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SOUTH PADRE ISLAND FLOATS \$1.8M RFP

South Padre Island, a hotbed among college student spring breakers, is floating an RFP to accelerate its growth as a year-round travel destination.



The \$1.8M RFP covers PR/media relations, creative services, media buy & digital placement and meetings.

Interested firms may pitch the entire package or bid on various parts of it.

Targeted audiences include “singles/couples mid-lifers” (age

25-35 with \$75K household incomes); “empty nesters/active adults” (55+, \$100K HHI); “winter Texans/retirees” (65+, \$75K HHI) and families (30-54, \$100K HHI).

The South Padre Island Convention & Visitors Bureau is primarily focusing outreach to Texas cities (Houston, Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, Laredo and Rio Grande City).

It also wants to expand outreach “flight origination markets” in the upper midwest, as well as Denver, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Portland and Kansas City/St. Louis.

Proposals are due April 15. They should be sent via FedEx, UPS, DHL to: South Padre Island Convention & Visitors Bureau; 4601 Padre Boulevard; South Padre Island, TX 78597

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

FINANCIAL PRO HARRIS JOINS BRUNSWICK

Adrienne Harris, who has advised financial/fintech companies and venture capital firms, has signed on as a senior advisor at Brunswick Group's DC office.



Adrienne Harris

She also served as special assistant to president Obama for economic policy at the White House's national economic policy office.

Most recently, Harris was founding chief business officer and general counsel at San Francisco start-up insurtech. At the University of Michigan, she is a Gates Foundation senior research fellow at the center for finance, law and policy.

George Little, Brunswick's Washington chief, said Harris “is highly networked, accomplished in the private sector and brings deep experience in the fast-changing fintech and broader financial services industry.”

INDEPENDENT PR FIRMS UP 3.8% IN 2020

The top 130 independent PR firms posted a 3.8 percent gain to \$3B in combined fee income during pandemic 2020 and a 2.9 percent dip to 15,832 in year-end overall employment, according to O'Dwyer's 2021 annual rankings.

Seventy-two firms posted income gains, while 48 suffered declines. Nine reported flat income.

One firm, Lansons Intermarket at No. 104 on the list, could not provide comparable 2019 figures due to a revamp in its accounting system triggered by a change in ownership.

The Top 25 firms combined for a five percent gain to \$2.3B in fee income. Employment dropped 2.2 percent to 12,135.

Edelman, which posted a 5.8 percent decrease in fees to \$840M, retained its No. 1 position in O'Dwyer's rankings. It had 530 fewer employees at the end of 2020 compared to 2019.

Real Chemistry, the former W2O Group, posted a robust 61 percent rise in income to \$360.2M, powered in part by the acquisition of seven firms: 21GRAMS, Symplur, Discern Health, Elysia Group, starpower, Swoop and IPM.ai.

CEO Jim Weiss noted that 2020 marked the 19th consecutive year of double-digit growth at his healthcare-oriented firm.

Real Chemistry worked with clients on the pandemic frontlines, supporting about 50 COVID-19-related initiatives and clients developing vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and devices.

“We leveraged our machine and AI data engine to provide vital information about the pandemic to media and the life sciences industry and committed significant agency time and resources to positively impact those affected,” said Weiss.

The firm established the Networks for Emergencies & Relief non-profit, which raised more than \$450,000 to source and distribute 2.3 million+ PPE to organizations in critical need and partnered with the Ad Council to launch a \$50M pro bono campaign that enlisted Dr. Anthony Fauci and other KOLs to improve vaccine confidence.

Real Chemistry also guided the Black Coalition Against COVID group as it launched “A Love Letter to Black America,” mobilizing advocates to build vaccine confidence



Jim Weiss

(Continued on page 3)

STAMFORD NEEDS COVID OUTREACH PR

Stamford is looking for a firm to develop an integrated marketing communications program and handle social media outreach to promote positive COVID-19 mitigation behaviors among communities of color.



The selected firm will identify “trusted voices for communities of color” and the barriers to COVID-19 vaccination uptake. It will iron out strategies to promote vaccinations and reduce vaccine hesitancy.

The PR partner will work with Connecticut’s Dept. of Public Health and agencies to ensure consistent messaging and provide input of multilingual content for flyers, posters and banners.

Stamford plans to issue an 18-month contract for the COVID-19 educational push.

Responses to the RFP are due April 15. They go to: <https://stamfordct.procurement.com>.

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

OMNICOM’S WREN TAKES COVID-19 COMP HIT

Omnicom CEO John Wren, who received no salary from April 1 through September, reported a 43.7 percent plunge in 2020 total compensation to \$11.1M, according to the firm’s proxy statement for its May 4 virtual annual meeting.



John Wren

The move was part of Omnicom’s response to the COVID-19 crisis, which included ending stock buybacks, employee pay and hiring freezes, and cutting discretionary spending to enhance liquidity and cash flow.

Beginning Oct. 1, Wren took a 20 percent cut in his \$1M base pay.

Prior to 2020, Wren and executive VP/general counsel Michael O’Brien had not had a salary hike in 18 years. O’Brien took a temporary 25 percent cut in his \$700K salary on April 1. He returned to full salary on August 1.

Omnicom also reduced CFO Philip Angelastro’s \$850K salary by a third from April through September. His original salary was cut 10 percent from October through yearend.

Angelastro’s total comp for the full-year dipped 19.2 percent to \$4.1M.

BALL BOUNCES OUT OF GAETZ’S OFFICE

Luke Ball is exiting his position as communications director for Rep. Matt Gaetz as the Justice Department inquiry into Gaetz’s possible connections to sex trafficking continues.



Luke Ball

Ball started out in Gaetz’s office as an intern in 2017. In addition to serving as his press secretary, Ball was deputy campaign manager in the representative’s 2018 re-election campaign and deputy digital director for Ron DeSantis for Governor, according to Ball’s LinkedIn profile. He is also the founder of Rightlife Media, a video production and website design company.

The *New York Post* said that Ball had scrubbed any mentions of Gaetz, from his Twitter biography by midday April 1.

LIPPE TAYLOR ACQUIRES CHEER PARTNERS

Lippe Taylor Group has acquired Cheer Partners, employee communications and diversity, equity and inclusion champion.

Cat Colella-Graham launched Cheer in 2017 after a 12-year stint at Ruder Finn, where she exited as executive VP-global head of people and acquisitions.

Cheer has worked with Pfizer, Tata Consulting, Bristol-Myers Squibb, CVS Health and Johnson & Johnson.

Paul Dyer, CEO of Lippe Taylor, noted the shift to remote work has made employee engagement a top concern of clients. The Cheer deal will “take our capabilities to the next level,” he said.

Art Stevens’ Stevens Group handled the transaction.



QATAR TAPS EMPIRE CONSULTING GROUP

Qatar has hired Empire Consulting Group, a firm with close ties to the Democratic party, to a \$40K a month contract to keep tabs on developments in DC.

The contract kicked off on March 15 and runs through Jan. 2023.

Empire Consulting managing partner Mike McKay, who was a top aide to House Foreign Affairs Committee chief Greg Meeks (D-NY), signed the agreement with Brigadier General Mohamed Abdulaziz, security attache at the embassy.

He’s assisted by Eulice Brandon Garrett, who was an aide to former Ohio Congresswoman and current Housing & Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge.

Empire in January inked Taipei Economic & Cultural Representative Office in the US to a six-month \$90K contract to analyze political developments and US policy moves that could impact US ties with Taiwan.



GAGNIER HANDLES REDBIRD’S RED SOX DEAL

Gagnier Communications is handling RedBird Capital’s acquisition of an 11 percent stake in Fenway Sports Group, owner of the Boston Red Sox and Liverpool Football Club.

The investment gives FSG an enterprise valuation of \$7.4B. John Henry, majority owner of FSG, paid \$700M for the Red Sox in 2001.

RedBird and FSG will work in tandem to make sports-related acquisitions of teams/venues and media properties to expand their platform.

As part of the deal, basketball great LeBron James will exchange part of his ownership in the British soccer team to become part of the Fenway ownership group.

FSG’s holdings include Boston’s Fenway Park and Liverpool’s Anfield Stadium, a 50 percent stake in NASCAR’s Roush Fenway Racing and 80 percent in the New England Sports Network.

Gagnier Communications’ Dan Gagnier, VP Lindsay Barber, senior associate Jeremy Schulman and junior associate Margaret Joel represent RedBird.



INDEPENDENT PR FIRMS UP 3.8% IN 2020

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within Black communities.

Weiss bolstered First Chemistry's ranks by recruiting a global chief experience officer; group president of transformation, consumer activation and marketing; head of DE&I; and presidents of CRM/marketing solutions and corporate & capital market communications.

He said the transformation from W20 to First Chemistry in March 2021 is designed to improve outcomes across the healthcare ecosystem and closely integrate operations "to deliver data-driven tech-enabled health marketing and communications solutions."

Zeno Group Restores Sacrificed Salaries

Zeno Group achieved its 11th consecutive year of growth in 2020 amid the global pandemic and social unrest.



Barby Siegel

The firm, which relies on technology, healthcare, food, beverage and manufacturing for 50 percent of its US business, counseled more than 85 clients on COVID-19 and racial justice matters.

"Clients within those sectors on both sides of the business spectrum—some battered, others surging—turned to Zeno's integrated capabilities including research, creative, corporate reputation, crisis, digital, analytics and purpose," said CEO Barby Siegel.

The firm added Hyatt Global Corp., Crate & Barrel and Ancestry to its roster in 2020.

"While the year at times was overwhelming and unnerving, Zeno's years-in-the-making culture of kindness, compassion and people first led the way on how the agency handled a new normal amid the pandemic," said Siegel, who sent nightly global emails to staffers that addressed fears and anxiety while offering hope and strength.

In June, Zeno implemented salary cuts for VPs and above to protect and preserve business. The pay was restored on September 16.

"We built our business back and continued our consecutive yearly growth," said Siegel, and paid back the sacrificed salary in February.

Pandemic Spurs Innovation at APCO

The unprecedented nature of the pandemic spurred APCO Worldwide to take innovative and bold decisions with new offerings, make acquisitions and strategic partnerships to meet clients' needs, and collaborate across regions and practices to help clients maintain business continuity and look forward with confidence, according to Evan Kraus, president of APCO Worldwide.



Evan Kraus

The Washington-based firm took the No. 3 slot in the O'Dwyer's rankings with net fees of \$143M, up one percent from 2019.

As the pandemic took hold, APCO launched a "coronavirus hub" to provide key intelligence through a series of surveys and expert insights into global sentiments and critical issues around the

pandemic.

The firm evolved its crisis response capabilities and launched "Come Back Stronger" to help clients navigate the challenges of the pandemic and move towards recovery.

Due to strong demand, APCO established regional hubs for growth and innovation. "The hubs will help anticipate what's next for the company and its clients, and focus on important client needs, including C-suite advisory; shifting demographic, social, culture and behavioral change; geopolitical dynamics and fallout from elections; and advancing innovative and disruptive business models," said Kraus.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, CEO Brad Staples has led a dedicated international APCO task force to monitor, assess, communicate and guide the company's pandemic response.

Kraus said employee well-being and mitigating business risk were top priorities during 2020.

"We seamlessly shifted to fully remote operations, provided complete flexibility to meet employees' challenges at home, converted global learning and development programs to be completely online, and hired experts and created social outlets to protect employees' mental wellbeing," said Kraus.

APCO also stepped up its efforts on the equity and social impact fronts. It tapped Charlene Wheelless as senior advisor for equity and justice and launched "Accelerate What's Right"—an effort designed to address the "right now"—to fight systemic racism and discrimination, and to create a lasting effort to advance equality and inclusion.

Core Values Guide Finn Partners

While 2020 posed tremendous challenges—personally and professionally—to the team at Finn Partners, "our values emerged as our compass, guiding business decisions and providing clarity amid the chaos," said CEO Peter Finn.

He said when the pandemic hit, the firm shifted swiftly from profits to the protection of its staff and client relationships.

Finn Partners reallocated underutilized staff, bolstered its data and analytics practice and retrained/upskilled workers for new jobs. "We can proudly say that we had no COVID-related layoffs or pay cuts, and in fact, gave bonuses during a time when so many others were shedding staff," said Finn.

The No. 4 ranked O'Dwyer's firm was in the forefront in the fight for social justice. It supported the Black Lives Matter movement, created a 100-person DEI committee of volunteers and promoted the push for greater voting access.

"We lived in the trenches with our clients, guiding them daily through COVID crisis communications, digital transformation, and shaping their sector leadership voice across policy, product and public issues," said Finn.

He said Finn Partners' first-quarter 2021 results were the best in the firm's history, further validating that "our purpose-driven, people-centric model is in demand."



Peter Finn

ICR Sticks with Ex-Clients

Tom Ryan, CEO of ICR, said 2020 ranked as "one of the most gratifying years" in the financial firm's 22-year history and "maybe its most prolific in terms of absolute dollar growth."

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O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS WITH MAJOR U.S. OPERATIONS

Firm	2020 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2019
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$840,022,000	5,143	-5.8
2. Real Chemistry , San Francisco, CA	360,187,000	1,350	61
3. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	142,960,000	799	1
4. Finn Partners , New York, NY	108,897,000	745	-8.7
5. ICR , New York, NY	105,955,111	260	20.0
6. Ruder Finn Inc. , New York, NY	87,775,000	732	13.0
7. Zeno Group , New York, NY	85,994,010	513	8.5
8. Prosek Partners , New York, NY	61,950,000	209	13.2
9. Hotwire , New York, NY	41,748,611	253	2.0
10. MWWPR , New York, NY	38,878,161	160	-9.0
11. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	38,092,948	169	12.6
12. IMRE, LLC , Baltimore, MD	36,739,100	185	10.2
13. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	35,862,295	165	-4.0
14. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	34,069,946	123	3.0
15. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	33,159,488	122	2.7
16. Spectrum , Washington, DC	32,900,000	120	0
17. Hunter , New York, NY	31,600,000	116	30.0
18. Evoke KYNE , New York, NY	30,984,000	139	24.0
19. Crosby , Annapolis, MD	29,092,172	99	18.6
20. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	28,000,000	139	-13.0
21. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	25,111,105	142	-18.0
22. Fahlgren Mortine (includes TURNER), Columbus, OH	24,991,200	165	-15.0
23. Highwire PR , San Francisco, CA	24,163,050	87	23.3
24. Citizen Relations , Los Angeles, CA	23,410,631	152	-7.4
25. PAN Communications , Boston, MA	23,359,021	148	4.6
26. Havas Formula , New York, NY	22,673,654	118	-11.5
27. Matter Communications , Boston, MA	22,540,000	167	-2.7
28. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	20,902,415	103	-15.4
29. Walker Sands Communications , Chicago, IL	20,169,584	129	7.1
30. Taylor , New York, NY	19,700,000	86	-2.0
31. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	19,182,393	111	-4.9
32. Regan Communications Group , Boston, MA	18,157,434	101	-4.2
33. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	16,376,510	103	-12.0
34. Zimmerman Agency , Tallahassee, FL	15,400,000	46	0
35. Hoffman Agency, The , San Jose, CA	15,115,000	34	1.0
36. JPA Health Communications , Washington, DC	14,818,927	64	44.0
37. Bravo Group, Inc. , Harrisburg, PA	14,562,475	70	0
38. M Booth Health , New York, NY	14,433,794	43	-12
39. Bliss Group, The , New York, NY	14,221,393	57	28.9
40. Lambert , Grand Rapids, MI	13,650,000	74	29.1
41. Marathon Strategies , New York, NY	13,504,883	40	15.0
42. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	13,091,113	78	-7.0
43. JeffreyGroup , Miami, FL	12,448,292	233	-6.0
44. Vested , New York, NY	12,409,000	30	18.0
45. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	11,912,000	57	-35.0
46. Davies , Santa Barbara, CA	11,750,000	34	4.7
47. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	10,780,275	79	-5.0
48. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	9,931,133	66	4.8
49. Moore, Inc. , Tallahassee, FL	9,452,995	38	7.0
50. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI) , New York, NY	9,410,923	55	-5.7
51. J Public Relations , New York, NY	9,119,000	53	-20.3
52. Clarity , New York, NY	9,035,115	65	47.0
53. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	8,575,221	49	-17.0
54. Peppercomm , New York, NY	8,312,989	27	-7.3
55. MMGY NJF , New York, NY	8,203,073	39	-23
56. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	8,184,000	37	-6.6
57. Sam Brown Inc. , Wayne, PA	8,001,820	51	26.2
58. Stanton , New York, NY	7,572,300	26	9.1
59. Merritt Group , McLean, VA	7,542,661	35	0
60. Lou Hammond Group , New York, NY	7,350,509	40	-9.0
61. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	6,802,560	32	-2.0
62. Bospar , San Francisco, CA	6,632,137	37	16.5
63. McCabe Message Partners , Washington, DC	6,407,087	39	10.7
64. Dukas Linden Public Relations , New York, NY	6,396,315	24	1.1
65. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	5,902,120	22	-19.0
66. Berk Communications , New York, NY	5,707,363	24	32.5
67. Singer Associates Public Relations, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	5,682,442	19	4.0
68. Infinite Global , New York, NY	5,609,950	29	-5.9

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Firm	2020 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2019
69. Touchdown PR, Austin, TX	\$5,600,633	12	14.7
70. 720 Strategies, Washington, DC	5,281,963	18	40.0
71. Lumina Communications, San Jose, CA	5,204,425	27	13.0
72. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	5,170,757	22	4.3
73. SourceCode Communications, New York, NY	5,168,512	27	52.0
74. Raffetto Herman Strategic Communications, Seattle, WA	5,119,092	28	64.0
75. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	4,886,767	30	10.0
76. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	4,804,411	36	13.7
77. LaVoie Health Science, Boston, MA	4,459,686	17	36.0
78. MCS Healthcare Public Relations, Bedminster, NJ	4,405,889	17	1.0
79. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	4,206,450	18	-11.0
80. BackBay Communications, Boston, MA	4,086,462	16	11.0
81. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	3,970,006	17	9.4
82. March Communications, Boston, MA	3,869,104	23	-17.0
83. TruePoint Communications, Dallas, TX	3,726,153	28	20.0
84. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	3,691,386	20	3.2
85. Idea Grove, Dallas, TX	3,577,000	28	7.2
86. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	3,473,116	23	-7.1
87. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	3,442,304	15	1.0
88. BoardroomPR, Fort Lauderdale, FL	3,400,000	17	13.0
89. CashmanKatz, Glastonbury, CT	3,325,000	24	4.5
90. Caliber Corporate Advisors, New York, NY	3,270,780	16	11.0
91. Serendipit, Phoenix, AZ	3,070,461	29	20.0
92. Lovell Communications, Nashville, TN	3,066,369	17	3.8
93. Crenshaw Communications, New York, NY	3,061,499	15	0
94. ARPR, Atlanta, GA	3,022,086	17	14.9
95. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations, New York, NY	2,991,360	22	-49.0
96. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,985,370	10	0
97. Cerrell Associates, Los Angeles, CA	2,918,614	15	-19.8
98. Zapwater Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL	2,900,376	23	-14.0
99. Brandware, Atlanta, GA	2,820,232	13	1.0
100. Ehrhardt Group, The, New Orleans, LA	2,806,267	17	4.0
101. Hewes Communications, New York, NY	2,705,723	7	-2.0
102. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,559,300	12	0
103. Hodges Partnership, The, Richmond, VA	2,537,332	16	19.6
104. Lansons Intermarket, New York, NY	2,473,605	13	NA
105. Montieth & Company, New York, NY	2,357,623	13	20.4
106. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	2,236,134	16	-3.3
107. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	2,234,463	10	-35.0
108. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,100,062	7	2.0
109. Bellmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	2,070,753	13	3.0
110. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc., New York, NY	2,000,000	7	-25.0
111. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	1,977,988	10	-1.0
112. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	1,935,060	10	-11.3
113. FrazierHeiby, Columbus, OH	1,779,362	14	0
114. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	1,547,713	8	4.7
115. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	1,442,023	8	26.4
116. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	1,293,586	7	-17.0
117. Buttonwood Communications Group, New York, NY	1,291,188	8	6.5
118. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	1,247,312	8	-19.7
119. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	1,218,152	9	1.4
120. Hemsworth Communications, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1,148,669	16	-35.7
121. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,133,507	5	-26.0
122. Pineapple Public Relations, Chamblee, GA	1,089,067	8	-18.5
123. Rosica Communications, Fair Lawn, NJ	973,955	5	4.0
124. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	960,053	8	-25.3
125. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	897,706	7	0
126. Agency Ten22, Cumming, GA	867,365	4	7.9
127. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	823,443	8	-22.9
128. Hoyt Organization Inc., The, Torrance, CA	810,000	6	-26.0
129. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	772,511	9	1.0
130. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	772,147	4	-1.0
131. Violet PR, Montclair, NJ	699,370	3	0
132. Lawlor Media Group, New York, NY	673,552	7	-20.0
133. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	616,208	4	-3.5
134. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	575,314	3	17.9
135. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC, Annapolis, MD	494,706	3	NA

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Once the pandemic hit in March, many of ICR's clients in the restaurant, retail and consumer sectors either left the shop or suspended fees. "Yet as a management team, we made the conscious decision to keep supporting those former clients regardless of their ability to pay," said Ryan.



Tom Ryan

The firm created a COVID-19 website in April to help clients navigate the impact of the pandemic, provide continual real-time insights and information about what was occurring, and monitor what industry peers were doing and how it affected them and their communication.

"Ultimately, as markets priced in a recovery, most clients came back to ICR in the second half of the year with a new-found demand for a broader level of engagement, including integrated investor communications, business & financial media strategy, crisis preparedness and management and governance advisory," said Ryan.

That client comeback accelerated ICR's growth across every service and industry sector, particularly technology and healthcare.

ICR also witnessed an explosion in the SPAC market where it is a leader in terms of market share, transactions executed and market value.

Ryan noted that ICR established a formal Inclusion & Diversity initiative and focused on team member engagement and communication, which he believes will be key to unifying a geographically disperse workforce going forward.

Coyne Maintains Family Ties

Coyne PR, which is proud of its family atmosphere, experienced a free fall drop in revenue during the second-quarter of 2020 due to COVID-19.

That decline caused a 13 percent decline to \$28M in full-year fee income for the No. 20 firm on O'Dwyer's list.

Despite the revenue shortfall, CEO Tom Coyne and his leadership team promised not to lay off or furlough a single employee.

"We made it clear that salaries and medical benefits would remain intact and that the health and safety of the extended Coyne PR family would always come first," said Coyne.

As a firm dedicated to being the best place to work, Coyne PR developed innovative approaches to conducting business;

created novel ways to stay connected, and forged caring and compassionate policies for serving the family of loyal employees.

Leadership unveiled a new program dubbed "Work Your Way," which gave every employee across all levels a completely flexible work alternative.

Employees were given the freedom to work from home full-time, relocate to a different office, or select a new office in the expanded space the company

acquired to accommodate social distancing guidelines more safely.

Working remotely posed a unique challenge to tight-knit



Tom Coyne

Coyne PR, which is noted for employee events like scavenger hunts, happy hours, themed lunches and corn hole tournaments.

With the shelter-in-place mandate, the firm produced "Coyne Connect," an initiative to keep people in the loop.

Some highlights are: "Don't Get Crazy: Cooking with Computer Mark" virtual cooking demonstrations from a former chef and Coyne's IT department head; "Storytelling with Jenn" sessions of heartbreak, career triumphs and lessons learned hosted by executive VP Jennifer Kamienski; "Mediation with Meg," led by social media strategist Megan Schuster; "Nutrition Rules! Bootcamp" taught by Jakie Peskin of the food/nutrition team and the #CoynePelotonCrew exercise bike program.

Coyne said staffers really pulled together during the pandemic and adapted communications programs that generated more than \$10M in new revenues.

Kivvit Increases Headcount

Kivvit, which registered a three percent spurt in 2020 fee income to \$34.1M, used the pandemic year to accelerate its "agency of the future" model, according to Molly Scherrman, COO.

She said O'Dwyer's No. 14 ranked firm invested to expand its leadership team, increased headcount by 20 percent, bolstered the use of data tools and technology, and developed new brand strategy teams, ranging from data-driven insights to motion graphics.

"We are immensely proud of our team, who responded nimbly to the new work environment and supported one another in addition to delivering incredible client work, which included campaigns on behalf of government agencies in six states on critical issues ranging from COVID-19 to the 2020 census to voting and to healthcare enrollment," Scherrman said.



Molly Scherrman

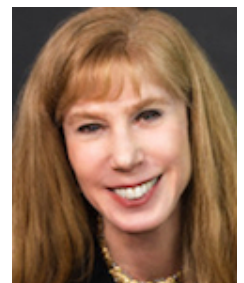
Ruder Finn Bolsters Digital, Tech Savvy

The rapid transformation driven by the COVID-19 landscape pushed Ruder Finn to invest in new digital and technological capabilities, according to CEO Kathy Bloomgarden.

O'Dwyer's No. 6 independent firm, with \$87.8M in fees, expanded its Techlab, which explores emerging tech in AI voice, VR/AR and robotics, and develops AI-driven apps, analytics tools and voice skills.

The New York-based firm's pharma unit and employee engagement practice earned it assignments at the forefront of COVID vaccines, therapeutics development and the tech-enabled virtual workspace, according to Bloomgarden.

Recognizing the power of honest dialogue to bring communities together, quell anxiety and spark innovative solutions, Ruder Finn launched a pandemic-centered salon series, bringing top communicators across industries together to brainstorm solutions, share insights and hold difficult conversations about topics such as how to inspire innovation and engagement among employees,



Kathy Bloomgarden

(Continued on page 7)

INDEPENDENT PR FIRMS UP 3.8% IN 2020

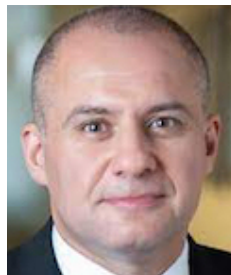
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while still upholding a sense of security and well-being.

Bloomgarden said: “Due to the strength of our portfolio, the digital DNA and architecture of our organization, and the energy and agility of our people, Ruder Finn was able to pioneer a smooth transition throughout the pandemic to not only avoid all furloughs, pandemic layoffs and salary cuts but support business continuity as we onboarded 17 key new hires and achieved double-digit growth in 2020.”

Defining Year for 5W Public Relations

5W Public Relations chief Ronn Torossian called 2020 “a defining year” for the firm that ranks No. 11 on O’Dwyer’s roster with fees of \$38.1M.



Ronn Torossian

He said when the pandemic jeopardized the business of clients and the future of the New York shop, staffers shined. “They quickly pivoted—adjusting strategies from client pitches to new business tactics, and thanks to this creative thinking, tireless work ethic, and calmness under pressure, managed to not only retain the majority of their clients, but also sign an impressive number of new ones,” he said.

The pandemic year was one of 5W PR’s most profitable years, which Torossian considers an “unbelievable accomplishment given the state of the world, and testament to the phenomenally talented professionals at this company.”

During 2020, 5W added GNC, CarParts.com, EPICOR, Medallia, Jamf, Columbia Care, Payless, SmileDirectClub, Isopure and Coca-Cola’s Fairlife unit to the client roster.

The firm used the lockdown to rebrand with a new logo, manifesto, and tagline to better communicate its services. That new identity also helps to unite employees who are working from home, according to Torossian.

IMRE Pairs Empathy, Optimism

IMRE, No. 12 on O’Dwyer’s list with 2020 fees of \$36.8M, attributes its solid 10.2 percent growth rate to a healthy pairing of empathy and optimism, according to CEO David Imre.



David Imre

The Baltimore-based firm’s growth resulted from a combination of organic and new business in its pharmaceuticals, CPG, biotech, automotive, financial services and retail practices.

“While the world turned upside down, we began with what we are good at—intentional, radical listening. This gave insight into the insecurities our clients and staff were feeling, and swiftly refocused our energies on new ways of working with and for our partners,” Imre said.

The firm added 27 staffers in 2020, a signal of its ability to attract talent.

They mostly joined the firm’s innovators practice, which is a mix of PR, creative, brand strategy, digital marketing, social media, and data analysts working in concert with one another.

Evoke KYNE Leans into Larger Purpose

Evoke KYNE entered 2020 after a transformational year in which it combined Evoke PR & Influence and KYNE to create a unified team to advance health-care and wellbeing.

“We entered 2020 in a strong position to weather what would be a very difficult year for all,” said David Kyne, CEO.

He said the global pandemic, a long-overdue racial reckoning and social unrest for Black Americans and others facing systemic racism and discrimination, and a fraught political landscape causing great anxiety, stress and tension all around the globe highlighted the need for PR to combat misinformation and educate the public on health issues.

As a result, Evoke KYNE, which is No. 18 on O’Dwyer’s list with fees of \$30.1M, enjoyed robust organic growth and 15 new client engagements.

“Our teams leaned into our larger purpose and delivered impactful and award-winning programs for clients and partners in COVID-19 and beyond, helping them to re-shape plans, pivot to a virtual environment and counseling them on how to support hard-hit communities,” said Kyne.

The firm hired about 50 people, including heads of reputation & social media and social media and expanded its creative, digital and earned media teams.

Kyne said that after a year like no other, his firm “is proud to have played a significant role in harnessing the power of communications to change the world for the better while continuing to be a best place to work.”



David Kyne

ON THE MOVE

Weber Shandwick appoints **Michael Frohlich** as chief executive officer, EMEA. Frohlich joins the agency from Ogilvy UK, where he was CEO. Previously he was CEO of Ogilvy’s public relations divisions in both EMEA and the UK. At Weber Shandwick, he will drive growth as well as overseeing the development of communications and marketing solutions for clients across the EMEA region in partnership with the firm’s EMEA-based specialist agencies: That Lot, Flipside and Prime Weber Shandwick.

KemperLesnik names **Michelle Press** senior vice president. Press was previously director of strategic communications and crisis management at UL, a safety science organization. She has also served as a senior vice president at Ogilvy and Golin. “Her strategic thinking and reputation management skills will add to our already strong corporate communications practice,” said KempnerLesnik managing director Amy Littleton.

dovetail solutions, which has offices in Denver and Sacramento, brings on **Summer Wright** as vice president. Wright was previously director of marketing at The Niello Company, a California automotive group. At dovetail, she will drive client program strategy and planning. **Stephanie Castro** and **Jillian Headrick** have also joined dovetail as client services partners.



Michelle Press

COMMENTARY



Donald Trump blasted his former COVID-19 advisors Anthony Fauci and Deborah Birx on March 29 for criticizing his handling of the pandemic.

He called them “two self-promoters trying to reinvent history to cover for their bad instincts and faulty recommendations, which I fortunately almost always overturned.”

As they say in the playgrounds: It takes one to know one.

Trump is reinventing the history of his presidency via the launch of 45office.com, which he says aims to “preserve the magnificent legacy of the Trump Administration, while at the same time advancing the America First agenda.”

The site is chock full of Trumpian propaganda and imagery designed to gloss over the record of what historians rate [as one of the worst presidencies](#) in US history.

Birx claims Trump’s failure to encourage mask-wearing and social distancing measures led to the unnecessary deaths of about 400K Americans.

45office.com begs to differ, claiming the Trump White House saved countless lives by banning travel from China and Europe at the onset of COVID-19, and rolling out Operation Warp Speed.

Trump fans can use the site to request a birthday greeting or condolence from Trump and former first lady Melania, or their presence at a special event. Event requesters must include the expected size of the audience, notable invitees and whether there will be media coverage.

“Volkswagen of America will not be changing its name to Voltswagen,” said the German automaker after its premature April Fools’ Day PR stunt crashed.

A “bogus press release” temporarily surfaced on March 29 touting the name switch as part of VW’s US launch of its ID.4 electric sports utility vehicle.

The news release triggered social media buzz and news reports about VW’s commitment to electric vehicles, which sent the company’s stock five percent higher.

It was a PR slam dunk. But there was one tiny problem: the Voltswagen name change claim was not true, though VW will put a Voltswagen badge on its electric vehicles.

A VW spokesperson told the *Wall Street Journal* that the company did not mean to mislead anybody.

“The whole thing is just a marketing action to get people talking about the ID.4,” said the PR rep.

Unfortunately, the bogus rebranding stunt had people talking about the last time VW lied to consumers and governments. That was the great emissions scandal, which ranks as the biggest fraud in auto history.

Ironically, that scandal sparked VW’s drive into the electric car market.

Manhattan’s elite Lenox Hill Hospital also is embroiled in a scandal after the *New York Times* reported on March 30 that the hospital was charging patients \$3K for a COVID-19

nasal swab test, 30 times higher than the test’s typical cost.

Lenox Hill, which the NYT calls “one of the city’s oldest and best-known hospitals,” charged such an exorbitant fee by billing the test as a “moderately complex emergency room visit” at its Greenwich Village facility located at the old Saint Vincent’s Hospital.

Federal law mandates the COVID-19 testing is free to patients, but the NYT notes that consumers will bear the costs of Lenox Hill’s expensive tests via higher insurance premiums.

A Lenox Hill patient told the NYT she started “freaking out” after she saw a \$3,194 charge for an emergency room visit on her insurance bill. The insurer negotiated the fee down to \$2,084.

Northwell Health, parent of Lenox Hill, says patients getting tests in emergency rooms receive more advanced care.

Less than four percent of COVID-19 nationwide have been conducted in emergency rooms.

Northwell owns an urgent care center that is a 15-minute walk from its Greenwich Village facility. It charges \$350 for a nasal swab test.

Inquiring minds participating at Omnicom’s virtual May 3 shareholder meeting wanting to know how much their company donates to political campaigns or to “influence the general public” are headed for disappointment.

That is because Omnicom’s board says the amount spent on political activities is of such a “de minimis nature” that disclosure would fail to provide any meaningful information.

How about letting the shareholders decide if the donations are of a “de minimus” or a “de maximus” figure?

As a holding company, Omnicom says it does not make political contributions, but its agencies do on a limited in frequency and amount basis.

Omnicom’s units include Porter Novelli, Ketchum, [FleishmanHillard](#), Mercury, Marina Maher Communications, Portland, and Cone.

Disclosure is in the best interest of the company and its shareholders, says a stockholder proposal set for the meeting.

Omnicom contends that its political contributions are subject to public disclosure by federal, state, and local laws.

Yes and no. The shareholder proposal notes disclosure requirements fail to cover payments to trade associations or other tax-exempt “dark money groups” that may be used for election-related activities.

The ad/PR firm says it joins trade groups because it values their industry expertise, not because it wants to use them to promote a political view.

The resolution notes that a growing number of companies are disclosing electoral spending and payments to trade groups and tax-exempt groups that may be used for political spending.

If Omnicom donates peanuts to political campaigns, why not disclose the amount and earn a measure of goodwill among shareholders and points for good corporate citizenship?

That willingness to disclose political spending would be part of 68-year-old CEO John Wren’s legacy at Omnicom.

—Kevin McCauley