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RUDER FINN ACQUIRES PEPPERCOMM

[Ruder Finn](#) has acquired [Peppercomm](#), a firm that reported \$9.2M in 2021 fee income for the 58th slot on [O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms](#).



Kathy Bloomgarden,
Steve Cody

Peppercomm's 29 employees in New York, San Francisco and London handle accounts such as Dole Sunshine Co, MINI Cooper, Xero and trivago.

The firm, which is led by Steve Cody, is noted for its "Change Agent" humor-led training programs.

Ruder Finn CEO Kathy Bloomgarden sees strong synergies between the Change Agent approach and Ruder Finn's "what's next vision" concept. "Their combination of powerful emotional mindset and sentiment analytics, combined with breakthrough creative, expands on and deepens our core capabilities, while their unique understanding of how to leverage humor in business gives us a new competitive edge in our ability to break down communications barriers, stimulate thinking and drive change," said Bloomgarden.

Cody will continue to lead Peppercomm and report to Bloomgarden, who expects no redundancies or layoffs following the deal.

Ruder Finn, which has 860 employees, is No. 8 in O'Dwyer's rankings, with fees of \$112.2M during the past year.

H+K RECRUITS WELLS FARGO'S DUNN

Hill+Knowlton Strategies has named Jennifer Dunn executive VP, head of US corporate affairs. She also assumes the helm of the H+K's Washington outpost.

She joins the firm from Wells Fargo, where she was senior VP, corporate communications and public affairs. Dunn



Jennifer Dunn

served as chief spokesperson for the bank for legal, congressional and reputational matters.

She managed global public affairs communications strategies in senior roles at Cisco and Intel, and was on the communications staffs of former US Senators Blanche Lincoln and Christopher Dodd.

"Jennifer is seasoned in navigating highly matrixed organizations, implementing complex change management initiatives, driving corporate reputation, and building teams," said H+K Strategies global president and CEO Richard Millar.

OMNICOM CHIEF WREN EARNED \$20M IN '21

Omnicom CEO John Wren, who hasn't had a salary hike in 19 years, earned \$20M in 2021 total compensation, which was up 79.3 percent from the year-earlier period. Along with other top executives, Wren did not take a salary from April 1 through September 2020 as part of the response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The 69-year-old chief collected \$1M in salary, \$8.1M in stock awards and a \$10.6M cash award as part of the firm's bonus scheme during the past year.



Jake Dilemani

Wren's employment agreement runs through 2024 and "is subject to annual automatic renewal for successive one-year terms unless either party provides timely written notice of an intent not to renew," according to the company's proxy for the May 3 annual meeting in Charlotte.

If Wren steps down as CEO, he will continue as executive chairman, while he serves on the board of directors.

Phillip Angelastro, executive VP/CFO, finished second in the compensation race. His total comp jumped 139 percent to \$9.8M.

SAINT ALBERT SEEKS PR TO REMOVE STIGMA

Alberta's City of Saint Albert is looking for help on the renaming of its Grandin neighborhood that honors a Catholic bishop who founded residential boarding schools, where Indigenous children were abused for more than 100 years, throughout Canada.

Saint Albert says many of its residents requested changing the name of Grandin after the discovery of the remains of 215 children on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in Tk'emups te Secwepemc First Nation in British Columbia in June 2021. The city has about 600 businesses, streets, civic sites and municipal properties that have some connection with Grandin.



Pope Francis on March 31 apologized for the abuse and mistreatment that went on in the Church's boarding schools and promised to visit Canada to meet with members of the Indigenous community.

Responses to the RFP are due April 13. Interested firms must be registered at <https://stalbert.bidsandtenders.ca/Module/Tenders/en>.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

STAGWELL ADDS DYVERSTY

Stagwell has acquired Dyversity Communications, a Canadian multicultural marketing shop based in Markham, which is just outside of Toronto.



Its 32 staffers specialize in Chinese and South Asian communications, plus more than 20 other languages.

They offer PR, advertising, strategy, digital marketing, analytics and experiential services.

Albert Yue, CEO and founder of the 26-year Dyversity shop, said he's proud of building Canada's largest multicultural shop and sees growth opportunities as ethnic marketing "still accounts for a very modest number of Canadian brands' total marketing spend."

He has run campaigns for L'Oréal, Gillette, Xerox, Moët Hennessy, Nestlé, UPS, RJ Reynolds and Kodak.

Stagwell chief Mark Penn said Dyversity "sets a high bar for excellence in multicultural insights that aligns with our data-driven approach to shaping culture."

Once Dyversity settles into Stagwell's Doner Partners Network, the plan is to scale its expertise in the US.

CANADIAN ENERGY CENTRE TAPS DDB

The Canadian Energy Centre is using Omnicom's DDB Canada to influence American public opinion about the Canadian oil and gas industry.

Created by the United Conservative Party, CEC's goal is to counter what it perceives as misinformation about Alberta's oil and gas sector. E.g., the Natural Resources Defense Council claims every step of tar sands oil production from extraction to waste storage wreaks havoc on the environment.

DDB is behind the CEC's pitch that "friendly" Canadian energy is the answer to the world's supply woes, especially as president Biden looks for producers to replace Russian oil.

DDB has a \$1.3M budget for a targeted US advertising push. That effort includes \$150K for digital work, including rapid response to media criticism, organic rebuttals and paid media amplification.

CORCORAN QUILTS REAL CHEMISTRY FOR BCW

BCW has named Mary Corcoran president, North America, effective May 1. Corcoran joins BCW from Real Chemistry, where she ran the tWist operating company, the communications business and most recently, had served as chief client officer.

Before that, she was chief operating officer in Edelman's New York office. Corcoran succeeds Brooke Hovey, who is returning to her role as BCW's global chief growth officer. In her new position, Corcoran will be responsible for business growth; talent acquisition, development and retention; and senior client counsel for the agency's largest region, in addition to serving on BCW's executive committee and global board.

"She has experience across nearly every industry and discipline, plus an impeccable track record of successfully leading increasingly large and complex P&Ls to outsized growth," said BCW global CEO Donna Imperato.



Mary Corcoran

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Bianchi Public Relations is named PR agency of record for **SAE International**, a professional organization committed to advancing mobility knowledge and solutions. Bianchi PR will provide ongoing public relations and media relations for SAE products, including journals, books and technical papers, automotive and aerospace standards, and events that address these topics and more, such as the WCX 2022, AeroTech and COMVEC conferences. The agency has provided SAE with specialized media relations since 2020.



Markacy is selected as agency of record for the US Beauty Division of **Lumenis**, a medical device company for aesthetic and ophthalmic applications. The agency will focus on driving growth for Geneo, a Lumenis brand that provides skincare treatments using patented oxygenation technology. Markacy will leverage its experience in the skincare technology sector to create a multi-channel integrated program for expanding Geneo's provider footprint and making its technology more accessible.

Gateway Group is selected to build, manage and deploy an investor relations program for **Blackline Safety Corp.**, which provides wearable safety technology, personal and area gas monitoring, cloud-connected software and data analytics. Gateway's responsibilities will include refining overall company and investment-oriented messaging and corporate positioning, strategic advisory services and introductions to institutional investors, sell-side analysts and other key influencers in the financial community. The agency will also assist in organizing roadshows and securing invitations to financial conferences.

Lou Hammond Group signs on to represent **Wellby**, a Houston-based credit union that serves 130,000 members from 20 locations. LHG is supporting Wellby with a range of services that includes PR, member communications and marketing strategy. Wellby was formed in 1961 as JSC Federal Credit Union to serve the employees and families of Johnson Space Center. LHG has also added Visit Athens GA, Vintage Hospitality Group, Venterra Realty and The Ryder Hotel to its client roster.



Hemsworth Communications is named agency of record for **LiveTrends Design Group** and its three brands—LiveTrends and Urban Jungle, which specialize in plants, and BeYou, a collection of products set to launch later this year. The firm is responsible for crafting and executing a national media relations and influencer marketing strategy to drive consumer awareness and sales for the company. It is also developing a launch strategy for the company's new website, which will be introduced in the coming weeks. LiveTrends Design Group sells its products in Lowe's, Target, Trader Joe's, Kroger and over 200 retailers nationwide.

Pace Public Relations is selected to lead media efforts for **Greater New Orleans, Inc.**, the regional economic development non-profit organization serving the 10-parish region of Southeast Louisiana. The agency will execute a strategic media relations plan for GNO focused on bolstering the region's profile as a tech and startup hub with a thriving business economy. GNO works to attract, retain and develop businesses in New Orleans as well as creating, promoting and advocating for programs that improve business conditions and career opportunities within the region.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WIKIPEDIA

Since its inception, the Wikipedia homepage has been viewed 44 billion times. In October 2021 alone, the encyclopedia as a whole was visited 1.57 billion times. It's used to research information on practically any subject, including current news and other trending topics. It also feeds information to smart assistants, populates Google's knowledge panels and People Also Ask questions, and is consistently a top 3 search result on Google.



Josh Greene

It's a mighty, powerful website, and it's impacting your online reputation. How?

If your organization is included anywhere on Wikipedia that information can be reviewed by possible and current investors and employees, as well as the press. With Wikipedia's reach, people don't even have to know about your brand to have Google bring it to their attention. Siri, Alexa, or People Also Ask questions will do the work for you.

The question is, is the supplied information up-to-date and accurate? Is it positive or negative? How do you find out and how do you make any necessary changes?

That's the focus of my book *Wikipedia for Business 2022: The Rules & Latest Developments that Businesses & Communicators Need to Know to Succeed*. All tips and strategies are used by my team as we help Fortune 500 companies, international brands, and high-profile nonprofit organizations align their Wikipedia pages, SEO goals, and online reputations.

My top pro-tip: You need to really understand Wikipedia before you do anything at all on the site.

It sounds simple, I know, but it's anything but. Wikipedia is ruled by a vast number of volunteer editors, many of whom are incredibly passionate about the encyclopedia's guidelines, have their own strong opinions and biases, and are dedicated to keeping articles non-promotional.

One wrong step can see your account suspended, your edits reverted, or even your page deleted.

Why?

I answer that question fully in the book, but to get you started, here is an excerpt.

How to Get and Keep the Best Content on Your Page

Wikipedia prefers that people affiliated with a company leave the editing to someone else to preserve the neutrality of the page. Take heart though, that doesn't mean that you can't be a part of the process.

Here's how you can help.

First, very specifically identify what you would like added to your page. Keep in mind that Wikipedia is an encyclopedia and not a company biography or press release. Significant developments can be added, but you're probably going to get laughed at if you want every tiny detail on your page.

Once you have the information selected, search the internet for reputable, third-party sources that support your request. Everything added to a Wikipedia page should be notable and verifiable, so this step helps you meet those requirements. Remember that content also has to be neutral.

Thirdly, draft your desired content, include any sources, and post the request on your Talk page. Be sure to share that you have an affiliation with your company.

Now, you wait for another editor to review your request. This is why we recommend being familiar with your page's History. If you know what's been happening on your page, you'll have a better guess as to how long it might take someone to respond, and what their response might be. Engage calmly and politely no matter what happens. Wikipedia isn't a dictatorship, and most editors follow a Talk page because they genuinely care about the page's topic.

If you're thinking that this sounds complicated and you'd like to go rogue, be aware that all IP addresses used to edit Wikipedia are logged. There are also a number of common self-edit patterns that experienced editors will identify with ease. Remember, everything is logged in your revision history so missteps can continue to cause problems for you going forward. Of course, you can engage with an expert to help guide you through the process, which we highly recommend.

Josh Greene is CEO of [The Mather Group](#), a digital marketing strategy company specializing in search engine optimization, pay-per-click, email marketing, content creation and ecommerce.

QUEENS COLLEGE NEEDS MARKETING HELP

Queens College, which is part of the City University of New York college system, is looking for an agency to develop a digital marketing and enrollment campaign to generate its undergraduate recruitment and boost its diversity branding, as well as its summer session and graduate studies programs.

Scope of the work includes developing and implementing a digital enrollment campaign; providing student lead generation; and conducting digital marketing work for the college as needed.

Terms of the contract call for a one-year commitment with the possibility of renewal for one additional year.

Proposals are due by 10 a.m. (EST) on Wednesday, April 13 and should be sent to: Queens College; Attn: Sunny Virk, Procurement Director; 65-30 Kissena Blvd.; Kiely Hall, Room 257; Flushing, NY 11367

[Download the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

CITI'S BOMBARDIER TO MORGAN STANLEY

Jennifer Bombardier, who was director of US personal banking communications at Citibank, has joined Morgan Stanley.

As head of brand communication position, a new post, Bombardier is to position Morgan Stanley as a market leader via amplifying its partnerships and activations.

She reports to chief marketing officer Alice Milligan.

At Citi, Bombardier handled external PR for its credit card and retail banking units that serve more than 75M customers.

During a seven-year run, she helped "humanize" the Citi brand to appeal to a new generation of customers, running media campaigns that enlisted influencers and forged partnerships with brands such as Live Nation and Spotify.

Prior to joining Citi, she led communications for LoyaltyOne and Canadian law firm Borden Ladner Gervais.



Jennifer Bombardier

HEALTHCARE PR FIRMS UP 47% IN '21

[Healthcare PR](#) enjoyed robust growth in 2021 as the 80 firms ranked by O'Dwyer's posted a 46.6 percent gain in total revenue to \$1.3B, counseling clients on how to deal with the global COVID-19 crisis.

[Real Chemistry](#) (\$475M), [Edelman](#) (\$208.9M) and [Evoke Group](#) (\$181M) took the top three slots in the rankings.

Michael Kempner's [MikeWorldWide](#) (+116.3 percent to \$7.5M), Tom Ryan's [ICR Inc.](#) (+67.6 to \$38.5M) and Scott Signore's [Matter Communications](#) (+51.6 percent to \$7.6M) posted the biggest gains of the Top 25 firms.

Healthcare Becomes Edelman's Biggest Practice

Edelman Health in 2021 emerged as the largest practice at the firm for the first time in its 70-year history. The unit posted a 23.8 percent jump in revenues to \$208.9M.

There was a 14 percent jump in new business wins, including a 49 percent increase in organic wins over 2020.

The robust performance came as Edelman collaborated with clients to build trust across health communities, while combating misinformation about their businesses, products, science and research, according to US Health chair Courtney Gray Haupt.

Gray Haupt noted progress on Edelman Health's DEI commitments, including a 27 percent increase in female managers and a 10 percent jump in diverse leadership.

"We have prioritized culture and continued to become more inclusive and specialized," she said.

APCO Empowers Clients

[APCO Worldwide](#), which showed a 12.4 percent revenue increase to \$36.7M, "helped clients deal with complex public and policy discussions," said Evan Kraus, president of the DC-based shop.

APCO's insight and health teams supported Pfizer's corporate affairs and global security staff to raise awareness of the risk of counterfeit medicines.

The agency also advised Roche in creating FutureProofing Healthcare, an interactive tool showcasing insights and

data on health care systems across Europe, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.

The United Arab Emirates turned to APCO to help reach its goal of becoming a COVID-19-free nation. APCO—with G42 Healthcare—designed a public health campaign that has made the country the most vaccinated nation in the world today, with more than 90 percent of the population fully vaccinated.

JPA Health Expands Across Biopharma

[JPA Health](#), which has offices in Washington, Boston, New York and London, registered a 14 percent boost in revenues to \$16.9M.

JPA Health's medtech unit bloomed, picking up clients focused on robotic-assisted surgery, artificial intelligence in drug discovery and new technologies for patient engagement.

Principal Carrie Jones said the firm dealt with some of society's most pressing issues, which included spotlighting the mental health crisis among health-

care workers and supporting COVID-19 vaccination confidence in medically underserved communities.

"The firm's life sciences and public health practices incorporated health equity principles from project planning to completion to create inclusive, culturally competent communications campaigns," said Jones.

Finn Guides Clients Through Fragmented Ecosystem

[Finn Partners](#) pounded out a 28.6 percent rise in 2021 healthcare revenues to the \$44.2M mark.

"Enabling clients to navigate the fragmented health ecosystem continues to be a winning recipe for success," said Gil Bashe, chair of global health & purpose.

The healthcare unit added new services in clinical trial recruitment, health IT marketing, and digital health and omnichannel communications during the past year.

The Medika Life and Pharmacy Podcast Network acquisitions "have given Finn's clients an inside track to connect with other health thought leaders and the influential pharmaceutical community," said Bashe.

Bashe called Finn "the go-to agency in health information—the glue that enables physicians, patients, pharma companies and payers to align around care and product access urgencies."

Matter Benefits from Demand from Emerging Verticals

[Matter Communications](#) ranked among the fastest growing healthcare firms in the Top 25 group, driven by "a rapidly expanding client base and demand from emerging industry verticals," according to Scott Signore, principal & CEO.

He said the firm more than doubled its client roster and staff numbers over the past calendar year.

As Matter and its clients emerge from the pandemic and face evolving economic and global events, Signore said: "We're helping to share the important messages of innovators making real differences in healthcare, ranging from technology to therapeutics, mental health and more."

Crosby Handled Ups and Downs of Pandemic.

[Crosby](#), which chalked up \$28.5M in healthcare revenues, "continued to be on the forefront of helping health care organizations navigate and communicate throughout the ups and downs of the pandemic," according to CEO Raymond Crosby.

In 2021, the firm landed assignments from Kaiser Permanente, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Refuah Health, and expanded work for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

Crosby's PSA campaign for DAV (Disabled American Veterans) generated \$98 million in donated broadcast, print and out-of-home media.

The firm enhanced its digital, UX and analytics capabilities, and invested in people and DEI initiatives to build its team.

"It's still hard to know what the new normal is, but 2022 is already shaping up to be another strong year of growth and success for Crosby and our health practice," said Crosby.



Courtney Gray Haupt



Evan Kraus



Carrie Jones



Gil Bashe



Scott Signore



Ray Crosby

FL COUNTY NEEDS ENVIRONMENTAL MKTG

The Lee County Board of County Commissioners is soliciting proposals from agencies specializing in advertising and marketing services.



The Gulf Coast Florida county, whose county seat is Fort Myers, is looking for an agency that can develop and implement an advertising program that promotes and complements the department's ongoing outreach efforts to educate citizens on improved recycling, reducing waste generation and increased participation in community donation and reuse options.

Scope of the work also calls for developing an advertising plan that supports the county's campaigns year-round and monitoring and providing analytic data.

Proposals are due by 2:30 PM (EST) on Thursday, April 7 and should be mailed to: Lee County Procurement Management; 2115 Second Street, 1st Floor; Fort Myers FL 33901

Bidding agencies should submit one original hard copy and two electronic versions of their proposals on a USB flash drive. Questions should be sent to David Jones, DJones2@leegov.com.

[Download the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

BALLARD LANDS \$900K PACT FROM DR CONGO

Ballard Partners has inked a \$900K one-year contract to provide strategic consulting and advocacy services to the Democratic Republic of the Congo regarding its business with the US government.

The firm will communicate to Washington officials about the DRC's goal of enhancing relations with the US, strengthening democratic institutions and advancing economic growth.

Ballard will promote the DRC as "an international leader on climate change, with equitable compensation for its carbon credits," according to its contract.

Brian Ballard heads the six-member team that represents the DRC's Ministry of Communication and Media.

The State Department's Monica Medina visited the DRC in February and discussed with government officials the need to stamp out corruption, conserve biodiversity and vaccinate its people against COVID-19. The State Dept. also provided the funds to help train and equip the park rangers that defend VNP against insurgent groups and poachers.

BIGGS RETURNS TO TENEO

Kensley Biggs has rejoined Teneo as managing director, focusing on dealing with ESG matters.



Kensley Biggs

Most recently, she was senior VP, ESG and corporate social responsibility at Truist, a Top Ten bank that was formed with the merger of SunTrust and BB&T. She helped build the merged bank's ESG operation and worked on its long-term climate strategy and pathway to net zero emissions.

Biggs moved to Truist after four years at Abernathy MacGregor, where she built its ESG offering, led IR programs, managed earnings calls and handled crisis situations.

She signed on at Teneo as its 13th employee in 2011 after a six-year run in Goldman Sachs' private wealth management group.

ICR HELPS FORTUNE GOBBLE UP D'ARTAGNAN

[ICR Inc.](#) handles Fortune International as it acquires D'Artagnan, a leader in the "farm-to-table" movement, in a deal pegged in the \$100M range.

Union, NJ-based D'Artagnan distributes free-range meat and all-natural poultry, foie gras, mushrooms and truffles to high-end restaurants and retailers. It has 260 workers.

It has developed a network of independent farmers and ranchers who must abide by its quality and conscientiously-raised meat standards.

Fortune International is the parent company of Fortune Fish & Gourmet food distributor that serves white-tablecloth restaurants, private clubs, hotels and gourmet shops. It has more than 10,000 customers in the southeastern US.

The deal expands Fortune's footprint to the northeast and combines its strength in seafood with D'Artagnan's free-range meat products.

ICR's Doug Donakys and Joe Crisci handle Fortune.



D'ARTAGNAN

GARVEY STRATEGIES TALKS FOR TURKEY

Garvey Strategies is providing government relations services to Turkey's Washington embassy under a one-year agreement worth \$180K.

The firm is educating Congress and the Biden administration about issues of importance to Turkey. It also is pushing for US action that results in a positive image for Turkey, Turks and the bilateral America-Turkey relationship.

Garvey is working as a subcontractor to Lydia Borland's LB International Solutions. She's a former consultant at former House Speaker-designate Bob Livingstone's shop.

Turkey's president, Tayyip Erdogan, has been serving as a mediator to end the war in Ukraine.

NATO countries objected to Turkey's decision to buy its S-400 air defense system from Russia and booted it from the F-35 fighter jet consortium.

Turkey has rebuffed calls to transfer the S-400 system to Ukraine and replace it with US Patriot batteries.

Turkey "takes pride in its NATO membership and expects to be treated by the West as it deserves," wrote Fahrettin Altun, Erdogan's director of communications, in a March 23 letter to the *Wall Street Journal*.

FORD DRIVES TO BARETZ+BRUNELLE

Baretz+Brunelle has hired Chris Ford, a veteran of the legal technology marketplace, as chief marketing and business development officer.

The New York-based firm provides corporate communications, digital marketing and crisis management services to law firms.

Ford spent more than 10 years at The LexisNexis and Axiom analytics firm, where he handled lead generation.

He is co-founder of LegalTech Hub, a global directory of legal technology tools.

Ford joins Baretz+Brunelle from Zero, a productivity automation company. At Zero, he served as chief marketing officer and helped guide the company through its Series A financing round.



Chris Ford

COMMENTARY



For God's sake, let's stop the nonsense about whether president Joe Biden committed a gaffe when he said Russian strongman Vladimir Putin cannot remain in power.

There's a war going on.

Biden was on the mark. He's talking about a guy who invaded a neighboring country without provocation, launched attacks on civilian targets, razed cities

and kidnapped Ukrainians, dispatching them to exile in Russia.

Shame on the GOP for trying to make political hay over president Biden's deviation from his scripted speech, which rallied NATO to support Ukraine.

Florida Congressman Michael Waltz said Biden's words damaged his credibility. I guess Waltz wasn't paying attention when Biden called Putin a "butcher" and "war criminal."

Georgia lunatic Marjorie Taylor Greene said: "The most needed regime change right now is the one in the United States." The only part of America in desperate need of a regime change is Georgia's 14th congressional district.

Putin and his state-run media have said for years that the US and the CIA are hellbent on removing him from power.

Dmitry Peskov, Putin's mouthpiece who is among the sanctioned oligarchs, said Biden's statement "makes us worry."

There's much more to worry about, Dmitry. You should be worrying about the damage done to your master's reputation following the failure of Russia's army to waltz into Kyiv and be hailed as conquering heroes by grateful Ukrainians.

Pezkov said the Kremlin will closely monitor Biden's statements. He should closely monitor Putin's sanity level.

Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelensky told *The Economist* he is baffled by Putin's inhumanity to his own people.

"Vladimir Putin is throwing Russian soldiers like logs into a train's furnace. And, they are not even burying them. Their corpses are left in the streets."

Biden simply expressed the opinion of millions of people across the world, including hundreds of thousands of Russians.

More than 200K have fled their country since the beginning of the Feb. 24 invasion.

Many more will follow in their footsteps as Russia's economy collapses; and dead, wounded and demoralized soldiers return home to their families to face a desperate future.

That upcoming horror may finally convince the Russian people: "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power."

They will owe a debt of gratitude to America's president.

Let's review Donald Trump's remarks made just prior to Putin's invasion.

He told radio hosts Buck Sexton and Clay Travis that Putin was a "genius" because he declared a big portion of Ukraine independent. "Oh, that's wonderful," said Trump.

That big portion is the Donbas region, where hundreds of Ukrainians have died battling the Russians since 2014.

The disgraced American president told a fund-raiser in Mar-a-Lago: "I'd say that's pretty smart. He's taking over

a country—really a vast, vast location, a great piece of land with a lot of people and just walking in."

Trump needs a new crystal ball.

In today's depressing news scene, one finds humor in the darndest of places.

The *New York Times'* March 27 piece about Chris Wallace (74) leaving Fox News for CNN+ is one such place.

"The advanced ages of some of his early guests—Judy Collins (82) and William Shatner (91)—also suggest that Mr. Wallace's program might complement more millennial-focused fare," wrote Michael Grynbaum.

Ya think.

Egads.....Mark Zuckerberg's Meta, parent of Facebook, funding a bare-knuckle grassroots campaign to turn public opinion against TikTok, which is owned by Beijing-based ByteDance, according to a report in the *Washington Post*.

Meta is using Targeted Victory to place articles and op-eds in regional papers promoting "dubious stories about alleged TikTok trends that actually originated on Facebook" and working to amplify negative coverage.

Targeted Victory, which WaPo notes is a Republican-aligned firm, is lining up "proactive coverage" about Facebook.

One wonders if the liberal WaPo post took a shot at Targeted Victory because its goal is to bring a "right-of-center perspective to solve marketing challenges."

Zac Moffatt, who was digital director for Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential run, launched Targeted Victory.

He's been working for Facebook since at least 2016, along with clients such as AT&T, Gillette and FedEx for years.

The Post failed to note that Targeted Victory is a unit of Stagwell Group. Mark Penn, who advised Bill and Hillary Clinton, helms Stagwell. His name has graced the pages of the Post for years.

Damn the Oligarchs—Full Speed Ahead, says Alberto Galassi, CEO of Italian yacht maker Ferretti.

Ferretti has just gone public on the Hong Kong stock in a deal valued at just shy of \$1B.

Its prospectus eases the fears of potential investors who thought the sanctions slapped on Russian oligarchs in the aftermath of Putin's invasion of Ukraine would sink its sale of super-yachts, which are boats from 39 to 95 meters long.

Fear not. Ferretti says sales to Russian and Ukrainian customers only accounted for three percent of 2021 sales.

To its best knowledge, there are no pending sales to Russians or Ukrainians on the books.

And beside the point: "Due to the nature and uniqueness of the luxury industry, we did not experience in the past, nor do we expect to face in the future any material difficulty in selling our yachts to other customers," Ferretti's said.

The company, which is controlled by China's Weichai Group, sees a bright future in the APAC market.

It posted a 63 percent rise in nine-month revenues to \$775M. It earned \$42M compared to a \$12M year-ago loss.

Let them eat cake, indeed.

—Kevin McCauley