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O'Dwyer's Newsletter

The Inside News of
PR and Marketing
Communications

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LOUISIANA REVIEWS TOURISM ACCOUNT

Louisiana has kicked off a review of its \$6.5M tourism PR, marketing and advertising accounts with an RFP process open through mid-November.

The state's Office of Tourism, based in Baton Rouge, said it will hire a single agency or multiple firms to handle three components of



the account: creative, PR and social/digital. Firms are invited to pitch one or multiple components.

Current budget for fiscal 2013-14 is \$6.5M.

The tourism entity expects to award a one-year contract starting July 1, 2014 with two year-long extensions possible.

The Pelican State currently uses the "Pick your passion" tagline and louisianatravel.com.

The state last reviewed the account in 2011, when it chose four firms – Deveney, Williams Creative Group (PR), Trumpet (creative) and Miles Media (digital).

RFP: <http://bit.ly/12iIEAB>.

OGILVY CHECKS IN AT INTERCONTINENTAL

InterContinental Hotels Group has selected Ogilvy PR Worldwide in a competitive pitch to handle branding, corporate and PA work for the network of 4,600 hotels in nearly 100 countries.

Tamara Strauss, global cross brand communications director, said IHG is eager to work with Ogilvy "to build awareness of IHG's strong and innovative brand marketing capabilities."



Iain Bundred, head of Ogilvy's corporate & PA practice in London, will lead the team at the WPP unit.

InterContinental brands include InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Staybridge Suites, Hotel Indigo, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express and Candlewood Suites.

The company last year introduced the Hualuxe brand, the first-ever luxury offering dedicated to serve Chinese travelers. There are 19 units in the pipeline.

IHG opened its first two Even Hotels, which target the wellness and healthy lifestyle market, this month in Rockville (Md.) and Norwalk (Conn.).

WEBER SHANDWICK WINS DC EXCHANGE

Washington, D.C.'s health insurance exchange has awarded its communications account to Weber Shandwick after a competitive pitch process.

The DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority, which hopes to serve as a model for state-run exchanges around the country under the Affordable



Care Act, issued an RFP in June to plan and execute its integrated communications and marketing effort ahead of the Oct. 1 deadline to start enrollment.

Eight firms pitched for the account, said Richard Soriano, director of communications for the exchange and former assistant secretary for public affairs for the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services during President Obama's first term. He declined to provide a budget for the work.

Soriano was a chief advisor to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, a key figure promoting the ACA.

Seventeen firms attended a pre-proposal conference in early June, including PR shops GolinHarris, Hager Sharp, MSLGroup, Vanguard Communications, Barrington Associates, New Partners, and Campbell and Company, among others.

The Washington exchange is the latest in a series of PR assignments for Weber Shandwick under the Affordable Care Act.

The Interpublic-owned firm has worked with California, Maryland, Massachusetts and the federal government on insurance exchange-related assignments.

MURPHY STEPS DOWN AT GRAYLING

Michael Murphy, non-executive chairman of Grayling, has stepped down to pursue other interests.

Edelman veteran Pete Pederson succeeded the former four-year CEO of the Huntsworth unit in February.

Murphy said he's eager to "pursue multiple opportunities" in the marketing sector and other areas.

His decision to leave Grayling was by mutual agreement.

Peter Chadlington, CEO of Huntsworth, said Murphy has a "long and distinguished career at first Shandwick and now at Grayling where he brought together all our brands under one banner with great consideration and care."

He wished him the "very best in his pluralist future."

CASSIDY FRONTS IRAQI OPPOSITION PARTY

Interpublic's Cassidy & Assocs. has inked a \$120K one-year pact to represent Iraq's Tajdeed Party, which is the political organization of the country's exiled former vice president, Tariq Al-Hashimi.

Tajdeed claims to be the voice of Iraq's minority Sunni sect. Al-Hashimi was charged in Dec. 2011 with running hit squads to conduct terror attacks against officials in the Shitte-controlled government.

Iraq's Kurdistan region, which is Sunni majority, refused to turn over Al-Hashimi, who has denied all charges, to the central government in Baghdad.

He then traveled to Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which granted him residency.

According to Cassidy's contract, the firm is to educate U.S. policymakers about the Tajdeed party's priority issues and long-term goals "on a limited but reasonable basis."

RF VETERAN SMIRNOFF TO WS

Susan Smirnoff, the healthcare pro and Ruder Finn veteran since 1979, has joined Weber Shandwick as executive VP/senior counsel.

In her career, Smirnoff promoted disease awareness, business alliances, clinical treatment recruitment and Rx to OTC switches.

She co-led RFs U.S. healthcare and served as senior counselor to health and corporate teams.

Smirnoff is president and trustee at CancerCare, which supports people with cancer.

Laura Schoen, president of global healthcare at WS, said Smirnoff's "passion for science and her commitment to delivering programs that impact patient outcomes is a perfect match to our culture."

LH PLAYS STEINWAY SALE

Lippert/Heilshorn Investor Relations is handling the \$512M Steinway Musical Instruments, Inc. takeover by Paulson & Co., which was announced Aug. 15.

The \$40 per-share offer by the firm of hedge fund manager John Paulson topped a \$35 per-share bid from Kohlberg & Co.

Paulson said in a written statement that he would not change any of the manufacturing operations or expansion plans of the Waltham, Mass.-based piano/drum/horn maker and classical music record distributor.

Steinway reported a 43.3 percent rise in Q2 operating income to \$8.6M on a 7.7 percent rise in revenues to \$92.3M.

During the quarter, the company sold legendary Steinway Hall, which is on Manhattan's W. 57 St., for a \$22.7M gain.

The 16-story building opened in 1925 to house Steinway's flagship showroom. JDS Development Group bought the property.

Harriet Fried, senior VP at L/H handles the Steinway takeover action. She's a former staffer at Kidder Peabody (corporate finance) and Oppenheimer & Co. (real estate and finance).

Kekst & Co. represents P&C.

ALASKA ENERGY ENTITY BIDS OUT PR WORK

The Alaska Energy Authority, which is pitching one of the largest and most expensive hydroelectric dam projects ever in the U.S., is prospecting for PR pitches to handle media relations, content development and public involvement planning on a contract that could span up to six years with options.

The Anchorage-based Authority released an RFP Aug. 12 for a firm to handle PR and communications projects as they arise over the term of the contract.

Last year, following an RFP, the Authority handed MSI Communications a \$500K pact to guide PR for the proposed 735-foot, \$5.2B Susitna River dam project, which the state says could create a power supply for more than two-thirds of its residents.

That effort faces opposition from environmentalists and others who say the state should turn to natural gas for its power needs.

The new PR pact, with a two-year base and four option years, is capped at six years and \$500K.

Proposal deadline is Aug. 28.

RFP: <http://bit.ly/17XXY48>.

CALIF. GOV PRESS AIDE TO FENTON

Gil Duran, who was press secretary for California Governor Jerry Brown, has joined Fenton Communications' San Francisco office as senior VP-media.

The former San Jose Mercury News reporter worked with Brown in Sacramento since 2011 and in Oakland from 2003-07 when the governor was mayor.

Duran also worked for top Golden State politicians, serving as communications director for Sen. Dianne Feinstein, press secretary for former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and senior advisor/communications director to Attorney General Kamala Harris, a rising star in the Democratic party.

At Fenton, Duran will handle public interest work for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Open Society Institute, Blue Shield of California Foundation, California Endowment and California Wellness Foundation, among others.

SHIFT HANDLES BOSTON TECH BASH

Shift Communications is handling the inaugural Boston TechJam, a block party slated Oct. 3 to celebrate the tech community and the city's "Innovation District."

TechJam will provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs, business leaders, venture capitalists, students and professors to "rub elbows."

Panel discussions and a "shark tank" event, where aspiring start-ups can deliver their pitches to potential investors are also planned.

Food trucks, music, craft beer producers and exhibits from local artists will contribute to the festivities.

Boston Mayor Tom Menino said in a statement that TechJam will strengthen his city's "vibrant tech and innovation economies by building social infrastructure and creating new partnerships."

Boston's revitalization has received national press of late in connection with the murder trial of legendary gangster Whitey Bulger.

PRO-ASSAD HACKERS ATTACK D.C. POST

The Syrian Electronic Army hacker group, which supports embattled Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, launched a cyber-attack on the Washington Post on Aug. 15.

Washington Post managing editor Emilio Garcia-Ruiz blogged that during the 30-minute attack readers were redirected to the SEA site.

The SEA said via Twitter that it gained access to the Post site through its vendor Outbrain, which also serves outlets like *Time* and CNN.

The Post, according to Garcia-Ruiz, took "defensive measures and removed the offending module."

Outbrain acknowledged that its system was compromised and apologized for the Post's attack.

The attack on the Post followed the day that the *New York Times* site was knocked offline due to an internal snafu during scheduled maintenance.

Lisa LaCour, VP-marketing at Outbrain, wrote a blog post the next day to outline its response to the attack, including a detailed timeline of events.

"We hope that this information will help our customers better understand what measures we have put in place to ensure this sort of thing will not happen again and help educate the community about how to mitigate the risk from groups like the SEA," she wrote.

LaunchSquad handles Outbrain's PR.

NY TIMES SITE CRASHES

The *New York Times* website crashed around 11:30 a.m. on Aug. 14 due to technical difficulties. The paper's site, which returned by the close of the business day, had not been updated since 11:07.

On its Twitter site, the NYT it's "experiencing technical difficulties" and expects to be back shortly. Via Twitter and Facebook, the paper promised to keep readers updated on news developments, especially the bloody crackdown in Egypt.

The Times, in the recent past, has been able to thwart off attacks from Chinese hackers who were upset about its coverage. But the paper said it believes the outage is the result of an "internal issue."

NYT Times Co. shares fell 1.5 percent to \$12.06 after the news Aug. 14.

GUZMAN NAMED EIC OF CN TRAVELER

Martha Stewart Living editor-in-chief Pilar Guzman is moving to the top editorial slot at *Conde Nast Traveler*.

She takes over for Klara Glowczewska, who held the EIC post since 2005 and is leaving CN.

MSL meanwhile has tapped editorial and brand director Eric Pike as its new EIC. Pike has been with the 2M-circulation magazine since 1992, mostly on the design side. Guzman was with Conde Nast from 2005-09, serving as founding EIC of since-shuttered *Cookie* and senior editor at *Real Simple*.

GREENBERG TO THE STREET

Herb Greenberg, a senior stocks commentator on CNBC who wrote a weekly column for the *Wall Street Journal* via MarketWatch, has returned to TheStreet.

He'll edit a subscription newsletter, Greenberg's Reality Check and pen a daily blog for TheStreet's free site, among other tasks.

He was a senior columnist for the financial portal from 1998-06. Earlier, he wrote a monthly column for *Fortune* and was a business columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Greenberg is based in San Diego.

MEEKS TAKES ATLANTIC CONTENT POST

Brock Meeks, director of communications for the Center for Democracy & Technology and former chief Washington correspondent for MSNBC, has moved to Atlantic Media Strategies in the capital as an editor.

He leads editorial strategy for AMS' Ideas Lab website, a policy site sponsored by General Electric.

He was previously with *Wired*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Interactive Week*.

BUFFETT DUMPS GANNETT

Berkshire-Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett has sold his investment in Gannett Co., driving down the stock five percent on Aug. 15 to \$24.39.

The stock's 52-week range is \$26.88 and \$14.99.

The second-quarter divestiture of 1.8M Gannett shares was for \$38M. B-H disclosed the divestiture via a Securities and Exchange filing on Aug. 15.

Buffett's BH Media unit owns 68 newspapers in nine states.

Those properties include the *Omaha World-Herald*, *Buffalo News*, *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and *Winston-Salem Journal*.

B-H is the largest outside shareholder in Washington Post Co., which is selling its newspaper flagship to Amazon's Jeff Bezos for \$250M.

ROLLING STONE ALUM TO SELF

Matt Mastrangelo, who was publisher of *Rolling Stone*, is joining *Self* next month as associate publisher of advertising.

He exited RS in June after a dozen years at RS parent, Wenner Media.

He also had served as publisher of *Men's Journal* and helped re-launch *rollingstone.com*.

Self publisher Laura McEwen cited Mastrangelo's "significant integrated sales successes across print, digital, social, mobile and event marketing."



Syrian Electronic Army boasts of its media attacks on Twitter.

MEDIA NEWS**MOST UNCOMFORTABLE W/ 'FRIENDING' BOSS**

Facebook users are not keen about being "friended" by either their boss or fellow workers, according to a poll released by Office Team, a unit staffing giant Robert Half Co.

Nearly seven-in-ten respondents (68 percent) are "not very comfortable" or "not comfortable at all" with being friended by their boss.

Forty-nine percent feel uncomfortable when colleagues friend them.

The survey also rated friending by clients and vendors. They drew uncomfortable scores of 74 percent and 78 percent, respectively.

Robert Hosking, executive director of Office Team, said the results show that "it's best not to blanket colleagues with friend requests."

Office Team believes there's a benefit in reaching out to business contacts as long as that outreach is done in a prudent fashion.

It recommends letting your boss make the first move in the friending process, checking out whether colleagues have other co-workers in their networks before asking them to connect, asking a person if they want to connect before sending an invite, checking your profile to make sure their isn't anything that might damage your career, and refusing to cave-in to peer pressure about connecting online.

The survey of more than 1,000 senior managers from companies with at least 20 employees was released Aug. 8.

FIRMS PREP STUDIO FOR 'HUNGER GAMES'

Movie studio Lionsgate has cast outside PR counsel as it prepares the highly anticipated November release of the sequel to 2012's blockbuster "Hunger Games" film.



Sam Claflin and Jennifer Lawrence in 'Catching Fire'

Photo: Murray Close/Lionsgate

"The Hunger Games: Catching Fire," the second in a series of four films, will premiere in London on Nov. 11 and be released worldwide Nov. 22.

Los Angeles-based Principal Communications Group is handling studio

communications on the domestic side

while Freud Communications works the U.K. The firms are not handling publicity for the Hunger Games film, but promote the corporate brand of the studio.

A spokeswoman declined to comment on agencies working on the film's publicity.

PCG managing partners Paul Pflug, a former SVP of media relations at Universal Pictures, and Melissa Zuckerman, ex-VP of comms. at IFILM, lead seven-year-old PCG.

The first Hunger Games film, released in March 2012, grossed nearly \$700M worldwide. The final two films, a two-part series based on the book "Mockingjay,"

are slated for release in November 2014 and 2015.

The first film's marketing success was hailed for its digital savvy and ability to navigate through the series' dicey topic of children killing other children in a future reality show competition.

On its release last March, Lionsgate chief marketing officer Tim Palen told the *New York Times*: "The beam for this movie is really narrow, and it's a sheer drop to your death on either side."

In an interview with *Man of the World* magazine this month, Palen said the release of the "Catching Fire" trailer in July was a "pivotal moment" because of the success of the first film and changes at director and other key positions. "So I really needed this first glimpse of the second film to work hard to reassure the fan base that the characters they know and love are back and that the integrity we showed with the first movie is still in tact," he said.

BLACKBERRY BAILS OUT

Blackberry, one-time "owner" of the mobile communications market, Aug. 12 announced a special committee of the board to explore strategic options following a lackluster reception for its Blackberry 10 smartphone, which it pitched as a game-changer.

Timothy Dattels, senior partner of TPG Capital, chairs the group, which includes Blackberry CEO Thorstein Heins.

Following the January launch of the Blackberry 10, Heins predicted the sale of "tens of millions" units.

During the first-quarter ended June, Blackberry sold 2.7M of the new models. The company recorded \$84M red ink on \$3.1B revenues in that period.

The special committee will mull joint ventures, partnerships or the sale of the company.

Heins, who took the helm in 2012 after leaving Siemens, maintains the Blackberry 10 has "compelling long-term opportunities."

Blackberry is now No. 4 in the smartphone derby, falling behind Windows-run devices.

Samsung, with Google's Android operating system, and Apple are the leaders.

TIME WRITER HIT FOR ASSANGE TWEET

Time magazine senior correspondent Michael Grunwald has apologized for publishing a Twitter post which read, "I can't wait to write a defense of the drone strike that takes out Julian Assange."

Grunwald, after receiving and re-posting reams of critical responses on the social messaging platform, deleted the original tweet on his personal account and wrote, "It was a dumb tweet. I'm sorry. I deserve the backlash. (Maybe not the anti-Semitic stuff but otherwise I asked for it.)"

He later added, "I didn't need a boss to tell me it was dumb."

Wikileaks, the organization led by Julian Assange, said it has written to *Time* to ask for Grunwald's resignation.

Time called the tweet "offensive" and noted it was posted to Grunwald's personal account.

NEWS OF PR FIRMS**VET JOBS PUSH RECRUITS BRAND, PR HELP**

A bi-state coalition between Kentucky and Indiana is looking for agency help to develop a brand to pitch the Louisville region as a U.S. model for hiring military veterans.

The Kentucky Indiana Exchange, known as KIX, was set up in 1990 and has fostered the Ohio River Bridges Projects, tuition reciprocity and other government collaboration between the neighboring states. The KIX Veteran Initiative wants a marketing communications firm to develop a brand – position statement, strategy, name, tagline, etc... – for the campaign with subsequent RFPs to cover communications strategy and implementation.

The Louisville region, encompassing 26 counties, was chosen for its proximity to Fort Knox and the headquarters for the U.S. Army's program for transitioning soldiers. It is also home of healthcare services company Humana, which has pledged to hire 1,000 veterans over the next three years under a White House push for companies to hire 100K veterans and their family members. KIX sees veterans as a key element in helping solve a national (and regional) shortage of skilled and educated workers.

More than 132,000 soldiers will leave the Army this year. KIX wants to hear from interested firms by Aug. 19. View the RFP at kix.com.

PA GOV'S PRESS SEC QUILTS FOR QUANTUM

Kevin Harley, press secretary to Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett, is stepping down to join Harrisburg PR firm Quantum Communications.

Harley has been the governor's spokesman since Corbett was state attorney general in the mid-1990s and again in the mid-2000s.

Lynn Lawson of DCI Group was named new communications director for Corbett, a Republican who faces a tough re-election campaign and possible primary challenge in 2014.

"Kevin has been one of my closest and trusted advisors for many years," Corbett said in a statement. "I value his counsel and friendship. I look forward to continuing to work with him in a new role."

At Quantum, Harley takes on a managing director role as a shareholder in the firm. Charlie Gerow, a former Reagan aide and influential Republican political advisor in the state, is CEO of Quantum and a close friend of Harley's.

Gerow said Harley will handle strategy development, issue advocacy, political consulting and media outreach for the firm when he joins next month. "Gov. Corbett is a man with unquestioned integrity and loyalty," said Harley. "I'm excited about continuing to help him in my new role."

Quantum has worked on campaigns for the Pennsylvania Gas Association, Pennsylvania Horse Racing Association, the Alliance to Stop I-80 Tolling, and scores of political campaigns statewide and for Congress.

Lawson did a stint on former Governor Tom Ridge's 1998 re-election campaign and was press secretary for the PA Dept. of Community and Economic Dev.

NEW ACCOUNTS**New York Area**

5W PR, New York/Phoenix Marketing International, marketing research, as AOR for PR.

Feintuch Communications, New York/Convene, conference center network formerly known as Sentry Centers, as AOR for PR. The company recently closed a \$10M financing round and plans two more facilities in New York and Virginia.

Nicholas & Lence Communications, New York/New York Academy of Medicine, which is launching its first annual Age Smart Employer Awards, for PR.

BackBay Communications, New York/Small Business Investor Alliance, organization of lower middle market private equity funds and investors, as AOR for PR following a competitive pitch process. BackBay will mount a campaign to raise awareness of the organization and recruit members and sponsors.

Raker Goldstein, Old Tappan, NJ/Nektar Honey Crystals, single-serving beverage additive, for PR.

East

DPR Group, Germantown, Md./DHA Group, management consulting and contracting firm serving the federal government, for PR and marketing.

Lewis PR, Washington, D.C./FlowTraq, network security software, for media relations and digital marketing in the U.S. The 12-month retainer started on July 1.

French/West/Vaughan, Raleigh/Campbell University, for PR for its new School of Osteopathic Medicine. The firm helped CU's law school with its 2009 relocation to downtown Raleigh.

MMI PR, Raleigh, N.C./World of Art Showcase, international art show, for PR for its Nov. 1-3 show at the Raleigh Convention Center.

Southeast

Brandware PR, Atlanta/Elco Motor Yachts, electric motors and yachts, for public and media relations as the Athens, N.Y.-based company, which traces its roots to the 1893 Chicago World Fair, seeks to capitalize on a demand for "cool, quiet, green and smooth" power sources on lakes and waterways.

Midwest

MWW, Chicago/hoopla digital, which helps public libraries provide online and mobile access to video, audiobook and music content, as PR and marketing AOR, including media/trade relations, influencer outreach, digital counsel and consumer cultivation.

Southwest

Moroch Partners, Dallas/ClubCorp., owner of more than 150 golf and country clubs, for PR, following a search and review. Work includes market insights, strategic counsel and media relations focused on member retention and club acquisition efforts, among other assignments.

Crosby|Wright, Scottsdale, Ariz./CarePatrol, senior housing referral service, for PR and marketing.

West

Myriad Marketing, Manhattan Beach, Calif./Kenya tourism Board, for marketing, advertising and PR, a renewal for the three-year incumbent. Kenya lured more than 123K U.S. tourists in 2012.

NEWS OF SERVICES**CISION UPS CONWAY TO COO**

Cision has promoted Dawn Conway to COO for its U.S. operation.

Conway, a lawyer formerly with LexisNexis, joined the company in 2012 as executive VP of customer experience and global content licensing.

President and CEO Peter Granat, to whom Conway reports, previously held the COO title for North America before taking the reins of the global company.

Conway leads product, marketing, sales, analysis, finance and media research and “will drive the overall strategic vision for the US business,” according to the company. She was a senior VP with 20 years of experience at LexisNexis.

HOME DEPOT’S GAMBILL TO VOCUS

Mark Gambill, VP of integrated media and marketing at The Home Depot, has moved to PR software provider Vocus as chief marketing officer.

Gambill was previously VP, marketing, consumer, small & medium business at Dell and CMO at CDW Corp. and ESI Corp., among other posts.

CEO Rick Rudman said Gambill will strengthen Vocus’ presence as an industry leader in cloud marketing software by helping it reach “the next level.”

PRSA NCC TO INDUCT PHAIR, OLIVER TO HOF

PRSA’s National Capital Chapter will induct Judy Phair and Bill Oliver to its 14-year-old Hall of Fame at the group’s annual Thoth Awards gala in September.

The Thoth event is set for Sept. 18 at the Pavilion Room in The Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington.

Phair, a national PRSA president in 2005, was nominated by past PRSA/NCC president Tracy Schario. She runs PhairAdvantage Communications and was previously VP for PA at the Council on Competitiveness, VP of comms. for the Graduate Management Admission Council, and was VP of institutional advancement at the Univ. of Maryland, among other posts.

Oliver, former head of PA for AT&T, was nominated by colleague Doug Goodyear. He held senior posts at PACCAR, Weyerhaeuser and TRW before AT&T.

PRSA/NCC Hall of Famers must have 30 or more years of PR accomplishments and have worked in the D.C. area for at least 10 years.

A list of the chapter’s Hall of Fame members is at <http://bit.ly/16WYccX>.

BRIEFS: PUR Water Filtration has engaged search firm **Roth Associates** to handle a review of its creative advertising account. TWBA\Chiat\Day is the current agency but will not participate in the review, according to PUR, which is marketed by KAZ USA. Roth has offices in New York and Los Angeles and is handling all inquiries about the search. ...Email and social media marketing software provider **VerticalResponse** has integrated the services of software provider Digioh into its platform, allowing users to attach or add various types of trackable files like audio, video and documents to email campaigns.

PEOPLE**Joined**

Suanne Buggy, senior comms. officer for the CaliforniaHealthCare Foundation, to Ogilvy PR, Sacramento, as a VP focused on clients like the California health insurance exchange Covered California. Buggy was previously assistant secretary in the California Health and Human Services Agency and department deputy director in the Calif. Dept. of Public Health. She worked in Washington for the Dept. of Commerce and Dept. of Agriculture. Executive VP Valerie Vento said the firm’s public health practice is growing as clients try to navigate healthcare reform.

Philip Zepeda, VP for cause marketing and comms., American College of Chest Physicians, to The Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Chicago, as director of comms. He oversees marketing, comm. and public affairs. Zepeda was VP of marketing comms for Restaurant.com and senior VP, comm., Feeding America, among other posts.

Rick Jennings, senior VP who led PMK*BNC’s consumer media practice, to Step 3, Los Angeles, as an executive VP. He handled Activision Publishing, Beats by Dre and YouTube at PMK. Digital-savvy Step 3 is marking its 10th anniversary.

**Jennings**

Heather Cmiel, A/D, Weber Shandwick, to Belmont Partners, Prior Lake, Minn., as an A/D. She handled State Farm, Amway, Kemps and the 2012 U.S. Census at WS and earlier worked at Maccabee.

**Cmiel**

Willie Norkin, VP, Susan Magrino Agency, to MWW, New York, as a VP focused on food and restaurant accounts. She was previously senior A/D at Talbert Comms. and KB Network News. Clients have included Alain Ducasse, Mario Batali, Le Cirque and Eatery.

DJ Hardy, senior A/E, DeVries Global, to Cornerstone Agency, New York, as a senior A/E focused on consumer PR. He was previously with 5W PR.

Promoted

Robert Moran to director of corporate communications, Mercedes-Benz USA, Montvale, N.J. He takes over for **Geoff Day**, the Scotland native who left the company this month after nine years. Moran, who joined in 2003, reports to president/CEO Steve Cannon leading corporate comms. strategies and initiatives for the company’s U.S. operations.

**Moran**

Brian Parrish to executive VP and principal, Dodge Communications, Atlanta. He joined in 2001 and now oversees the firm’s entire account services function.

Holly Zawyer to VP, Cheryl Andrews Marketing Communications, Coral Gables, Fla. The travel pro joined the firm in 2004 and played a key role in winning the Anguilla Tourist Board account earlier this year.

Stephanie Young to marketing and comms. manager, Buck Knives, Post Falls, Idaho. She is a six-year veteran of the company.

NY REVIEWS ECONDEV PACT

New York State is soliciting pitches to review its account to promote investment and business development to European markets.

The New York State Dept. of Economic Development has put out an RFP for economic development marketing covering eastern and western Europe.

The three-fold goals of the work are: promote increased exports by Empire State companies; promote increased investment in New York, and trade show, trade mission and other business development promotions.

The state runs the nylovesbiz.com website to aid with trade promotion.

In addition to Europe (currently based in the U.K.), New York has trade/econdev reps for South Africa and Israel. IBDG Group, London, is the incumbent.

Proposals are due Sept. 4. RFP:
<http://bit.ly/1cUHsKy>.

SARD VERBINNEN CUTS DEAL WITH DEVILS

Sard Verbinnen & Co is working PR for the \$320M acquisition of the New Jersey Devils hockey franchise by private equity financiers David Blitzer and Joshua Harris.

Blitzer, a New Jersey native, is senior managing director of Blackstone Group. Harris is a co-founder and managing partner of Apollo Global Management, a long-time Sard client, and owns the Philadelphia 76ers NBA franchise.

The deal for a majority stake includes the Devils' long-term interest in Newark's Prudential Center, known as The Rock, and other assets. The duo purchased the team from Lehman Brothers alum Jeff Vanderbeek.

"We will be committed stewards of this great franchise and arena as we work closely with city and state leadership to ensure the Devils, their fans and the Newark and greater New Jersey community all share in the future success of their favorite team," they said in a statement today.

Scott O'Neill, CEO of the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers has been named CEO of the Devils and Prudential Center in addition to his basketball post.

Sard chairman George Sard and managing director Jonathan Doorley are handling PR for the acquisition.

Mike Levine is senior VP of comms. for the Devils.

LEVY STAYS ACTIVE ON ACQUISITION HUNT

Publicis Groupe Maurice Levy, who brokered the blockbuster "merger of equals" with Omnicom, has scooped up digital shop Engauge Marketing, which is based in Columbus, Ohio.

EM's 285 staffers generated \$40M in revenue last year from blue-chips including Coca-Cola and Nationwide Insurance.

The shop is a partnership between legendary direct marketing wiz Stan Rapp, co-founder and ex-chairman of Rapp Worldwide, an Omnicom unit, and private equity firm Halyard Capital.

Nick Bandy, CEO of Engauge, who was shopping the firm, said in a statement that "multiple companies across the advertising business" were contacted, but Publicis Groupe was best aligned with his firm's goals."

HARD DRIVE MAKERS FORM TRADE GROUP

Four leading hard drive makers have formed the Storage Products Association to represent and promote the \$37B sector as the Big Data and mobile communications era places a greater emphasis on cloud computing and so-called flash memory use expands.

Seagate, Toshiba, HGST and WD (Western Digital) are founding members who launched the trade group at the 2013 Flash Memory Summit Aug. 13 in Santa Clara, Calif.

San Francisco-based L&M Management will run the organization while tech firm PR Works, Scottsdale, Ariz., is guiding PR.

Jeff Burke, treasurer of SPA and VP of strategic marketing and research at Seagate, said the group will promote the industry's solutions and technologies, as well as educate consumers. "We are pleased to join SPA as we view the association as an excellent forum for educating the public at large," he said.

Hard drive makers chalked up \$37B in revenue last year producing more than 578M drives. The rise of flash drives, which don't incorporate a spinning disc but are more expensive, could cut into that market.

The quartet said the new group's immediate focus is promoting hard disk drives and solid-state hybrid drives, or SSHDs, but suggested the scope could be expanded down the road to include other memory like flash and SSD.

The SPA is incorporated as a non-profit in California.

ABMAC'S FRANKLIN TO FTI IN SF

John Franklin, managing director for Abernathy MacGregor Group in San Francisco, has moved to FTI Consulting's strategic communications unit to focus on the telecom, media and technology sectors.

Franklin, who specialized in integrating PR, marketing and digital strategies at AMG, handled HP, PepsiCo, Credit Suisse and Toyota.

He earlier spent eight years at Robinson Lerer & Montgomery, now RLM Finsbury, on crisis assignments for Northwest Airlines, Morgan Stanley and Becton-Dickinson. On the tech side, he has counseled clients like Trulia, Zynga, Nextel and Microsoft

He was also chief marketing officer for Catalyst Group Design, handling digital communications.

CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY PUSH NEEDS PR

A 26-year-old national campaign for safety on college campuses is on the hunt for PR help for a fire safety push with a goal of reaching at least 10 percent of the 18M students in higher education.

The Clery Center for Security on Campus, founded by the parents of a 19-year-old girl raped and murdered in her dorm room at Lehigh University, has published an RFP for PR firms to aid its national fire safety campaign, which has grants from the federal government and partnerships with two other organizations.

The effort notes that preventable factors like disabled smoke alarms, careless disposal of smoking materials and impaired judgment often contribute to fires in student housing. RFP: <http://bit.ly/19E9jNJ>.

Lia LoBello, a “strategic” PR staffer at Peppercomm, \$16.1 million O’Dwyer-ranked PR firm, is upset at PR’s poor public image.

In an Aug. 14 post, she wonders why, when talking to someone not in PR, she is “still fighting the stereotype that I work with a bunch of entitled brats, living for \$300 high heels, in apartments paid for by their parents, and clamoring to simply hold the guest list at the next big red carpet event?”

She says her colleagues are also tired of fighting this image and wonders why it even exists when there are many hundreds of PR firms conducting “important, strategic business and communications work for our clients day in and day out.”

Helping to cause PR’s bad image, she says, are programs like “Kell on Earth,” about a fashion publicist, and “Power Girls” that “did nothing to advance notions of what PR actually entails” Also rapped by LoBello is the way a PR person was portrayed by Samantha Jones in “Sex and the City.”

PR Leaders Should Speak Out

LoBello’s solution is for PR leaders to present themselves in major broadcast and print media.

“Why aren’t more Chief Communications Officers and Chief Marketing Officers speaking at major venues like CGI, a common way for web services to interact with users, or TED,” a non-profit “devoted to ideas worth sharing,” she asks.

We’ve been asking the same question for years. About the only two regular on-air PR spokespeople who undergo questioning are Fraser Seitel and Mike Paul, both of whom are also O’Dwyer contributing editors.

Others with public PR personas include Richard Edelman of Edelman, who appears before PR groups and who comments extensively on current issues in his blog, and Donny Deutsch, who is “technically an advertising guy,” says LoBello.

Need to Reverse “Tide” of Bad Ink

In order to reverse the tide of negative comments, top PR executives must present themselves to media, she said.

“In every agency and in every organization, there are executives that are smart, strategic and relatable,” she writes. “We need to place those people front and center in the media.”

LoBello says she works every day with people “who blow me away with their creativity, and who wow me with their incredible ideas and business acumen.”

PR Is Pummeled Here and Abroad

LoBello needs to read the 4.5-page piece titled “PR Is Dead” by the Centre for Corporate Public Affairs of Melbourne and investigate the fiasco that the first “PR National Awareness Day” <http://tinyurl.com/ktl8z62> was in the U.K. July 27.

“PR Day” won almost no coverage but it touched off a cascade of negative comments in the U.K. press including posts in the BBC by counselor Benjamin Webb, whose “heart sinks” when people ask him what he does

for a living, and Brian Groom of the Financial Times who said it looks like “the death of the sector” and “goodbye to PR people...it was sometimes interesting and often aggravating to know you.”

There is plenty of similar criticism in the U.S. including *New York Times* columnist David Carr writing that what he mostly encounters at companies are “PR underlings” who block access to executives and deliver “slop.”

We’re reminded of the childhood game of hide and go seek in which the person who is “it” hollers, “Come out, come out, wherever you are.”

PR people are mostly in hiding these days and not only can’t produce executives for interviews, they can’t even produce themselves.

There’s a lot of talk about “truth” and “accuracy” but those are only hammered out in public debate.

LoBello should come to our offices for a chat (F2F) and see some of the materials we have. The odds of that happening are slim to none.

Her blog touched off a number of comments including one that said PR Society of America should be “leading the charge in a PR for PR effort.” With \$11 million in revenues and a staff of 55 it certainly has the infrastructure to do this.

But there is not a single senior PR person on the staff. Current PR head is Stephanie Cegielski, a 2006 University of Denver law grad. It is like a hospital without doctors.

Resuscitation of APR Being Attempted

Instead of sending out elected leaders or staffers as spokespersons for the industry, the Society has hired Laura Freebairn-Smith of Hamden, Conn., to come up with a program that will provide, by August, “actionable recommendations to enhance the profile and prestige of the APR credential to the Universal Accreditation Board and Assembly.” APR will be 50 years old next year.

New APRs created by the UAB in the past ten years averaged 157 yearly vs. 256 in the 1993-2002 period.

A PR Society e-mail to Peppercomm co-founder Steve Cody in July 2009 that urged him to sign up for a four-day APR “boot camp, prompted him to write a blog about APR headlined “Useless. Useless.”

He wrote that an APR is “worthless” and it has “never meant anything to any client organization I’ve ever encountered. Nor has it ever made one iota of difference in considering a prospective employee’s strengths and weaknesses.”

He said APR “has always lacked any real teeth and is based on a false assumption that a PR person should master rules and regulations in the same way a doctor or lawyer must.” PR, he said, is “an art and not a science” and an APR is “even more irrelevant in today’s social media environment...”

Freebairn-Smith should study these comments by the co-founder of a major PR firm with a strong creative reputation that has just won the MINI Cooper.

– Jack O’Dwyer