our state’s history and further established the foundation of what is today a multi-billion-dollar biodefense and biotech industry in our state.

Leader of that bid was Dr. Brett Giroir, then Vice Chancellor of the Texas A&M University System, who then went on to make more medical history by acting as chief navigator of the nation’s rapid-paced development and delivery of effective COVID-19 vaccines.

Our firm served as “PR agency of record” for the bidding effort from Texas, a statewide initiative that combined and coordinated city governments, hospitals and research centers in the state’s top university systems.

It was a proud moment for us as communicators but more importantly a victory for the real heroes: our too-often unheralded medical teams and research techs across Texas that had been woefully underfunded until that turnaround victory in 2012, men and women of skill and commitment quietly devoting their lives and careers to protecting the health not just of Americans but of humans all over the planet.

Today, bioscience in Texas is booming, which was also a principal attractor to the ARPA-H decision: The Texas Healthcare & Bioscience Institute reported last November that the industry employed more than 116,000 across 7,462 Texas business establishments in 2021, and it continues to grow at a rapid rate. From 2018 through 2021, industry employment grew by 15 percent, outpacing national industry growth.

Some additional numbers, thanks to THBI:

- Texas is now among the top tier of states measured not only in the size of its industry base, but in several additional measures of its innovation ecosystem, including university R&D expenditures which exceeded \$4.1 billion in 2020; NIH funding at more than \$1.5 billion in 2021; venture capital investments with nearly \$4.9 billion from 2018-21; and in bioscience-related patent awards where 5,312 were awarded to state inventors since 2018.

- Texas has the third-highest academic bioscience R&D expenditures and the fourth-highest growth rate—however, at a per capita rate alone, we’re not even in the top 10. That’s an interesting dichotomy and either a good news point or an indicator of a need for increased funding, depending on how you look at it.

Four of the state’s five major bioscience subsectors, according to THBI, contributed to the overall industry job gains.

In the past, major medical advances in Texas history were usually disaster driven. One of the earliest surges came in the immediate wake of the 1920 Black Death plague that left more than a dozen dead in Galveston, which was preceded by more than one outbreak of yellow fever. Galvestonians experienced at least nine yellow fever epidemics between 1839 and 1867 alone, most if not all arriving by sea.

One of the first nationally respected healthcare facilities in the State of Texas, The University of Texas Medical Branch, began in Galveston as the state’s first medical school in 1891. The medical school is still there but UTMB today is also home to the Galveston National Biocontainment Laboratory, one of this century’s leading international centers for the study of exotic disease diagnosis and pandemic containment.

From Galveston on the coast to now Pegasus Park, a 26-acre life science and social impact-focused campus in Dallas in north Texas, the state is now firmly established as the third coast in biosciences and medical research, one that for many years to come will be among the world’s major life sciences centers of excellence.

Thomas Graham is President, CEO and Founder of Crosswind Media & Public Relations in Austin, Texas. ●



Thomas Graham

How to build engaging stories in healthcare

Navigating the crowded digital landscape in healthcare is a high-stakes challenge that demands more than just visibility—it requires building trust and influencing change.

By Kevin Lamb

In the modern world, where digital platforms teem with information, the quest for visibility and relevance is more challenging than ever. This challenge becomes exponentially more complex in the healthcare sector, where the stakes are high: emotionally, physically and, sometimes, a literal matter of life and death. One proven tactic to capture attention, foster trust and, most importantly, influence change is through authentic storytelling.

The essence of authenticity

In healthcare communications, authenticity isn't just an accessory; it's a critical cornerstone upon which trust and communications are built. While the term itself is used frequently, its interpretation may vary. It's best defined by how the audience interprets the message. Rather than being an inherent trait, authenticity is best achieved by constructing stories that resonate with the audience, with the consistent core principles of relatability and believability.

While patient testimonials are the conventional route to establishing a connection with audiences, authentic storytelling taps into the emotional fabric of an audience, weaving narratives from real experiences and borrowing from time-tested narrative elements like plot, character, thought, diction and spectacle. Pulling it all together requires strategic planning and keen insight.

Strategies for authentic storytelling

As you prepare for your next big campaign, here are three impactful approaches to consider when building authentic and engaging storytelling strategies:

The power of inspiration

Inspirational stories can uplift an entire community. Take, for example, the Humana Game Changers, a program we created with Humana to highlight athletes aged 50 and over who are participating in the National Senior Games. Selected from tens of thousands of participating athletes, each "game changer" personifies the attributes of active aging through their own awe-inspiring life story, from surviving near-fatal accidents to achieving sobriety to receiving a liver transplant.

Their authentic impact lies not in their athletic abilities but in their true selves. They're not professional athletes but everyday people who embody the concept of active aging and, in doing so, enable a ripple effect of inspiration through storytelling. Over the past decade, the program

has brought forth the stories of numerous people who've inspired many, a testament to Humana as a champion for seniors.

Stories of tragedy and triumph

Narratives around struggle and resilience strike a chord with virtually everyone. The opioid crisis, a challenge many face but few discuss, was explored profoundly in "GATEWAY," a documentary film project we developed in collaboration with Pacira BioSciences, Inc.

The project delved into the often-underreported avenue of surgery as a gateway to opioid addiction. Evolving from a series of testimonials into a full-length documentary, "GATEWAY" provided a poignant and emotionally charged look at the devastating impact of opioid misuse and the resilient spirit of individuals battling addiction through their personal journeys: a resilient woman from Maryland who faced addiction following a C-section; a high school athlete from New Mexico who battled opioid misuse following a sports injury; a tenacious young woman from New Jersey fighting addiction for several years; and a nationally-recognized clinician whose mission is to reduce opioid prescriptions following surgery.

By blending the elements of tragedy and triumph, this film turned a clinical debate into a compelling and authentic call to arms, providing a body of work to educate various stakeholders about the issue to influence change.

Embracing vulnerability

A genuine connection comes when people share their vulnerabilities. Baseball legend and entrepreneur Alex Rodriguez partnered with OraPharma to share his personal journey with gum disease, a common yet stigmatized chronic oral health condition.

Rodriguez's collaboration with OraPharma to discuss his experience with gum disease brings authenticity to a new level. A condition that often goes undiagnosed yet is especially prevalent among Latino men, Rodriguez's openness struck a chord with the media and the community, garnering almost 1,000 stories and more than five billion media impressions in just one day. Most importantly, though, is that in his willingness to share his journey, Rodriguez illustrated the strength and power that comes from vulnerability and the impact one authentic story can have on countless others.

The authentic takeaway?

Storytelling in healthcare isn't merely a box to be checked; it's an impactful strategy that, when done authentically, can drive engagement and change lives. Whether it's inspiring audiences through the real-life stories of "game-changing" individuals, raising awareness about the complexities of a critical public health crisis or destigmatizing common health issues through celebrity narratives, the foundation starts with authenticity. Authentic storytelling builds trust, catalyzes behavioral change and fosters a sense of community, ultimately amplifying the effectiveness of healthcare brands and the value they bring to patients and their families.

By taking the time to lean into the authentic narrative, using well-crafted stories rooted in the principles of inspiration, tragedy, triumph and vulnerability, PR professionals can deliver campaigns that resonate with audiences and have a lasting impact. Authenticity isn't just a buzzword; it's essential for meaningful engagement and impactful healthcare communications.

Kevin Lamb is Senior Vice President at Coyne PR. ○



Kevin Lamb

PR news brief

FTI Consulting handles \$5.6B Twinkies deal

FTI Consulting is handling Hostess Brands as the marketer of Twinkies, Ding Dongs and Zingers agrees to be acquired by J.M. Smucker Co. in a deal worth \$5.6 billion.

The \$34.25 cash/stock transaction represents a 54 percent premium from Hostess' closing stock price on Aug. 24, the day prior to news reports about the potential takeover.

Andy Callahan, Hostess CEO, said he's proud of the team "for the legacy they created in building a premier snacking company and driving industry leading returns for our investors."

Mark Smucker said his company is adding "an iconic sweet snacking platform, enhancing our ability to deliver brands consumer love and convenient solutions they desire."

His Orrville, OH-based company markets Smucker's jellies/jams, Jif peanut butter, Milk Bone dog treats, Meow Mix cat food and Folgers coffee.

FTI Consulting's Pat Tucker, Brian Waldman and Kyla MacLennan represents Lenexa, KS-headquartered Hostess.

Embracing a digital-first future

Trends and implications for modern communicators working in the healthcare sector.

By Steve Halsey

The digital age has irreversibly changed the way industries operate, and healthcare is no exception. As this sector speeds towards personalization and precision in care, communicators find themselves at the crossroads of both challenges and opportunities. The evolving trends define not just the path healthcare organizations should adopt but also how communicators strategize and execute their narratives.

G&S Business Communications delved into this phenomenon to understand it better. On September 21, 2023, we conducted a survey involving 284 U.S. adults. The objective was to tap into the pulse of consumer expectations and feelings regarding personalization, convenience, and workplace culture in healthcare delivery.

A snapshot of our findings

The data gathered painted a clear picture of what the modern healthcare consumer craves. A remarkable 47 percent emphasized that personalized care, designed around their unique needs and preferences, tops their list of expectations from healthcare providers. Their perception of healthcare has evolved, influenced by other sectors. Nearly half—49 percent—articulated their desire for healthcare experiences to mirror those they have with banks, grocery stores, and online retailers. They underscored the importance of quick access to information, seamless interactions, and convenience. An interesting revelation was the weight consumers placed on organizational culture. Of respondents, 42 percent voiced that it's absolutely essential for healthcare organizations to adapt their workforce culture to resonate with the digital age's demands. And, that same percentage said that workforce culture directly impacts patient care.

As communicators, it's our prerogative to translate these insights into actionable strategies. Let's delve into the top five trends and their implications for modern-day healthcare communicators.

The power of personalized messaging

Gone are the days when generic messages sufficed. Today's patients, equipped with vast information sources, yearn for communication that speaks to them. They want to feel seen and understood. The pivot towards tailored healthcare solutions, with treatments designed around individual patients, has set the stage for expectations in communication.

Implication: This trend mandates a deeper

dive into data analytics and audience segmentation. As communicators, we need to craft nuanced narratives. It's about sculpting a core message, then tweaking it to cater to varied demographic or psychographic profiles. Mastery over big data analytics becomes paramount, bridging the gap between what patients want to hear and what healthcare institutions wish to convey.

The digital ecosystem confluence

Today, the boundaries separating PR, digital marketing, and social media have grown fuzzy. These domains converge as patients seek a unified digital experience, spanning websites, social media platforms, and even virtual health consultations.

Implication: Siloed strategies won't cut it anymore. We need to conceive integrated campaigns that dovetail into the broader digital blueprint. To win, we must harmonize communications strategies to ensure that the patient's journey, from information-seeking to actual care, is seamless.

Racing against time

In today's hyper-connected world, news travels fast, and so do opinions, reviews, and crises. The digital age demands swiftness, but not at the cost of precision.

Implication: Preparedness becomes the cornerstone of modern communications. Real-time monitoring tools, agile response teams, and crystalline crisis communication blueprints need to be in place. Moreover, regular drills simulating potential crises will ensure that teams are primed to tackle real-life challenges.

Building blocks of trust

Trustworthiness is the bedrock of the healthcare sector. The digital age, marked by an overflow of information, has made patients more discerning. They seek transparency—a clear view of how care is delivered, how drugs are developed, and how their data is utilized. This also includes providing clear counsel on the effective and ethical uses of AI in developing and disseminating health-related information in order to support—not undermine—trust.

Implication: As guardians of communication, we must champion transparency. Open dialogues, patient engagement initiatives, and lucid communication about processes and policies become vital. Our strategies must pivot around creating an environment of trust and openness.

Advocacy from within

Organizations are as strong as the people who drive them. As the healthcare sec-

tor negotiates the digital age's intricacies, workforce culture assumes center stage. Employees are more than mere staff; they represent the brand, its values, and its promises. Their experience of organizational culture has a large and direct impact on how patients experience care.

Implication: Internal communication is not just a necessity but a strategic tool. We need to create robust employee engagement programs, fostering a culture where every team member feels informed and empowered. When employees turn brand ambassadors, the authenticity of communication multiplies.

As we stand on the cusp of transformative changes, the healthcare sector's trajectory seems clear. Personalization, bolstered by digital tools, is the way forward. For communicators, this era is replete with challenges but also abundant with opportunities. By understanding these emerging trends, by harnessing their potential, we can steer healthcare communication towards a future where it's not just about speaking but about making every word count.

A digital-first future beckons, promising a tapestry where genuine communication, transparency, and impact intertwine. Let's embrace it.

Steve Halsey is Chief Growth Officer at G&S Business Communications. ○



Steve Halsey

PR news brief

ICR acquires UK's Consilium

ICR has acquired Consilium Strategic Communications, the London-based healthcare communications and investor relations firm.

The deal, which caps about a decade of joint venture activity between the firms, will result in the combination of Consilium's 45 staffers with ICR's Westwicke and its more than 70 healthcare pros to create an entity that serves nearly 200 clients.

The Consilium acquisition provides ICR its first official on-the-ground presence in Europe, broadening its global footprint from North America and the Asia Pacific regions.

Tom Ryan, ICR CEO, said: "Consilium has long been recognized as the preeminent healthcare communications and advisory firm across Europe and our years of collaboration have allowed us to learn firsthand what makes them so unique."

Mary-Jane Elliott, Managing Partner, and Amber Fennell, Senior Partner, launched Consilium in 2013.

They will join the ICR healthcare leadership team that includes Mark Klausner and Bob East (IR); and Terri Clevenger and Michael O'Brien (PR).



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O'Dwyer's Industry Rankings: #10 Healthcare and #27 Overall

Tapping AI for faster insights, deeper connections

How a new tool that leverages the latest in artificial intelligence-powered technology is helping our clients gain valuable insights and foster deeper connections with audiences.

By Ken Deutsch and Debra Skinner

A medical device company recently approached us with an intriguing challenge. The company was preparing to introduce a new product and wanted JPA Health to develop both communications and marketing messaging to support the launch.

However, that messaging had to be directed at distinct medical professionals: in this case, obstetrician-gynecologists, urologists and primary care physicians, as well as to patients.

To help us create this complex campaign, we turned to GRETEL Trails, JPA Health's newest tool, which leverages the latest in artificial intelligence-powered technology to offer our clients seamless access to real-world insights from patients, healthcare providers and other key audiences.

With its easy-to-use chatbot interface and an ability to process staggering amounts of data at lightning speed, GRETEL Trails gave us a powerful foundation to build upon.

Working within a secure environment, we quickly "trained" GRETEL Trails on the nuances of the assignment and which datasets from our library of market research would be most advantageous to leverage. Then, with just a few keystrokes, GRETEL Trails began providing valuable insights about these nuanced audiences.

For example, it told us that OB/GYNs are particularly interested in the efficacy and safety of treatments and that they prioritize patient comfort and minimizing side effects. Even more helpful, it recommended emphasizing the results of clinical studies and stressing that the device offered a non-drug, non-surgical solution for a common medical problem.

And GRETEL Trails was just getting started. For example, our research indicated which healthcare providers had used similar treatments in the past. We integrated that information into our database, which allowed GRETEL Trails to draft personalized letters to these doctors who introduced the product and offered to arrange a call or meeting to discuss it in more detail. It was even able to recommend how our client should present their new device at medical conferences, as well as which ones to attend.

To understand the sophistication of GRETEL Trails, one must first turn to GRETEL, the industry's leading healthcare insights engine. JPA Health developed GRETEL over the last decade as a research tool—similar to focus groups and survey responses—that allows us to use social media as a proxy for how audiences engage on health issues, because it gathers and stores data on their interests and sources.

With GRETEL, we not only monitor those engagements, but we can also identify key stakeholders who influence the conversations, based on how frequently they're referenced, or their posts are shared by audiences talking about a particular issue or topic. GRETEL combines this trove of information with a database of more than 22,000 top health journalists.

GRETEL improved our ability to target messages to diverse audiences, but processing these massive datasets could be time-consuming—a problem solved by the arrival of GPT-4, the largest AI-powered natural language chatbot ever built. Combining GRETEL and GPT-4 to create Gretel Trails gave us an interface that understands and responds to prompts in plain English—no knowledge of analytics or technical know-how required—and powers precision insights in seconds.

Insights generated by GRETEL Trails provide our team members with a first draft to build on and develop with their healthcare expertise and years of experience—and the breadth of what this platform can do and tell us seems limitless.

Consider the role GRETEL Trails recently played in our work with the Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation, a philanthropic organization seeking to improve equitable access to supportive care for all people affected by cancer. Clinical studies show that people with cancer have better outcomes when they receive comprehensive supportive cancer care, which collectively addresses their complex clinical, physical, emotional and social needs.

Our work began with traditional data gathering, which included a comprehensive landscape analysis, stakeholder mapping and market research, including surveys of patients and HCPs, and in-depth interviews with policy influencers.

We then trained GRETEL Trails with this raw data, as well as a year's worth of social media posts about supportive care and other information on oncology and health policy.

GRETEL Trails was able to rapidly interpret these very large research datasets and generate actionable insights in real-time on how best to engage and communicate with multi-sector, cross-discipline stakeholders to make supportive care a reality for every patient in the United States.

For example, we asked GRETEL Trails to suggest main message points for each audience (patients and caregivers, cancer care professionals, healthcare executives, policymakers, employers, payers and pharmaceutical leaders) and strategies for reaching them, which helped kick off brainstorming for our team.

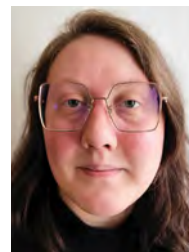
And there's so much more that GRETEL Trails can do. Need a first draft of an op-ed? A press release? Ideas for visuals that will resonate with audiences? Whether it's to craft brand messaging or spark creative concepts, this innovative platform helps our team and clients understand their audiences and deliver highly targeted messages.

Importantly, GRETEL Trails is 100 percent private and secure: Client information is never made available to GPT-4 and isn't used to train its artificial intelligence. GRETEL Trails is just one of the ways JPA Health is providing faster insights and helping our clients foster deeper connections with its audiences.

Ken Deutsch oversees research and insights work at JPA Health and is lead developer of GRETEL and GRETEL Trails. Debra Skinner is a research manager for JPA Health and is the primary lead on GRETEL research. ○



Ken Deutsch



Debra Skinner



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Seven tips for success at CES 2024

How to put your best foot forward at CES 2024, the big consumer electronics show that takes place in Las Vegas in January.

By Chip Scarinzi

I live in the San Francisco Bay Area, which means we're entering the warmest months of the calendar year: A late summer after the cool ocean breezes and heavy fog of June, July, and August. However, that doesn't mean the mind shouldn't drift toward the winter months. In fact, if you're planning on making some noise at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in January, the clock is already ticking.

The world is different now than it was a few years ago, as much as we're all "getting back to normal," more or less. And while CES 2023 drew a smaller crowd than we had all grown accustomed to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was no small step forward that more than 100,000 people returned to Las Vegas last year. One more year removed from the worst of things, all signs point to many more adding the largest consumer products showcase in the world to their calendars in 2024.

So, with that in mind, it's time to start acting on your most ambitious CES aspirations. As you begin the planning process, here are a few things to keep in mind to ensure your next visit to the Las Vegas Strip is your best yet:

Tap into key CES topics of note. Every year, the Consumer Technology Association settles on an overarching theme for CES. In 2024, and for the second year in a row, they'll emphasize the collaborative campaign, Human Security for All. Emerging from a partnership between several organizations including the CTA, the initiative focuses on the role technology can play in improving the human condition. There are many ways of interpreting this purpose, but brands participating in CES this year should consider what role they or their products play in making life better for all—be it access to healthcare, food security, personal safety and privacy, or otherwise. There will always be value in aligning your CES strategy with key themes, but making an authentic (that part is important) connection with the theme of doing good for humanity is something we should all probably give a bit more thought.

Lean into CES' reputation as a new product show. After all these years, CES is still very much a new product show. So, what's new within the walls of your company? While it's best to announce products that will, at some point, be made available for purchase, don't be afraid to pull the curtain back a bit and share some under-devel-

opment product innovation that may still be a bit further away. CES is an opportunity to showcase innovation—both in the here and now, as well as what may yet come.

Immersive, hands-on experiences often deliver the goods. While you will surely do a lot of talking at CES, it's best to let your CES story and products speak for you. How? As your team begins to map out the brand experience at the show, consider how you might be able to give booth or suite attendees—especially media and analysts—immersive, hands-on time with your product(s). It's one thing to tell someone you have a great product, but another thing entirely to let them experience it for themselves.

Consider a surround-sound content strategy for your brand, not just your news. Every year, a few brands will dominate CES media coverage simply by virtue of their reputation for innovation. However, a little creativity and rigor around content development can go a long way toward ensuring success for your brand. For example, carve out time and structure for your teams on the ground at the show to embrace the broader CES experience. Set them loose with a smartphone and a well-organized plan and turn them into roving content creators. While many brands focus their energy on securing media coverage, briefing analysts, executing a few strategic social posts, and meeting with partners and customers, there's broader opportunity for exposure with a little creative will and permission to roam. One cautionary note: Make sure to set clear creative guardrails so those smartphone videos shine vs. embarrass.

Start everything early—earlier than you think. We all know the dates of CES—why put anything off? I've always advocated for deploying a far-reaching pre-brief media strategy because I find it's the absolute best way to set product launches and brand experiences up for success while easing the burden on reporters who will undoubtedly be pulled in a million directions as the show comes into focus. If you've waited to pitch the media until launch day, it's too late.

Don't forget the folks at home. If the virtual CES of 2021 taught us anything, it's that it is entirely possible to build a winning CES program—and from a media perspective, cover the show—from the comfort of home. And while many reporters returned to Las Vegas in 2023 (you may recall that 2022 was a bit of a washout in terms of me-

dia attendance due to a COVID-19 surge), media outlets sent fewer reporters than in pre-pandemic times. I'd expect that this will continue, though I'm sure we'll see a few more reporters roaming the halls on tired legs. Still, the brands generating the most attention will be the ones who create positive experiences for those covering the show from far afield.

And finally, yes, ask yourself if you have an AI story. There's no avoiding the inevitable AI spotlight at CES 2024. The various permutations of Generative AI have been topics of the year and will surely be on the tip of everyone's tongue at CES 2024. How is AI impacting your brand? How has it impacted product development, if at all? Consider what might be possible to say about this burgeoning technology that has carved out sizeable real estate in 2023 tech conversations and will only continue to grow in influence and impact. But don't just force an AI angle because it's all the rage—make sure your AI story is authentically yours and maps honestly to your product narrative and brand value.

The beauty of CES is that there are a million ways to run a successful program. And every year, it's fun to do a bit of tinkering and try new things.

Hope to see you in Las Vegas!

Chip Scarinzi is head of technology at Rud-er Finn. ○



Chip Scarinzi

PR news brief

Joele Frank readies MEI's defense

Joele Frank represents MEI Pharma, a clinical development company working on cancer drugs, as it confirms that it has received nominations of three director candidates from Anson Advisors Inc. and Cable Car Capital to stand for election at its 2024 annual meeting.

"Anson and Cable Car have been running an opportunistic campaign to take control of the company without paying what the board believes is an appropriate premium to do so," said MEI's statement.

After discussions with Anson and Cable Car reps, MEI claims "they have a single-minded agenda to obtain the company's cash now without paying a premium, regardless of the opportunity cost to MEI's development programs and other stockholders."

MEI's board will review the Anson and Cable Car nominees in accordance with corporate governance guidelines and its fiduciary duties to all stockholders.

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher has Dan Katcher and Aaron Palash reprising San Diego-based MEI.

Ford Motor snags Toyota's Materazzo

Ford Motor Company has recruited Toyota North America Group VP, Marketing Lisa Materazzo as Global CMO.

Materazzo succeeds Suzy Deering, who exited the company late last year.

During two decade-long stints at Toyota, Materazzo's responsibilities included leading marketing for the company's Lexus unit, as well as overseeing market planning, advertising, digital platforms, experiential marketing, motorsports and the Toyota Dealer Association.

She has also overseen over automotive marketing for AOL, and was named "Automotive Marketer of the Year" by Media Post this year.

In her new post, she heads up product planning and marketing across Ford's customer-centered business groups: Model E, which focuses on electric vehicles; Blue, which produces vehicles with combustion engines; and Pro, its commercial-vehicle unit.

She also is responsible for marketing for Ford Performance, the company's high-performance motorsports and racing division, and its Lincoln luxury-vehicle unit.

Materazzo arrives at Ford as it faces a struggle to claim a larger share of the electric vehicle market and the possibility of a strike by the United Auto Workers. ○



Lisa Materazzo

Dandridge returns to AIG

Ed Dandridge, who served as Chief Marketing and Communications Officer of general insurance at AIG from 2018-2020, is returning to the organization as Executive VP and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, effective October 16.

Dandridge rejoins AIG from ScaleWith, an environmental- and social impact-focused tech company, where he served as President. Before that, he was Senior VP and CCO at Boeing. He has also held senior posts at companies including Nielsen, ABC



Ed Dandridge

and the National Association of Investment Companies.

In his new post, Dandridge will lead the global teams that shape AIG's corporate reputation including brand, marketing, and external and internal Communications. He will also collaborate with AIG's investor relations, government relations and corporate social responsibility teams and work to advance AIG's global brand in the marketplace. ○

Finn Partners ups King

FINN Partners has promoted Kristina King to Partner for the FINN financial services practice.

King has been with FINN since 2021, previously serving as a VP. Before that, she was Senior Manager, Strategic Communications at HUGE and also worked at Ogilvy PR and FleishmanHillard.

In her new position, King will continue to oversee key client relationships, collaborating closely with cross-practice teams to develop and execute integrated communications campaigns and deploy strategies to drive measurable business results.

She will also take on a more significant role in shaping the practice's strategic direction and contributing to its overall growth and development. ○



Kristina King

FTI Consulting's Wong returns to FH

FTI Consulting Strategic Communications Senior Managing Director Joanne Wong is headed back to FleishmanHillard, where she will be President of the agency's Asia Pacific operations.

Wong was previously with FH from 2000 to 2019, last serving as its Executive Vice President, Managing Director, Client Service and Head of Business Development for APAC.

At FTI, Wong advised and worked with clients from the financial services, professional services, banking, manufacturing and supply chain, healthcare, energy and natural resources, technology and consumer sectors.



Joanne Wong

In her new position, Wong will oversee FH's operations in nine countries across the APAC region. Her responsibilities will include developing and organizing new-business efforts, managing the region for growth and profitability, developing high-functioning colleagues and teams, and leading with a focus on respect, collaboration and inclusion at the core of the business. ○

GMMB's Bataille moves to Aledade

GMMB Managing Director and Senior VP Julie Green Bataille joins Aledade, a network of primary care practices with nearly 1.7 million patients, as its Senior VP of Communications.



Julie Green Bataille

Bataille had been with GMMB since 2015, working with non-profit, public and private sector clients on issues affecting the healthcare system.

Before that, she was Director of the office of communications at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

She has also served as Associate VP of Communications at Georgetown University, Deputy Director of Communications for Al Gore's 2000 presidential campaign, Press Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education and Assistant Press Secretary in the Clinton White House. ○

Watson flies to Orioles

Kerry Watson has joined the Baltimore Orioles Major League Baseball team as EVP, Public Affairs, a new position.

He will oversee government affairs, communications, community development, and creative content.

Watson joins the team from MGM Resorts International, where he rose to the Regional VP-government affairs post in DC.

Earlier, he was government relations consultant for Alexander & Cleaver lobbying firm in Annapolis and Senior Advisor to Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker.

Before entering the government affairs business, Watson was a police officer for Prince George's County. ○



Kerry Watson



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Annette Banca, Managing Partner & EVP, Health & Wellness
Dara Busch & Matt Caiola, Co-CEOs

5W's award-winning health and wellness PR practice creates and executes communications plans that succeed in this multi-dimensional world. Our range of experience spans from long-established product categories like vitamins and supplements, diet, sports and fitness, and functional nutrition to brands and physicians in both the physical and mental health space, as well as a growing pharma division. We also excel in emerging areas of opportunity such as Cannabis, CBD, and psychedelics, and have represented a range of sub-categories within the larger wellness macro trend including healthtech, sexual wellness and femtech, and telehealth and treatment centers.

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.

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We are a fully integrated PR and marketing agency that's been around since 2008, and our work has spanned across various industries, with healthcare becoming a paramount area of business. As a mission driven company, our ultimate goal is to make a positive impact on the communities we engage with and leave them better than we found them. Through a research driven-approach to PR and communications, we've worked with healthcare businesses and organizations to launch campaigns that reach their audience in ways that truly matter.

When it comes to our good work, we don't just talk the talk, we walk the walk. The Abbi Agency has been recognized nationally for healthcare campaigns including at the Public Relations Society of America's 2023 Anvil Awards. Here, we were recognized with an Award of Excellence for our work with Nevada's Health Insurance Exchange, known as Nevada Health Link.

The Abbi Agency was also named one of *PR Daily's* Top Agencies for 2023. We like to think this recognition is a testament to our commitment to excellence, innovation and delivering exceptional work as a top performance marketing agency to each and every one of our clients. When it comes to healthcare, the impact of our work goes beyond clicks, views or other vanity metrics. It's about helping real people and real communities.

We are fiercely independent and true to our mission, vision and values—but also fiercely dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a woman-owned business enterprise, we understand the importance of amplifying underrepresented voices, providing opportunities for diverse career growth, and practicing cultural humility to cater to the unique needs, desires, and perspectives of a diverse constituency.

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For the leading-edge companies changing the way health care is discovered, delivered and paid for, The Bliss Group is the integrated marketing communications partner that helps explain, encourage and activate those changes. We stand apart for our deep understanding of the complex dynamics among patients, payers, physicians and health care providers, and those supporting them in transforming the health care ecosystem.

This deep understanding of the business of health advances the missions and business goals of our clients in deploying population health analytics to support chronic care management, addressing social determinants of health, and nurturing reputations amid shifting competitive landscapes. Our health care storytellers and integrated marketers work with data scientists to pinpoint audience needs, so people remember, and get messages in front of the right eyes, at the right time, via the right channels.

Our business of health work complements our sister life sciences agency, Bliss Bio Health. Ignited by insights and informed by analytics, Bliss Bio Health (BBH) is an AI-infused, next-generation life sciences marketing communications firm that partners with clients across the health continuum from "Atom to Access" to disrupt the healthcare ecosystem and remove barriers to optimal care with an unrelenting focus on the whole person and their health journey.

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Chris Boehlke, Curtis Sparrer, Tom Carpenter, Principals
Paula Bernier, Chief Content Officer

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Jane Barwis, President & CEO
Mike Sloan, COO
Shannon Patrick McDaniel, EVP
Laurie Mobley, EVP

Recent awards for BRG Communications include *PRWeek's* 2023 Outstanding Boutique Agency of the Year and PRSA's Best Boutique Agency of the Year. BRG Communications has also been named a Great Place to Work for the second consecutive year. Founded in 2001, the agency forms strategic campaigns for clients that address critical health and social issues, strengthen brand reputa-



World Series Champion, Alex Rodriguez, joined Coyne client OraPharma to launch the Cover Your Bases campaign—a national awareness initiative to help people understand the signs and symptoms of gum disease and encourage them to talk to their dentist about comprehensive treatment options.

tion, build awareness, educate and drive positive change. BRG clients include corporations, nonprofit organizations, industry associations and medical societies focused on health, science, safety, and wellness.

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There is nothing more precious in life than health. And there is perhaps nothing more personally rewarding than helping someone in need. Parents, caregivers, volunteers, medical professionals, researchers, advocates—they all share a common purpose: to help people. We embrace that purpose and believe we can make a difference by connecting people in need to a treatment, service, or solution

that in some way helps improve their lives.

In partnership with our clients, we embrace the opportunity to change lives by guiding health journeys through information, insights, and inspiration. Data tells you what's happening, stories tell you why it matters. Insights inform new conversations, frame new

perspectives, and inspire people to think differently. Storytelling brings them to life through compelling narratives and inspirational tales of triumph that turn data and content into meaningful connections. That's why we get up in the morning.

Because when it comes to health, everything else comes second.

CROSBY

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Raymond Crosby, President & CEO
Denise Aube, EVP, Healthcare Practice Leader
Rob Schnapp, Executive Creative Director
Suresh John, EVP, Digital Strategy & Analytics
Anna Zawislanski, EVP, Government Practice Leader
Pam Atkinson, EVP, Director of Connection Planning

For almost 50 years, Crosby has helped healthcare clients Inspire Actions That Matter™—actions that positively impact people's lives and contribute to the greater good – while building their brands and business.

Crosby's Healthcare Practice serves hospitals and health systems, health plans, physician groups, technology and service providers, seniors housing, health advocacy groups and federal government agencies.

Services include marketing research and planning, brand development, experience design, public relations, social media, partner and community mobilization, digital marketing and web development,

— Continued on page 40



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

CROSBY

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multicultural outreach, PSAs, and behavior-change campaigns.

Clients include the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Kaiser Permanente, OrganDonor.gov, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

O'Dwyer's ranks Crosby #10 among the top health communications agencies in the country. Crosby is a member of the PR Council, American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As), and the Diversity Action Alliance, and is a Google Premier Partner. The firm has offices in Maryland's capital of Annapolis and in Washington, D.C. To see case studies and capabilities, visit www.crosbymarketing.com.

CROSSWIND

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Since 2008, Crosswind Media & Public Relations has helped healthcare leaders across the country stay at the forefront of conversations that matter. As a full-service communications and public relations agency, our experts bring decades of experience to brand enrichment, effective messaging and compelling public dialogue. We use our innovative approach in public relations, traditional and digital media, research, brand enrichment and marketing to develop fully integrated and multi-channel campaigns that make a difference. We believe in fashioning purposeful and impactful conversations that build pathways to success for more people, more often.

EDELMAN

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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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Southeast Health Group
Gil Bashe, Managing Partner/
Chair Global Health, and Purpose

FINN Partners champions innovation across the health ecosystem. Our health clients include visionaries and game-changers from across the health industry, including top-20 pharmaceutical companies, the nation's largest hospitals and payer systems, and many of the world's boldest companies in artificial intelligence, digital health, health information technology and medical devices. Ranked among the world's largest independent health practices, The FINN Global Health Practice includes more than 300 colleagues dedicated to the health sector, spanning nearly 100 countries.

Ranked by O'Dwyer's among the leading health sector agencies and named "Healthcare Agency of the Year" by PRovoke and health-sector trade group HITMC, FINN delivers extraordinary service and value to every client through product communications, clinical-trial patient recruitment, digital marketing, investor relations, issues management, scientific publication support, thought-leadership strategy and traditional and social media.

Across the health industry, FINN is recognized for its work in transforming people's lives by championing health innovation. Whether introducing new medicines and technologies that improve and extend life, uniting patient communities through advocacy platforms, supporting breaking science or raising awareness of unmet health needs, and elevating the work of provider systems, FINN has become the leading partner in helping clients to make a difference.

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

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, a distinction it has held since 2001. Headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., and founded in April 1997, FWV has received 30 National Agency

of the Year honors over the past 26 years. Its professional services practice area is ranked 16th in the country.

FWV's category acumen includes private and clinical practices, research labs, health IT companies, laboratory and medical device manufacturers, drug development firms, weight loss centers, medical schools and large pharmaceutical manufacturers. The agency specializes in helping its healthcare clients increase brand awareness among key decision makers for their product lines and services through targeted media outreach, advocacy marketing campaigns, public affairs, special events, trade show support, emerging media applications and crisis communications.

FWV's healthcare and medical marketing experience includes work done on behalf of: A4 Health Systems, Avmacol, bioMérieux, Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Cardinal Health, Catalyst Clinical Research, CeNeRx, Eat Well, EpiPen, Ester-C, Flywheel, Foresight, GlaxoSmithKline, Isagenix, Istari Oncology, Locus Biosciences, MDeverywhere, Medcryption, New Hope Fertility Center, Nutramax Laboratories Consumer Care, Inc., O2 Fitness, Octapharma Plasma, One Medical, Pfizer, Proctor & Gamble (Prilosec), Quest Diagnostics, Southtech, Sterling Healthcare, Structure House, TFS HealthScience, The V Foundation for Cancer Research, University of North Carolina Institute for Pharmacogenomics and Individualized Therapy, WakeMed and Wellspring.

In addition to its diverse range of healthcare and medical marketing clients, FWV's passionate team of expert storytellers works with many of the world's leading companies and brands, including Wrangler, ABB, 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 feature 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.

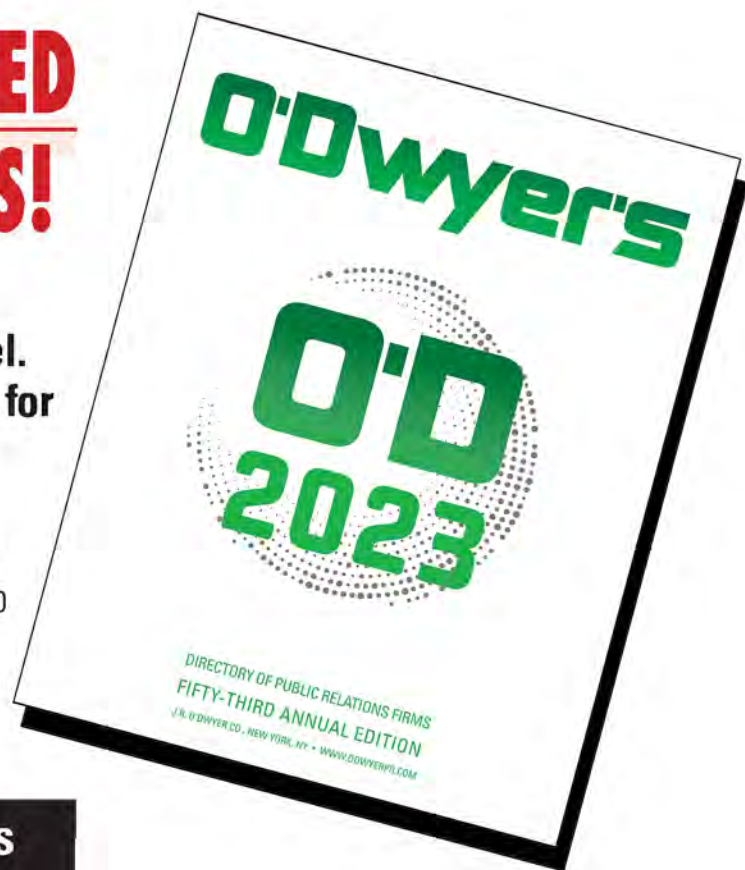
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We are more than a public relations firm, digital agency or creative shop. We are a fully integrated team of media strategists, storytellers, engagement experts and analysts who are true partners in moving your business forward.

At G&S, we live and breathe our mission to inspire people to take action, resulting in business growth for our clients. That's why we choose to work with companies who are making a difference, every single day. We immerse ourselves in a handful of industry sectors to help clients better navigate the realities brands face today. This includes work in: advanced manufacturing and energy; agribusiness; financial and professional services; healthcare; and, home and building.

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

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Jennifer Wayman, MHS,
President & CEO

At Hager Sharp, we have dedicated 50 years to creating strategic communications and social marketing initiatives for organizations that are committed to fighting for equity in education, improving the health of people and communities, and empowering vulnerable populations. We are a full-service, integrated marketing and communications firm with deep expertise in public health, disease prevention, health promotion, and behavior change strategies. As an employee-owned small business, we have provided communications leadership across a wide range of health issues, including COVID-19, chronic and infectious diseases, cancer, vaccine promotion, genet-



Highwire at its 2023 all-agency Kickoff.

ic diseases, environmental health, women's health, food safety and nutrition, and substance abuse prevention. Hager Sharp's strategists, researchers, creative specialists, media experts, and public health professionals bring award-winning, research-driven, behavior-changing health communications services and social marketing campaigns to life. Our focus is, and always will be, working with mission-driven institutions, businesses, foundations, and nonprofits to create and execute ideas that make a difference.

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Highwire is an inclusive strate-

gic communications and digital marketing partner designed for category leaders across the healthcare and technology sectors. With roots in journalism, Highwire sets the standard for high-impact communications and marketing, with the goal of connecting reputation to revenue.

We are powered by the Highwire way: critical thinking, creative ideation and tenacious execution. Highwire's fully integrated programs leverage digital and social media channels, media relations, and editorial and creative services to drive businesses forward.

Highwire's client portfolio includes leaders in digital health, medtech, diagnostics, primary care, behavioral health, remote care and more. Current partners include Definitive Healthcare, Holon Solutions, iRhythm, Medically Home, Simple Practice, Wellframe and Zocdoc, among many others.

Highwire's award-winning work has been recognized with honors such as: PRClub Bell Ringer award for Best in Healthcare (2023); SABRE Digital Agency of the Year (2023); Fast Company Most Innovative Companies (2017); Inc. Best Workplace (2022); Bulldog Best Healthcare Campaign (2020); Forbes Best PR Agencies (2020) and more.

With over 140 employees, Highwire has offices in New York, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco.

Our four core values are: Inclusion always; Growth mindset; Team empowerment; Fierce distinction.

ICR WESTWICKE

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ICR Westwicke, the healthcare division of ICR, has established itself as one of the leading providers of integrated Public Relations, Investor Relations and related services for healthcare companies. ICR Westwicke's healthcare practice works with more than 200 clients across life sciences, medical device/diagnostics, services and healthcare IT. With complementary services in digital branding, capital markets advisory, IPO advisory, crisis communication and corporate governance advisory, ICR Westwicke offers a full suite of strategic communications and advisory services for startups and mature public companies alike. In September, ICR Westwicke acquired Consilium Strategic Communications, one of the preeminent healthcare communications firms in Europe. This provides our firm with the unrivaled ability to serve our healthcare clients' communications needs on a global basis. Con-

silium's clients extend across 13 countries in Europe and their team brings a complementary set of experience to the ICR Westwicke group. Whether the emphasis is on corporate, scientific and marketing communications, patient education and advocacy, preparing for an IPO or raising additional capital, we understand that every client is different, and so too, is their story. With an innate understanding of the many complex dynamics and influencers within the healthcare ecosystem and a clear lens on the financial impact of all communications, ICR Westwicke takes a hands-on approach to understand both the science and the sentiment behind your business, ensuring that your message goes beyond simple clarity to resonate and make a lasting impression with the audiences that matter most.

IMRE HEALTH

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Patrick Burke, Chief Financial Officer
Brian Simmons, Chief Growth Officer
Patrick Sullivan, Chief Creative Officer
Lorraine Hirsh, Chief People Officer

Imre Health works with many of the world's leading and high growth brands. Driven by innovation, the agency's integrated suite of marketing communications services include brand strategy, creative, digital, social, omnichannel marketing, modern earned, production, and media, data & analytics.

The firm continues to focus on disrupting the conventions of life sciences marketing, fueled by the fresh perspective shared by its culturally-connected creators across the agency's consumer marketing team. This intentional approach continues to lead to more fully-integrated AOR assignments, and transforming the agency into a talent magnet.

Imre Health partners with a diversified and growing portfolio of brands across pharmaceutical, biotech, automotive, sports and retail, among other categories. The agency maintains offices in New York, Baltimore and Philadelphia in addition to a growing group of employees who work from anywhere. Imre Health is an LGBTQ-founded company.



JPA Health senior leadership at a client event in Washington, D.C. From left to right: Tish Van Dyke, EVP; Adam Pawluk, CCO; Carrie Jones, CEO; Chris Sousa, CFO.

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Adam Pawluk, CCO
Tish Van Dyke, Exec. VP
Ken Deutsch, Exec. VP
Diane Wass, Mng. Dir., London

JPA Health is a full-service, omnichannel marketing & communications agency that is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with additional offices in New York, Boston and London. We work exclusively in healthcare, across four sectors: life sciences, public health, one health and the U.S. federal government.

JPA Health's team of specialists make meaningful connections like no other, leveraging cutting-edge data and analytics tools, including our industry-leading AI insights chatbot, Gretel® Trails. Its mantra of "Connect'ability" means their team delivers faster insights for

deeper connections with audiences at every point on their journey—and results that keep clients coming back for more.

Over the course of 2023, JPA Health continued its growth trajectory, achieving 26% revenue growth by adding new clients and increasing the average client size compared to the previous year.

Clients Include: American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (ACOG), Arvinas, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Glaukos, GSK, Intuitive, Kroger Health, LUNGEVITY, Merck, National Institutes of Health (NIH), Sanofi, Takeda, The Physicians Foundation and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

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LaVoieHealthScience partners with health and science emerging and commercial organizations to advance their innovations. The complexity of the business of science, medicine, and technology requires leaders to create a unique voice in a highly regulated industry. We are a strategic communications and marketing firm with hubs in Boston, New York, and South Florida. We excel in messaging, positioning, investor relations, corporate communications, marketing, and public relations. As part of the health and science ecosystem, we stay ahead of the industry to skillfully guide clients in meeting tomorrow's needs. Our purpose and value-driven approach seamlessly connects our clients with their target stakeholders including media, investors, advocacy, KOLs and more.

We are ranked among the Top 30 independent healthcare communications agencies in the United States according to *O'Dwyer's* 2023 public relations firm rankings. We are an award-winning agency having won over 60 public relations and investor relations awards and are a member of the *Inc.* 5000's fastest-growing private companies Hall of Fame. We are certified in healthcare communications compliance and serve com-

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LAVOIEHEALTHSCIENCE

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mercial and pre-commercial clients both domestically and globally. Through our alliance with Omnicom Public Relations Group, we bring our global clients a broader set of health and science teams offering over 2,000 health experts worldwide. We are committed to serving health and science clients offering broad domain experience in animal science, autoimmune diseases, CAR-T, cell and gene therapy, generational AI, diagnostics, CNS, CRISPR, immuno-oncology, lysosomal diseases, medtech, medical devices, neurodegeneration, oncology, ophthalmology, precision medicines, rare diseases, regenerative medicine, and more. We've earned our clients' trust with 21 years in our sector and have developed over 450 communications plans.

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Lindsey Carnett, CEO & President



Marketing Maven CEO & President Lindsey Carnett.



Lisa Arledge Powell, President and Founder of MediaSource.

With offices in Los Angeles and New York City, Marketing Maven's combination of PR, social media, influencer marketing and market research helps provide a competitive edge to their clients. Marketing Maven helps businesses grow their revenues by developing

campaigns that engage a target audience, generate sales then utilize advanced metrics to measure ROI.

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

Most Entrepreneurial Companies in America, their services aid national marketing campaigns and product launches with reputation management, organic SEO tracking, competitive analysis reports and online product reviews to help increase revenue.

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

Specialties include: Multicultural, beauty/fashion, professional services, travel/hospitality, home furnishings, financial PR/investor relations, healthcare, food & beverage, entertainment/sports, technology, environmental/public affairs clients and social media.

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Tired of telling groundbreaking stories that your audience never sees? Results start with us. MediaSource is a certified women-owned health care communications agency that helps organizations meet business goals by combining storytelling with strategy. With a 25-year history of elevating healthcare brands across the U.S., our team understands the realities of the healthcare industry with proven results that drive patients, recruitment, reputation and business.

That's right; Campaigns that actually drive business to your healthcare organization! There's a reason why we were named Best Healthcare Agency by Ragan Communications for an unprecedented four years in a row. We know health care. Our award-winning collection of veteran public relations experts, producers and strategic analysts have the expertise to take your projects to the next level. Working as true partners, our team is known to quickly align with internal teams for collaboration that moves the needle for respected organizations.

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

Let's get to work discovering and creating stories that will help you reach your goals. To learn about our PR, thought leadership content, video storytelling and other specialties, visit mediasourcetv.com.

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Merritt Group is an award-winning, woman-owned strategic communications agency with a dedicated focus on healthcare with locations in McLean, Virginia, San Francisco, California and North



PAN Communications President & CEO Philip A. Nardone.

Texas. Merritt Group specializes in public relations, content creation, marketing, social media, demand and lead generation, analytics and measurement, and marketing infrastructure consulting.

Our philosophy starts with intrinsically understanding our healthcare clients' target audiences, which leads to the development of powerful messaging and creative PR programs that drives high impact awareness, engages audiences and accelerates sales around their innovations.

We help our healthcare clients achieve their goals and meet the needs of today's patients, providers, physicians, insurers and influencers across a complex healthcare continuum. Our team deeply understands the transformative world of healthcare. With a more consumer-driven healthcare marketplace and constant changes to the healthcare policy landscape, Merritt Group can be your sentinel to navigate how to market to your core audiences.

For more than 15 years, we have worked with leading and emerging healthcare brands including RapidAI, Medisafe, Infermedica, GoHealth Urgent Care, Samsung Health, InnoCaption, Avizia, MedGenome, CardMedic, Emeritus Healthcare and more.

PADILLA

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Jen Dobrzelecki, Senior Vice President, Health

Padilla is a full-service integrated agency transforming brands and organizations through strategically creative communications. Our omnichannel work across health, agriculture, technology, financial services and food, beverage and nutrition, is consistently recognized with industry honors such as *PR-Week* Awards, *PRovoke* SABRE/IN2 SABRE Awards, and *PRSA* Anvil Awards, among others. Padilla operates in seven cities in the U.S. through its family of brands, which includes SHIFT (performance communications), Food-Minds (food and nutrition affairs), and Joe Smith (brand strategy).

Health clients include Abbott, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, CommonSpirit Health, Lupus Foundation of America, Mayo Clinic, Medtronic, Myriad Genetics, Purdue, Sanofi, Thea Pharma, and Valneva.

Padilla's best-in-class Health team consists of highly experienced health, wellness, and science ex-

perts spanning the health care and patient ecosystem, specializing in:

- Pharma & biotech
- Medical devices
- Health tech & health IT
- Health care providers, hospital and health systems
- Consumer health & wellness
- Insurers, payer groups
- Nonprofits, associations, government

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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— Continued on page 46

PAN COMMUNICATIONS

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Darlene Doyle, Chief Client Officer
Megan Kessler, Chief of Integrated Marketing & Strategy
Gary Torpey, Chief Financial Officer
Dan Martin, EVP, Healthcare
Nia Evans, Managing Dir., UK

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 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, Amdocs, Apptio, athenahealth, Aurora Solar, Bitdefender, Booz Allen, Boston Consulting Group, Botify, Brightside Health, CivicPlus, ClosedLoop AI, Clarify Health, Commure, DISCO, iCIMS, LeanTaaS, Loyal Health, NTT Data, Nuance, OM1, Qualtrics, Salucro Healthcare Solutions, Thales, ThreatX, Toshiba/Americas, UPS Capital, Veeam, Venti and Vercara.

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Perry Communications Group is a California-based public affairs firm that operates at the local, statewide, and national levels. We work at the center of issues that matter and give new perspective to the causes and events making headlines today, as well as those that will in the future. We shape

ideas, opinions, decisions, and social change. PCG tackles pressing health care issues including those dealing with public health, health care reform, health care disparities, and chronic diseases. The bottom line for us is always the same—we're invested in the cause and our clients' work.

PCG's current health care clients include Albie Aware Breast Cancer Foundation, California Chronic Care Coalition, Center for Inherited Blood Disorders, Chronic Care Policy Alliance, GO2 for Lung Cancer, Hemophilia Council of California, Joshua's House Volunteer Hospice, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, Porosome Therapeutics, and the Sickle Cell Disease Foundation.

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Public Communications Inc. (PCI) is team of experts passionate about healthcare and healthy communities. More than 60 years after our founding, healthcare communication strategies that deliver client solutions and results remain at the core of our national, independent agency. Healthcare is complex and deeply personal. PCI's Healthcare Practice works across the continuum of care to champion real stories and create space for voices that often go unheard. Whether you need to reach patients, physicians, allied health professionals, policymakers or other stakeholders, we know how to make your messages move audiences to act. PCI's Healthcare Practice connects the science and practice of healthcare to create understanding.

Healthcare represents more than half of PCI's client work. Our clients include medical and dental associations, start-ups looking for communications and marketing strategy and visibility, and university health systems. We launch products and manage lifecycle

communications; run consumer awareness and screening programs on a turn-key basis; develop professional relations campaigns designed to draw referrals; and develop digital media strategies, campaigns and platforms including efficient online newsrooms and content-rich websites.

PCI's philosophy is to build client programs on a foundation of thoughtful, strategic counsel. Our job is to help clients communicate what they have to say so it is heard, believed and leads to positive action. We take pride in our reputation for delivering creative, strategic and well-executed programs on time, within budget and to the satisfaction of our clients, exceeding expectations at every level.

RACEPOINT GLOBAL

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Bob Osmond, President
Phil Chadwick, Chief Financial Officer
Carolyn Regan, Chief People Officer
Ben Haber, Executive Vice President, Client Services

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.

RAFFETTO HERMAN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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John Raffetto, CEO
David Herman, President
Danielle Ruckert, VP, Healthcare Practice Lead

John Raffetto and David Herman founded Raffetto Herman Strategic Communications (RH Strategic) in 2008 with the belief that tying great work to business objectives drives results and transforms innovative companies into industry leaders. We pride ourselves on elevating the stories of next-generation innovators—the visionaries, game-changing brands and hands-on architects of a better future. We deliver creative, integrated communications across the technology, healthcare, sustainability, and government sectors—and, importantly, the powerful intersections between them.

As the forces of change in healthcare drive innovation, RH Strategic has elevated the voices of visionary leaders and transformative brands through strategic communications. Our healthcare practice mirrors the healthcare landscape itself, spanning *Fortune* 100 players to Series A disrupters, including providers, insurers, health IT innovators, life sciences, educators, advocates, and digital health platforms.

Our approach is based on a deep understanding of our clients, our up-to-the-minute vertical expertise and our ability to articulate and amplify stories that build brands and thought leaders. We design award-winning strategies that introduce, inform, influence and inspire. We execute those plans with a commitment to precision and adaptability. We work smart and hard.

RH Strategic is more than the sum of its parts. We are our people, our clients and our relationships—collectively focused on ensuring tomorrow is better (and healthier) than today.

REIS GROUP, LLC, THE

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Sharon Reis, Principal
Lauren Musiol, **Stacy Skelly**, **Kathleen Petty**, Senior VPs

Beth Casteel, Peter Pearl, Senior Counselors
Hayley Rakus, Managing Supervisor

The Reis Group is a health care public relations agency based in Washington, D.C. Our PR services are focused solely on health and social causes. We are passionate about our clients' issues and believe in the power of communications to transform lives.

TRG is proud to represent a growing roster of both national and regional clients in the fields of health care, science marketing, medical research, social justice, and health equity. Their common denominator is striving for excellence to make the world a better place by improving health and well-being.

Our team of more than a dozen seasoned communications professionals has decades of experience working closely with clients as their communications partners, offering services including message testing, earned media outreach, thought leadership, issues management, science marketing, social media, reputation management and content development.

Clients Include: American Gastroenterological Assn., Banner Alzheimer's Institute, Blue Shield of California Foundation, Digestive Disease Week, George Washington University, Office of The National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, Nemours Children's Health System, Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, Society of Interventional Radiology and World Vaccine Congress.

ROSICA COMMUNICATIONS

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Chris Rosica, President
Kathy Carliner, SVP
Terese Kelly Greer, SVP of Media Relations

Founded in 1980, Rosica Communications is a strategic, integrated PR and digital marketing agency specializing in the healthcare, animal health, non-profit, and education sectors. The award-winning PR and communications programs we develop and execute are driven by our clients' goals, objectives, and strategic imperatives.



The Reis Group principal Sharon Reis.

Rosica's Healthcare PR services include thought leadership advancement, positioning and messaging, earned media, publication planning, KOL relationship development, B2B social media marketing, corporate communications, crisis communications, media training, and content creation.

Through Interact Marketing, the digital agency we co-founded in 2008, Rosica offers such digital marketing services as SEO, online reputation management, and SEM (paid search and paid social). This enables us to effectively measure the impact of our clients' PR and comms. programs. One key metric we monitor is the number of [powerful] inbound links our work generates as this bolsters SEO. We also review website traffic, email open rates, page one search results (for reputation management), and website conversion rates.

What differentiates Rosica?

- Our hands-on senior team that brings decades of strategic experience to our clients.

- The award-winning earned media campaigns we creatively execute.

- Our ability to strategically repurpose and leverage earned media and other quality content to impact stakeholder communications, sales, perception, fundraising, government relations, and

partnership development.

Rosica's healthcare communications team quickly assimilates to our clients' needs, handily tackling complex and technical subjects and creating authentic positioning statements, key messages, differentiators, stakeholder communications, and story ideas. We identify and develop key opinion leaders and media train KOLs to conduct powerful talks and highly effective media interviews. Clients say our PR team is smart and strategic, providing white glove service from a senior-level team of PR and comms. professionals.

Rosica continuously cultivates and broadens relationships with national and regional media as well, including trade/business/consumer print, online, and broadcast outlets.

Clients, past and present, include: Easterseals, Exergen, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, NJ Sharing Network, Parker Laboratories, Pfizer, ShiftKey and Suve-to. Please visit www.rosica.com for case studies and additional information.

TIER ONE PARTNERS

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Marian Hughes, Co-Founder, Managing Partner, Chicago
Kathy Wilson, Co-Founder, Managing Partner, Boston

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 digital healthcare companies 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

Continued on page 48

TIER ONE PARTNERS

Continued from page 47

tal 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 industry leading tools and proprietary processes 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 digital healthcare leaders including GHX, Level Ex, Omada, Virgin Pulse, Mightier, Medisafe, GI Supply, Hospital IQ, and more.

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Ranked #1 in Healthcare in Atlanta, Trevelino/Keller continues to see its healthcare practice rank as one of its highest performing. Its long-standing base of experience with the CDC, United Healthcare and Snapnurse [#2 on *Inc.* Fastest Growing], coupled with one of the country's deepest technology practices and Atlanta's leading lifestyle practice, has advanced its health work across Health IT, retail health and nutrition. The world's pandemic crisis shined a spotlight on firms with extensive disease-related work and Trevelino/Keller became Georgia's go to firm, representing Georgia's COVID-19 Health Initiative on both COVID-19 awareness programs that would eventually transition to COVID-19 vaccine programs. This important work, coupled with a base of experience with Ebola, Zika and other health crises, has made the firm one of the country's established health firms.

Some other highlights of recent engagements include ground-



Tier One Partners works with pioneers across North America in the digital healthcare industry.

breaking work in the cancer treatment segment with Specicare, a first mover in Live Tissue Science™, 360 reputation marketing for SOC Telemed, as well as the launch of Mossa's Movement Health initiative to address both the sedentary market and health club crisis through virtual, accessible programming. Its growing base of work in healthy eating and nutrition with clients like unMEAT and its launch of plant-based products, as well as Qunol Turmeric Supplements, indicate an increased demand for the agency's predisposition to healthier brands. While the firm's public relations discipline continues to grow, it's seeing greater demand for its reputation marketing approach which leverages its Growth Marketing department as well as its Creative Studios.

As 2022's third fastest growing firm, the agency continues to own the industry's number one retention rate, having lost two staffers to agencies in 20 years. It is known for its progressive, culture-rich programs like Red with Ted, Cooleaf Pro, Read to Lead, Patio55 and its recently released,

Wild Blue Yonder, a curated travel getaway for staff. For more information, visit trevelinokeller.com.

V2 COMMUNICATIONS

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Jean Serra, CEO and Founder

V2 Communications is an integrated communications firm that represents B2B technology companies with a dedicated health tech practice. Despite the size and maturity of our clients' organizations, our goal is the same: to shape markets, make market leaders and build iconic brands. By offering senior experience, trusted counsel and excellent execution, our strategic communications programs are proven to advance our clients' business and financial outcomes.

The technology companies ushering in the new era of healthcare need strategic communications programs that influence audiences and drive better business out-

comes. We are expert at illuminating innovative pathways for how care is diagnosed, delivered, and paid for. From breakthrough imaging and AI tools, to remote patient management and telehealth solutions, to documentation and billing support technology, V2 has the experience health tech leaders need to break through the noise.

V2's roots in technology enable us to swiftly discern and message our healthcare clients' unique value proposition against the context of the evolving market. We create customized communications campaigns that build awareness and connect clients with patients, scientists, healthcare professionals, or hospital and health systems administrators leveraging paid, earned, owned and social channels. ○

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

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

HEALTHCARE & MEDICAL PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2022)	Firm	Net Fees (2022)
1. Real Chemistry , San Francisco, CA	\$555,000,000	44. Red Thread PR , Philadelphia, PA	1,059,510
2. Evoke , Philadelphia, PA	368,000,000	45. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	1,030,244
3. Edelman , New York, NY	224,352,000	46. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	1,001,535
4. Spectrum , Washington, DC	80,174,000	47. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	999,514
5. Ruder Finn Inc. , New York, NY	56,010,000	48. Bellmont Partners , Minneapolis, MN	983,746
6. Finn Partners , New York, NY	52,600,000	49. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	945,840
7. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	33,900,000	50. L.C. Williams & Associates , Chicago, IL	811,862
8. ICR , New York, NY	33,194,813	51. Merritt Group , McLean, VA	805,978
9. imre, LLC , Baltimore, MD	31,879,000	52. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	712,759
10. Crosby , Annapolis, MD	25,213,010	53. BLAZE , Santa Monica, CA	634,382
11. M Booth Health , New York, NY	21,811,192	54. Tier One Partners , Boston, MA	564,718
12. JPA Health , Washington, DC	19,965,000	55. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	471,679
13. Zeno Group , New York, NY	13,133,411	56. PSC (Princeton Strategic Comms.) , Trenton, NJ	444,139
14. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	13,017,928	57. Marketing Maven Public Relations , Camarillo, CA	443,471
15. MikeWorldWide , New York, NY	12,031,998	58. Landis Communications , San Francisco, CA	427,000
16. Sam Brown Inc. , Wayne, PA	11,428,977	59. Ehrhardt Group, The , New Orleans, LA	390,945
17. Matter Communications , Boston, MA	10,284,000	60. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	375,000
18. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	8,388,077	61. Judge Public Relations , Tampa, FL	369,264
19. Health+Commerce , Eagle, ID	8,023,637	62. Havas Formula , New York, NY	367,435
20. Hunter , New York, NY	7,400,000	63. Rosica Communications , Fair Lawn, NJ	361,385
21. Bliss Group, The , New York, NY	6,844,663	64. Stanton Communications , Washington, DC	350,000
22. PAN Communications , Boston, MA	6,616,441	65. Franco , Detroit, MI	320,445
23. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	6,500,000	66. Slide Nine Agency , Columbus, OH	301,002
24. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	6,450,236	67. Milk & Honey PR , New York, NY	277,750
25. LaVoie Health Science , Boston, MA	5,752,399	68. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	275,405
26. Moore, Inc. , Tallahassee, FL	5,022,468	69. Superior PR , Chicago, IL	269,856
27. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	4,281,400	70. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	250,000
28. MCS Healthcare Public Relations , Bedminster, NJ	3,722,106	71. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	226,865
29. BRG Communications , Alexandria, VA	3,495,531	72. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	216,000
30. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	2,988,149	73. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	205,500
31. Fiona Hutton & Associates, Inc. , Los Angeles, CA	2,609,362	74. BoardroomPR , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	200,000
32. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	2,488,396	75. WordWrite Communications LLC , Pittsburgh, PA	174,500
33. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	2,305,548	76. Lavidge , Phoenix, AZ	170,062
34. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	2,154,774	77. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	139,000
35. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	1,900,000	78. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	111,000
36. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	1,800,000	79. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC , Annapolis, MD	65,891
37. Singer Assocs. Public Relations, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	1,751,926	80. Wordhampton Public Relations , East Hampton, NY	31,500
38. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	1,650,000	81. O'Malley Hansen Communications , Chicago, IL	29,198
39. V2 Communications , Boston, MA	1,641,007	82. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	23,495
40. Bospar , San Francisco, CA	1,251,828	83. Violet PR , Montclair, NJ	12,000
41. Communications Strategy Group (CSG) , Denver, CO	1,237,354	84. SPM Communications , Dallas, TX	6,946
42. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	1,177,522	85. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	6,000
43. Otter PR , St. Petersburg, FL	1,078,977		

The culture change that 'awoke' Trump's chances

By Fraser Seitel

I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest that there was a time when people generally approached the world with a bit more perspective, a greater understanding of proportionality and a keener sense of what's meaningful and what isn't than they do in 2023.



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*.

Exhibit A is doomed former President of the Royal Spanish Football Federation, Luis Rubiales, who was railroaded into resigning this month for audaciously kissing Jenni Hermoso after her Spanish team won the Women's World Cup in August. Mr. Rubiales' errant public smooch landed him square-

ly as news story numero uno on every broadcast channel, front page and website in the world.

And Rubiales' story—which has since escalated into nationwide protests, the championship team's coach being fired and government charges against Rubiales of sexual assault and coercion—won't end until he loses everything.

The global uproar over the Spanish kiss, while clearly not the most urgent item in today's news, nonetheless reveals much about the state of popular opinion in society, including why the next President of the United States may well be—alas—Donald J. Trump.

The incident

Spain's 1-0 victory over England was its first-ever Women's World Cup championship and cause for jubilation throughout the country.

On the field in Australia, players piled onto each other and celebrated before and after trophy presentations. Among the most excited was Federation President Rubiales, a former player himself, who in full view of a watching world, embraced the team's star scorer Hermoso, lifted her off the ground and kissed her on the lips. When the obviously over-the-top display was brought up after the game, Ms. Hermoso acknowledged that she "did not enjoy it, but what could I do." And on the bus ride back to their hotel,

her teammates laughed about Mr. Rubiales' inappropriate gesture, chanting "beso, beso, beso" as a smiling Hermoso looked on.

Had the story stayed right there where it should have, with an apologetic Rubiales punished by the Federation for his wrong-headed action and Hermoso and her teammates basking in the glow of their superior performance, all would have been right with the world.

But in 2023, in the midst of perpetual polarization, teeming tempers and zealots zeroing in for any fight they can publicize, no dumb deed goes unpunished, and Spain's beso bandito was dead meat.

Three days after downplaying the incident, Hermoso went public with a decidedly different tune. Egged on by the players' union, she announced that she had been put under "continuous pressure" to defend Rubiales and had felt "vulnerable and a victim of an impulse-driven, sexist, out-of-place act without any consent on my part."

The aftermath

Predictably, in the weeks that have followed the Rubiales kissing catastrophe, the Spanish women's historic futbol victory has been forgotten in a sea of sexism stories in the worldwide media.

Also predictably, leading the charge is the ever-crusading New York Times, which has averaged a story a day about Spanish soccer sexism: "Spanish Soccer Official Apologizes, Sort of, For Kissing World Cup Winner," "Pressure Mounts on Spanish Soccer Chief Over Nonconsensual Kiss at World Cup," etc., treating Luis Rubiales as the second coming of Harvey Weinstein.

The truth, of course, is a lot more nuanced than the media hysteria promulgated by the kiss. No one questions the fact that Mr. Rubiales is a boor, whose spontaneous public display of affection was completely inappropriate and grounds for suspension. Nor is there any doubt that the history of Spain's women's soccer program is fraught with sexism and should be corrected. Nor, for that matter, is there any question that the FIFA governing board of international soccer, which also suspended Mr. Rubiales, is, itself, the most corrupt sports body in the world. And finally, no one doubts the sincerity of many of the observers who labeled Rubiales' action as "offensive." It was offensive. None of that is in doubt.

But what's dubious is that throwing not only the book but also the entire library at the Spanish soccer federation President for this one boneheaded action is not only blatant overkill but also emblematic of the so-called "wokeism" that permeates today's

media and society, where we conflate every questionable affront into a prime example of sexism, racism or bigotry.

And that leads us directly to the growing possibility that Donald—shudder—Trump could be reelected President.

The fallout

According to most polls, Republican primary candidates' calls for "a culture war on wokeism" haven't particularly resonated with voters. Most Americans just don't seem to care that much about fighting things like critical race theory or transgender health-care or abortion services for women.

But they do care about common sense. And they particularly resent establishment elitists dictating how the rest of us ought to think about such abominations as out-of-touch octogenarian politicians clinging to power or accusations of police racism for every split-second judgment they're forced make or even the ruination of a man's career for one cringeworthy kiss.

Common sense is a value treasured by people who think for themselves and aren't driven by any particular ideology. These are the very people—in swing states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Arizona and Georgia and Michigan—who will ultimately determine the next President of the United States.

Between now and election day, the more examples these people see that society is losing its collective mind—like the overblown brouhaha over the Rubiales' kiss—the more likely they'll be to vote for an anti-establishment disruptor as President, no matter how odious, arrogant or divisive that individual might be.

So, if you think there's no way that Donald Trump could ever be reelected President, wake up. ○

PR news brief

Matter reps biotech Abpro

Matter is representing Abpro, a biotechnology company that develops antibody therapies to treat cancers, as it merges with Atlantic Coastal Acquisition Corp. in a SPAC deal worth \$725 million.

Ian Chan, CEO and co-Founder of Abpro, said the SPAC represents a milestone for the Woburn, MA-based company.

Proceeds from the transaction will help "accelerate the advancement of our pipeline toward clinical trials and provide the foundation for ongoing development of novel immunotherapies to help patients," said Chan.

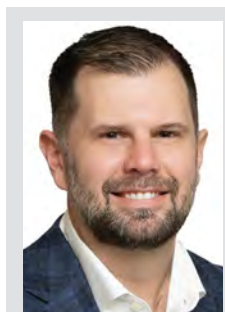
Abpro is currently in the developmental stage with its HER2+ treatments for breast, gastric and colorectal cancers. It also has a partnership with South Korea's Celltrion pharmaceutical company. Celltrion has made an equity investment in Abpro.

The SPAC deal is expected to close in Q2 2024.

AI: a powerful tool for PR and marketing agencies

By Dominic Rovano

How public relations and marketing agencies are integrating AI into their business to improve efficiencies and deliver more creative results in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.



Dominic Rovano, CPA, is a Co-Partner in Charge of Janover LLC's New York City office. He leads the Professional Services group, and helps its clients satisfy their financial-reporting requirements successfully by providing assurance, tax and other advisory services.

Artificial intelligence is one of the most buzzed-about technologies in the news today. And for good reason. AI is rapidly transforming many industries, including public relations and marketing.

In our rapidly evolving data-driven business landscape, PR and marketing firms are continually seeking innovative ways to improve their processes and deliver the highest quality service to clients.

Incorporating AI into various areas of your business can help achieve this.

If your resources are strained, AI can help complete more tasks with on a smaller budget while sparking creativity and setting you apart from others in your industry. From Customer Relationship Management to content marketing, accounting and analytics, AI-powered tools are transforming many businesses—including PR and marketing firms—by helping them streamline processes, save time and deliver better, more creative results.

Here are a few areas where PR and marketing agencies can integrate AI into their business.

Customer relationship management. AI-powered CRM systems help manage client relationships, enhance communications and better understand your clients moving forward. While traditional CRMs can be used to store client information, advanced CRMs are incorporating AI into their systems to help you create email copy tailored to your needs while providing analytics about your specific campaigns. Many advanced CRMs also offer a chatbot feature that provides immediate client support, helping to improve client satisfaction.

Content marketing. AI can be a helpful

tool to support your content marketing strategy. Natural Language Processing algorithms can help content creators brainstorm and generate high-quality, personalized content as needed on a small scale, allowing them to focus on strategy and creativity. AI can also optimize content for SEO and schedule posts at the most optimal times in order to maximize engagement. However, users should be cautious not to rely entirely on AI-based content, as it may contain factual inaccuracies and awkwardly written phrases.

Marketers can also utilize AI to enhance their creative strategy, including boosting design elements and creating short-form marketing videos. These AI videos can be helpful when sharing data with key stakeholders or presenting proposals to potential clients.

Accounting and financial management. Given that many PR and marketing agencies don't have a robust financial team, they rely on AI-powered accounting software that can streamline AP and AR processes while automating routine time-consuming financial tasks, such as invoice processing and expense management. AI software can also provide predictive financial modeling, helping PR and marketing firms make more informed decisions about budget allocation and resource planning.

Analytics and insights. AI-driven tools can process vast amounts of data to provide valuable insights into your financials and operations, including history and trends. These insights empower firms to make data-driven decisions and refine their strategies in real time.

Business intelligence tools such as dashboards enable decision-makers to monitor their organization, track progress towards goals and quickly identify trends or issues relevant to their operations. These dashboards often integrate data from various sources, including sales, marketing, finance and operations into a single, user-friendly display.

Additional insights and suggestions

- AI can be used to personalize outreach and engagement. By analyzing audience data and preferences, AI can help PR and marketing agencies identify the best ways to reach and engage their target audiences. For example, AI can be used to create personalized email campaigns, social media posts and press releases.

- AI can help to identify and measure the impact of PR and marketing campaigns. AI-powered analytics tools can track metrics such as website traffic, social

media engagement and media coverage to help PR and marketing agencies measure the effectiveness of their campaigns. This data can then be used to refine future campaigns and improve results.

- AI can help to stay ahead of the curve and adapt to changing trends. AI can be used to monitor social media and news outlets for emerging trends and topics. This information can then be used to develop timely and relevant content and messaging for clients.

AI is a powerful tool that can help PR and marketing agencies improve their efficiencies, effectiveness and results. By embracing AI, PR and marketing agencies can better position themselves to succeed in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Here are a few specific examples of how PR and marketing agencies are using AI today:

- One PR agency is using AI to generate personalized media pitches. The AI takes into account the journalist's interests, beat and recent coverage to generate a pitch that's tailored to their specific needs.

- Another marketing agency is using AI to create personalized email campaigns for its clients. The AI analyzes customer data and preferences to create email campaigns that are more likely to be opened and engaged with.

- A PR agency is using AI to track social media sentiment and identify potential crises. The AI monitors social media for mentions of the agency's clients and their products and services. If the AI detects any negative sentiment or potential crises, it alerts the agency's team so that they can take action immediately.

These are just a few examples of how AI is being used by PR and marketing agencies today. As AI continues to develop, we can expect to see even more innovative and effective ways.

Dominic Rovano, CPA is a partner at Janover LLC and leads the firm's Professional Services Group. ○

PR news brief

5WPR eyes Blenders Eyewear

5WPR has picked up PR work with Blenders Eyewear, part of Safilo Group.

The agency will execute a full-scale media relations program designed to build brand awareness and support sales.

Blenders recently collaborated with University of Colorado football coach Deion Sanders to unveil a new sunglasses line that will serve as the preferred eyewear partner of CU Athletics.

Ballard hires Jill Biden spokesperson

Michael LaRosa, former Press Secretary for First Lady Jill Biden, has joined Ballard Partners' D.C. office as a Partner.

Serving as her Chief Spokesperson and Strategic Communications Advisor, LaRosa traveled to more than 75 cities and 15 countries with Biden.

He handled Biden's events at the 2021 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, NATO conference in Madrid, G-20 Summit in Rome and the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles.

LaRosa also created the communications strategy for her secret trip to Ukraine, which was the first time a First Lady visited an active war zone without the protection of U.S. troops.

Prior to working for Biden, LaRosa handled communications for the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and the House Democratic Policy Communications Committee.

He also spent seven years as a television producer for cable news, at MSNBC's Hardball with Chris Matthews.

Most recently, LaRosa was Managing Director at the Penta Group, a global PA firm. ○



Michael LaRosa

Cornerstone recruits army vet

Cornerstone Government Affairs has hired Rick Zampelli, who was Director of the U.S. Army's liaison office to the House of Representatives, as a member of its federal government relations team.

As the Army's direct rep to Congress, Zampelli handled contact with Members of Congress and their staffs, responded to inquiries, and synchronized communications among the Army's senior leaders.

Prior to his work on Capitol Hill, he served as Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command in Redstone Arsenal, AL, and Commander of the 128th Aviation Training Brigade in Fort Eustis, VA.

Zampelli will assist Cornerstone clients develop successful strategies to deliver advanced warfighting capabilities to the nation's soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. ○



Rick Zampelli

Ex-U.S. chief protocol officer joins FGS

Former Chief of Protocol of the United States Capricia Penavic Marshall has joined FGS Global as a Partner, based in D.C.

Marshall also served as Deputy Assistant to the President and White House social secretary under President Bill Clinton and Special Assistant to then-first lady of the United States Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Most recently, she was President, CEO and Founder of CPM Global Engagement Strategies, working with clients in sectors including healthcare, consumer products and financial services.

She is also ambassador-in-residence at the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center at the Atlantic Council, where she works with the CEO and executive leadership to promote the organization's goals and to broaden its reach and influence. ○



Capricia Penavic Marshall



Chartwell reps Foxconn founder in presidential run

Chartwell Strategy Group is providing media relations and public affairs services in the U.S. for Terry Gou, the Foxconn founder who is running for President as an independent candidate in Taiwan.

Foxconn, which is the largest electronics manufacturer in the world, is based in Taiwan but generates the bulk of its revenues from its factories in China. Its Shenzhen plant produces most of Apple's iPhones.

Billionaire Gou, 72, has promised to bring Taiwan "back from the abyss of war with China," according to a report in the BBC.

He selected actress Tammy Lai, who played the role of a presidential candidate in the Netflix hit show "Wave Makers," as is running mate. The show sparked a "MeToo" movement in Taiwan.

Taiwan's presidential election is set for Jan. 13.

Chartwell's \$50,000 a-month contract runs from Sept. 1 to Jan. 31.

Managing Directors Matthew Epperly and David Tamasi, Director Janet Nice, and Associate Grayson Midkiff work the effort for Gou. ○

SKDK recruits Jill Biden's chief speechwriter

SKDK has hired Amber Macdonald, long-time Chief Speechwriter for First Lady Jill Biden, for its executive communications practice.

She will co-lead the message development, ghostwriting and media training team with Stephen Krupin, a former senior speechwriter for President Barack Obama.

Before joining the Biden Team, Macdonald was Director of Speechwriting to Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burrell and Deputy Director of Speechwriting for Secretary Kathleen Sibelius.

Macdonald is a former playwright and actor who has performed with the improv comedy theater Upright Citizens Brigade.

SKDK CEO Doug Thornell said Macdonald's arrival "reinforces our dedication to providing unparalleled executive communications services, and we are proud to have two former senior presidential speechwriters leading the team."

Stagwell owns SKDK. ○



Amber Macdonald

Qorvis reps banned Haitian ex-PM

Qorvis is working to overturn the visa ban imposed by the U.S. on former Haiti prime minister Laurent Salvador Lamothe. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken Lamothe announced the ban on June 2, charging Lamothe was involved in “significant corruption.”

“Lamothe misappropriated at least \$60 million from the Haitian government’s PetroCaribe infrastructure investment and social welfare fund for private gain,” said Blinken. “Through this corrupt act and his direct involvement in the management of the fund, he exploited his role as a public official and contributed to the current instability in Haiti.”

Qorvis is to engage with Washington thought leaders, key decision-makers in the U.S. Department of State, Homeland Security, the U.S. Congress, and influential media and think tanks that can serve as third-party advocates. The intended outcome is to have the visa ban lifted.

Qorvis began its six-month project for Lamothe on Aug. 22. It is in line for a \$23,000 monthly retainer from Equity Savvy Ventures, which is owned by Lamothe.

Qorvis CEO Matt Lauer and General Counsel Aliya Manjee handle the Haitian politico. ○

Trident DMG supports Israel’s Pro-Democracy Movement

Trident DMG, which is based in D.C., has signed on to provide strategic communications services to support the pro-democracy movement in Israel.

The Blue and White Future organization, a registered non-profit group in Tel Aviv, is paying Trident DMG a \$25,000 monthly fee for an initial three-month engagement that began Sept. 5.

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.

Brunswick Group LLC, New York, N.Y., **registered Aug. 30, 2023 for London Legacy Development Corporation**, London, U.K., to lead a communications campaign aimed at raising the profile of East Bank cultural quarter with key sector stakeholders and audiences nationally and internationally.

Business Finland USA, Inc., New York, N.Y., **registered Aug. 31, 2023 for Business Finland Oy**, Helsinki, Finland, regarding supporting the growth of Finnish companies in the United States, participating in activities which promote travel between Finland and the United States, and more.

Finn Partners, New York, N.Y., **registered Aug. 30, 2023 for Travel Alberta, Calgary**, Alberta, Canada, concerning providing public relations activities to promote tourism in Alberta and increase visitors to the province.

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.

Marshall & Popp, LLC, Washington, D.C., **registered Sept. 8, 2023 for JP Morgan Chase Holdings, LLC**, New York, N.Y., regarding issues related to financial services, banking and investments.

Mehlman Consulting, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered Sept. 1, 2023 for ScribeAmerica**, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., concerning monitoring healthcare workforce issues and healthcare AI legislation.

The Ferguson Group, Washington, D.C., **registered Sept. 6, 2023, for Wilkes County on behalf of Town of North Wilkesboro, N.C.**, regarding pursuing federal support for local priority projects and initiatives.

Todd Strategy Group, Washington, D.C., **registered Sept. 1, 2023 for American Medical Association**, Washington, D.C., concerning health issues and Medicare/Medicaid issues impacting the American Medical Association.

It was founded in 2009 to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of “two states for two peoples” and work on methods to absorb the settlers within Israel’s 1967 borders.

Trident DMG co-Founder Eleanor McManus, a former Senior Producer at CNN and SVP at Levick Communications, heads the firm’s BWF team.

“Israel is experiencing a profound crisis, one that has existential consequences for the country and all sectors of society, McManus told O’Dwyer’s.

Trident is working for BWF to help make American audiences aware of the substantial risks to democracy in Israel and efforts to secure the nation as a free and democratic state.

Helen McCarthy, Director; Taylor Pearson, Senior Account Manager; and Emma Novak, Account Manager; round out Trident’s BWF team. ○

Edelman gets Saudi Arabia’s Oxagon

Edelman is providing global PR services for Saudi Arabia’s Oxagon, a “reimagined” industrial city that is part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s \$500 billion Neom project.

Oxagon, which will be the world’s largest floating industrial complex, is to be the gateway to the development of advanced and clean industries in Neom.

It will be supported by a fully integrated port and supply chain ecosystem and feature residential communities, urban plazas, sports/wellness centers, hotels, restaurants and retail facilities.

Edelman’s job is to communicate Oxagon’s business and corporate strategies, programs, announcements, white papers and opportunities to local, regional and global media outlets.

Edelman is to position Oxagon executives as industry and innovative thought leaders and establish working relationships with influential global media.

Edelman is to receive \$1.4 million for the effort. ○

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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.

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

- **News of Firms: J/PR Launches 20Two Studio**
Wed., Dec. 1, 2021
... J/PR launches 20Two Studio, a creative storytelling affiliate focused on public relations and social media...
- **News of Firms: J/PR Scoops Up Sadler & Co.**
Mon., Nov. 8, 2021
... Emma Hartland-Mahon J/PR acquires luxury travel, hospitality and design PR agency Sadler & Co. The two agencies plan to...
- **Accounts in Transit: J/PR Checks in at California Olive Ranch**
Tue., Oct. 26, 2021
... J/PR is named agency of record for public relations and social media strategy for both...



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