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# O'Dwyer's Newsletter

The Inside News of  
PR and Marketing  
Communications

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## AL GOLIN DIES AT 87

**Al Golin**, the original public relations counsel to McDonald's and founder of the Chicago-based firm Golin, died April 8 at age 87 in his second home in Scottsdale, Arizona after a battle with prostate cancer.

McDonald's CEO Ray Kroc in 1957 called on Golin for PR help, and the relationship lasted more than 60 years. The initial contract had been for \$500 monthly. McDonald's in its early days did not have much of an ad budget.

Golin Chairman Fred Cook said Golin "worked on McDonald's until the day he died."

"Kroc trusted him completely," his friend Chuck Ebeling said in an obit posted by the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "He was really a pioneer of modern communications. Al was instrumental in the creation of the brand's community outreach and messaging."

Golin liked to say that building goodwill for the company could be like putting money in the bank. Every time the company did something to help its community, it would add up over time.

### **McDonald's CEO Praised Golin**

McDonald's CEO Steve Easterbrook said the company benefited for decades from Golin's wisdom and leadership.

"McDonald's owes Al a tremendous debt of gratitude for all he accomplished in his partnership with us," said the Easterbrook statement.

McDonald's each year gives the Al Golin Trust Bank Award to the franchise owner who played the most important role in his or her community that year.

"We had other clients, but McDonald's was everything," Ebeling told the *Sun-Times*. "We considered it the ultimate in community relations opportunities; to deal with the relationships of millions of people on a daily basis and always try to find ways to improve the quality of those relationships."

Golin built the firm from a small office to a one with 1,200 employees and 50 offices worldwide.

He was the recipient of lifetime achievement awards from the Public Relations Society of America and the Publicity Club of Chicago, as well as numerous other honors.



Al Golin



Al Golin (L) & Harold Burson at O'Dwyer's "Greatest Generation in PR" event in 2005.

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## FINN PARTNERS ACQUIRES YING COMMS.

**Finn Partners** has acquired Singapore-based B2B PR and marketing agency Ying Communications after a 100 percent purchase of Ying parent company Ying Pte Ltd. The deal includes sister agency True Worth Consultants. Financial terms of the deal were not publicly disclosed.

Ying provides B2B communications services with a primary focus on the tech sector. The agency, which staffs 35, was founded in 2001 by Allan Tan, a former IBM Singapore and Shell Eastern Petroleum communication manager, and Yin Ching Yeap, an IBM Singapore and Singapore Airlines veteran. Clients include Airbus, Cisco Systems, Cognizant, Cloudera, HP Enterprise, HP Inc, MediaMath, Microsoft, Pure Storage, SES, S&P Global Platts and Tableau.



Finn Partners founding partner Peter Finn (center), with Ying Communications founders Allan Tan (left) and Yin Ching Yeap.

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## LUMENTUS REPS PROTECT OUR POWER

Protect Our Power, a new advocacy group dedicated to increasing measures to protect the U.S. electric power infrastructure from cyber or physical attack, has named Lumentus as its strategic communications firm.

**A national poll conducted by POP** in March shows more than 60 percent of Americans believe the U.S. electric

grid is vulnerable to disruption. 29 percent agreed that Russia is capable of pulling this off given recent news of the country's information cyber warfare. 34 percent view North Korea as a threat in light of its aggressive missile program. Fewer than nine percent of respondents believe the federal government is doing all they can to protect the grid.

"Electricity makes the American way of life possible," said Jim Cunningham, executive director, Protect Our Power.

New York City-based Lumentus recently helped POP assemble a panel of 20 advisors with expertise in energy policy, power production and delivery operations, as well as stakeholders familiar with healthcare, finance, transportation, security and national defense.

"From our first discussion, it was clear that POP was formed from an urgent need for decisive action to protect the national electric grid," said Laurence Moskowitz, managing partner and chief executive, Lumentus.



**PROTECT  
OUR  
POWER**

## AL GOLIN DIES AT 87

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He was inducted into the PR Hall of Fame in 2015.

Born in 1929 in Chicago, Golin got his start in the early 1950s as a publicist for the film industry, working in the Chicago offices of MGM studios.

He is survived by June Golin, his wife of more than 55 years; their children Barry, Karen and Ellen; six grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

A memorial service will be held in Chicago at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the Golin family asked that donations be made in his name to Ronald McDonald House Charities, the Off the Street Club, the Goodman Theatre or Roosevelt University.

### **Spoke at O'Dwyer Event**

Golin Spoke at O'Dwyer Function in 2005 called **"The Greatest Generation in PR"** that celebrated the 35th anniversary of O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms. It was managed by Fay Shapiro, then O'Dwyer associate publisher and now publisher, CommPRO.biz.

Also speaking were Dan Edelman of Edelman; Harold Burson of Burson-Marsteller; David Finn of Ruder Finn, and Margery Kraus of APCO.

Golin told PR pros to balance high-tech with "high-touch" and not to be obsessed with tech capabilities. He noted that one colleague was e-mailing and leaving voice-mails to him although his office was only 30 feet away.

On recent PR controversies, Golin warned: "We're now becoming more of the problem than the solution." But he said the industry has to be careful not to overreact.

"We can't listen to the naysayers, and we have to take some chances and keep taking risks," he said. "We need to focus on reading the public mind, and not manipulating it."

## FINN PARTNERS ACQUIRES YING COMMS.

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The agencies keep their names, but will now be known as Finn Partners companies. Tan and Yeap now wear the titles of managing partners. They'll report to managing partner Howard Solomon, who is based in San Francisco and heads the Finn Partners West outpost, which includes its Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland offices.

Ying will also retain its current Singapore offices. No staffing changes will occur as a result of the merger.

The acquisition officially extends Finn Partners' inaugural footprint into the Asia Pacific region. The New York-based agency, which maintains ten offices throughout the U.S., also holds three outposts in Europe as well as an office in the Middle East.

"With their expertise in B2B tech, Ying Communications provides Finn Partners — which already counts tech as its biggest practice area — with expanding synergies in providing exciting new services to our clients as well as increasing new business opportunities," Finn Partners founding partner Peter Finn told O'Dwyer's. "Ying is also an ideal fit; we share the same overarching belief in the power of collaboration and a dedication to the core values of working hard and playing nice, the foundation of growing and maintaining a Best Place to Work culture."

Global M&A advisor SI Partners advised Ying in the deal.

## PEPSI AD CREATES FIRESTORM OF NEGATIVE PR

By Ronn Torossian, CEO of 5W PR



Not since a pyrotechnics accident injured Michael Jackson on the set of a Pepsi commercial have more people been mad at the brand for its advertising. Recently, in an obvious effort to be both hip and topical, Pepsi crafted a commercial that, according to its critics, missed on both marks.

The **spot featured Kendall Jenner**, in the midst of a modeling shoot when a number of protesters march by. The crowd is joined by various other characters before Jenner eventually leads the group toward a confrontation with police. Jenner, then, offers a cop a Pepsi, which he gratefully accepts ... and there are smiles all around. At least there were smiles until the public got a look at the ad.



Viewers were enraged that, as they saw it, Pepsi appropriated imagery most closely associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. These folks were not happy with the way the commercial played out, believing that Pepsi's handling of the subject minimized the struggle and the importance or seriousness of the movement. Twitter, as it's been known to do, erupted. The critiques were vicious and condemning.

Then, before most people had even seen the original ad that started the whole explosion, Pepsi pulled it. Of course, not before someone else grabbed it online, and now the ad has been circulating through a series of disparate "think pieces" ... most of them lambasting Pepsi for being so completely tone deaf. Now, that accusation is up for debate, but what isn't up for debate is how Pepsi responded to the anger. They did so apologetically and immediately.

Here's part of Pepsi's statement: "Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace, and understanding ... Clearly, we missed the mark and apologize. We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are pulling the content and halting any further rollout."

But critics were not done taking shots. They said it wasn't that Pepsi "missed the mark," but that they portrayed the polar opposite of what they say they actually experienced as protesters. Pepsi didn't just steal their images; they downplayed the experience, especially the danger.

Others said the ad didn't properly portray the seriousness of the current protest or the sacrifices made by other protesters in the past.

This incident plays an educational role in the evolving notion of intent in media. Today, it's not enough to try to convey an idea. You have to be aware of the ideas other people will have as a result of your communication. Because once someone with a big enough voice online gets hold of your content and slaps their idea on it, your intent really no longer matters. Pepsi couldn't say, "this is a plea for unity" once enough people decided it was insensitive and culturally inappropriate. At that point, there would be no more conversation, so the ad had to go.

This is the tightrope brands walk in today's environment any time they try to tackle difficult issues. Be warned.



## **CAYMAN ISLANDS BANK ISSUES RFP**

Cayman National Bank has **issued a request for proposal** for qualifying firms that can assist the Cayman Islands-based banking institution in developing a social media strategy, as well as implementing and performing monitoring services for that online platform.

The George Town-based bank, which is a subsidiary of Cayman National Corporation Ltd., was founded in 1974 and maintains additional operations in Dubai, as well as the Isle of Man.

Key objectives for the project include integrating CNB with current social media outlets and using social media to build brand awareness and expose CNB to new clientele; designing and implementing an online platform that supports CNB's social media presence; improving brand reputation management by increasing positive brand mentions and managing negative customer feedback; providing updates on outages or other company events that impact users; and finalizing and implementing a social media strategy that provides engagement opportunities for new customers.

RFP s will be evaluated on proposed methodology, technical quality and price. Qualifying firms should have between five and 10 years of experience with social media projects and content management, which includes experience in developing social media campaigns and strategies, as well as monitoring and measuring impact of social media campaigns.

Expected timeline for the project includes an initial rollout of social media platforms within two or three months, and subsequent management of those platforms for an additional 12 months.

Proposals are due by May 1st.

## **UNIVERSAL BUYS THE DAILY RECORDER**

Universal Information Services has purchased The Daily Recorder media monitoring service, based in Albany, New York. Existing clients will be offered expanded ability to monitor local, state and nationwide news media coverage.

Founded in 1908, Universal is a privately held and family-owned company headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska.

"Although we're over 100 years old, I make sure we operate with the innovation of a start-up organization," said Todd Murphy, Universal Information Services VP. "We call this the art of the restart, ensuring we remain relevant and diversified at all times. Very few monitoring services of our age are still considered leaders in the industry."

The Daily Recorder was founded in 1993 by media and news industry veteran Mark Verdile.

"We thank Mark Verdile for wanting Universal to carry on the high standards he has set for the service under his ownership," Murphy said.

Universal provides media contacts/releasing, media monitoring and PR measurement & insights.

James L. Murphy is president.



## **CROSBY ACQUIRES PRODUCTION COMPANY**

Annapolis, MD-based agency **Crosby Marketing Communications** has unveiled a new multimedia content division, the result of the firm's recent acquisition of production company Butler Films.

Annapolis-based Butler has served clients such as Discovery Communications, National Geographic, CarMax, GE and Capital One, as well as a variety of healthcare and nonprofits. The 20-year-old company is led by director David Butler, who holds an Emmy, Addy and Telly, as well as PRSA and Clio awards to his credit.

In light of the acquisition, Crosby has integrated its creative, social and digital teams into a new multimedia content division, with Butler named vice president of multimedia production. He'll lead an in-house team capable of creating TV spots, PSAs, short films, video series, social media assets, webcasts and multimedia presentations out of Crosby's 20,000-square-foot headquarters.

Crosby president Raymond Crosby told O'Dwyer's that the decision to acquire an existing production company as opposed to creating a new practice from the ground up allows the agency to begin providing a suite of internal multimedia capabilities for clients in one fell swoop, as opposed to doing so slowly over time.

Crosby also noted that his agency has had a long working relationship with Butler, having collaborated with the company for the last 15 years.

"The whole driver behind this was the need to deliver creative storytelling across every media channel, but with an agility that maximizes our ability to meet the rapid-fire pace of the world we're living in," Crosby told O'Dwyer's. "With David, we've got a great leader who can drive this whole division and who's got an amazing reel, strong industry contacts, and who already knows our organization and will be able to seamlessly connect with them."

Crosby, which specializes in marketing programs for healthcare, government and nonprofits, grew by nearly 22 percent last year, with more than **\$12.2 million in 2016 net fees**, according to O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms.

## **WEBBY AWARDS ADDS PR CATEGORY**

**Webby Awards**, recognizing promotional excellence on the Internet, has added PR as a category. Work by Edelman, DKC, Ogilvy and Havas are nominated.

Webby, established in 1996, drew 13,000 entries this year from the U.S. and 70 other countries. Categories, besides PR, include websites, film & video, ads, mobile sites & apps, social media, podcasts and digital audio.

Winners will be announced April 25 and honored at a dinner at Cipriani Wall Street on May 15. Executive director of the Awards is David-Michel Davies.



**Crosby Marketing Communications president Ray Crosby (L) with Crosby multimedia production VP David Butler.**



## **WALMART SUPPORTERS 'WON' APRIL 6 DEBATE**

Pro-Walmart forces convinced 48% of a 300+ studio audience to vote in favor of "Long Live Walmart" but 44% of the online audience voted against the proposition while 40% voted in favor of it. The initial vote of those in attendance, before the debate at the Kaufman Center, 129 W. 67th st., was 30% in favor of Walmart.

The percentage of online voters who were against the proposition grew from 36% pre-vote to 44% after the debate while those in favor of the proposition grew from 24% to 40%. The undecideds shrank from 40% to 16%.

Defending Walmart were Richard Vedder, author of *The Wal-Mart Revolution*, and John Tierney, former *New York Times* columnist. Critics were Nelson Lichtenstein, author of *The Retail Revolution: How Walmart Created a Brave New World of Business*, and Amy Traub, researcher for **Demos**, liberal-oriented policy organization.

The event was streamed online, and hosted by Intelligence Squared U.S. Moderator was John Donovan, co-author of *In a Different Key: The Story of Autism*. He is also a regular correspondent for "Nightline."

Walmart is an Edelman account.

### **Tierney: Walmart Deserves Nobel Prize**

Tierney, a contributing editor to the quarterly publication *City Journal* and contributing science columnist for the *New York Times*, said Walmart's contributions are so great that it deserves "a Nobel prize." Walmart revenues are \$485 billion, and it employs 2.3 million.

Besides saving U.S. consumers money, it is a major player in the reduction of global poverty, serving as a "pipeline for redistributing wealth from rich countries to poor countries," he said.

The motivation for attacks against the company, he claimed, have much of their roots in "snobbery," a sense that the store's offerings are "tacky." Also contributing to Walmart's negative public image, he added, is the opposition it faces from two major opponents: newspapers and labor unions.

Traub talked about the difficulties faced by its employees. Addressing issues of low pay and what she called the refusal of Walmart to bring many part-time employees up to full-time status, she said that the company has created a "low-wage business model" that is a major contributor to the problems now faced by the American economy at large.

She also referred to what she called the ever-increasing share of company profits that go to the Walton family, the company's main shareholders, and held that up as a commentary on the problem of economic inequality in the U.S. Traub highlighted chains such as Costco and Trader Joe's as examples of how retail chains can provide better working conditions.

### **Walmart a "Private Anti-Poverty Program"**

Vedder called Walmart "a private anti-poverty program that actually benefits taxpayers." He said that its downward pressure on consumer prices is a boon to lower-income Americans, claiming that Walmart sells its goods at prices that are from eight percent to 39 percent less than its competitors.

Consumers "voted with their feet" when they abandoned smaller stores for the big-box chain. He also noted the difficulties that Walmart faces in the current economic

climate, when internet commerce, specifically the overwhelming presence of Amazon, is cutting into the company's profits and necessitating major investments in bolstering its online profile.

He discounted the example of Costco as offering an alternative to Walmart's current policies, noting the different consumer audience at which each chain is targeted. "Costco is the biggest seller of champagne in America," he quipped, "and people who shop at Walmart don't drink champagne."

Lichtenstein focused on what he saw as the poor working conditions faced by Walmart employees. He accused the company of indulging in what he called "churn," the rapid turnover of lower-level employees that, in his opinion, made it difficult for any worker to pursue a long-term career at the company. He also questioned the claim that Walmart benefits lower-income consumers, claiming that in urban areas the chain tends to avoid locating in poorer neighborhoods.

### **Audience Questioned Panel**

After each of the panelists made their presentation, they faced a series of questions from Donovan, and then the floor was opened to the audience. Noting the huge amount of applicants (23,000) for 600 available Walmart job slots in Washington, D.C., one audience member asked if perhaps potential employees felt there was a greater sense of opportunity with the chain. Another brought what she saw as the company's positive environmental record to light, while others addressed the store's allegedly detrimental effect on "quality-of-life" issues and the factor the chain plays in the shuttering of small stores.

So, in spite of living in one of the nation's few Walmart-free zones, a New York audience proved itself to be surprisingly open to having its opinion of the chain, and its image, changed.

Vedder, Tierney and others say new Walmart stores boost employment and income in communities, especially benefitting the poor; that Walmart employees are paid fairly, and that very few do not have health insurance. They decry attempts by communities to penalize Walmart by enacting restrictive zoning laws, requiring health insurance or setting high minimum wages.

### **10,000 New Jobs Promised**

Walmart in January said it would create 10,000 new jobs in the U.S. this year. Supporters say this is the latest example of Walmart benefitting America by providing jobs to low-skilled workers, selling affordable goods, and attracting new consumers and businesses to its neighborhoods.

Lichtenstein, Traub and other critics say Walmart hurts local communities by pushing out locally-owned businesses, provide low pay and "restrictive" work hours, and force U.S. companies to use cheap foreign labor.

While widely diverging opinions on Walmart were voiced by the panelists, a quick poll of them revealed that all had at one point shopped at the big-box retailer. A similar poll of the audience revealed that 46 percent of them had shopped at Walmart in the past year, while 54 percent said they had not.

Walmart has "spread evangelical Protestantism into the workplace, made South China an American workshop, and pushed U.S. politics to the right," says Lichtenstein.