



Kevin McCauley  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's Newsletter



The Inside News of  
PR and Marketing  
Communications

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## VIRGINIA STATE POLICE WRITE UP RFP

Virginia's State Police Dept. seeks a PR firm to raise awareness and educate people about the benefits of the Commonwealth's vehicle safety inspection program.



States have dropped auto inspection requirements in recent years. Virginia, one of 15 states still requiring vehicle inspections, faces pressure to eliminate its program.

Virginia's RFP calls for a PR firm to be proactive to prevent anti-inspection groups from "controlling the message."

An estimated 20 percent of the vehicles inspected in Virginia during 2017 had critical safety issues.

Virginia's desired PR firm will have "expertise in building and executing creative messaging and developing and assisting in the implementation of a strategic public awareness communications campaign."

It will be familiar with the state's demographics and media markets and be savvy in the use of social media.

The contract will run for a year with four optional one-year renewal periods.

Timothy Jarck at [timothy.jarck@vsp.virginia.gov](mailto:timothy.jarck@vsp.virginia.gov) and 804-674-2078 is available for questions about the RFP.

Proposals, due Sept. 13, go to: Commonwealth of Virginia; Department of State Police; 7700 Midlothian Turnpike; North Chesterfield, VA 23235; Attn. Timothy Jarck, Contract Officer; Proposal No. 156-20-015

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

## BCW'S JONES SHIFTS TO VANDA

Aranthan "AJ" Jones II, who was global head of public affairs for BCW, has joined Vanda Pharmaceuticals as chief corporate affairs and communications officer at the biopharmaceutical company.

Prior to joining BCW in 2018, Jones was chief of staff & chief policy & communications officer at W.K.



Aranthan Jones II

Kellogg Foundation, head of worldwide government affairs at Gilead Sciences and healthcare practice chairman at Podesta Group.

Vanda also recruited Joakim Wijkstrom, a veteran of Perry Ellis, One Main Financial, TBWA Chiat Day and BBDO, for the chief marketing position.

Vanda, which is developing treatments for jet lag disorder and motion sickness, registered \$107M in first-half revenues and \$10.9M in profit.

Based in DC, the company's shares trade on the NASDAQ.

## BLUE FOCUS REFOCUSSES GLOBAL PUSH

China's Blue Focus Intelligent Communications Group is merging its international units into Legacy Acquisition Corp., a Big Board-listed \$300M special purpose acquisition company.

Legacy will be recast as Blue Impact and headquartered in Mountain View, CA. BFICG will own a 44 percent stake in the new entity.



BI will include Canada's Vision 7 (Citizen Relations, Cossette Communications, The Camps Collective), San Francisco's Fuse Project (product design/branding), UK's We Are Social (social media/digital offerings), Hong Kong's Metta (marketing) and Shanghai's Madhouse (mobile-focused paid media/performance platform).

Brett Marchand, CEO of Vision 7 and marketing veteran of Procter & Gamble, Campbell Soup and Molson Coors, will helm BI. Holly Zheng, president of BFICG's international business sector, will be chairwoman.

Edwin Rigaud, Legacy CEO and Procter & Gamble alum, said his team screened 370 opportunities before partnering with Blue Focus.

BI will have more than 2,500 employees. Digital marketing activity will account for more than 60 percent of its \$400M revenue base.

The transaction will be completed this year.

## SARAH SANDERS JOINS FOX NEWS

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, whose combative reign as White House press secretary ended in June, is coming on board as a contributor at Fox News.

Sanders will make her Fox debut Sept. 6 on "Fox & Friends." She arrives at Fox as the president's relationship with the network has grown chillier. "@FoxNews is at it again," he tweeted on July 26. "So different from what they used to be during the 2016 Primaries, & before—Proud Warriors!"



Sarah Sanders

Sanders' father, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, is also employed as a Fox contributor, as are two White House press secretaries who served for George W. Bush—Dana Perino and Ari Fleischer. Three former Obama press secretaries—Jay Carney, Robert Gibbs and Josh Earnest—also headed for the airwaves after serving. Carney went to CNN, and Gibbs and Earnest were hired by MSNBC.

President Trump has publicly encouraged Sanders to run for governor in Arkansas, but she is legally prevented from doing that while employed by Fox.

## **BERLINROSEN LANDS VT'S \$1B TECH CAMPUS**

BerlinRosen will promote Virginia Tech's \$1B Innovation Campus that will anchor the National Landing District, future home of Amazon's HQ2 complex.

Tracy Vosburgh, senior associate VP for university relations, said BR will help Virginia Tech "communicate our vision for this world-class campus and help develop new tech talent, disciplines and research that will transform the regional economy."

Virginia Tech's commitment to build the innovation campus played a major role when Amazon chose Northern Virginia and Long Island City for its second headquarters last year.

The Virginia Tech facility will be located in Alexandria and Amazon's HQ2 will be situated in the Arlington portion of the National Landing District.

BR, which landed Virginia Tech in a competitive pitch, launched and continues to serve Cornell Tech's campus on New York's Roosevelt Island.

## **EDELMAN JOINS G7 INCLUSIVITY EFFORT**

Edelman has signed on as the sole communications shop to the G7 Business for Inclusive Growth Coalition, which has committed to investing \$1B to advance the human rights of more than 100M people, so far.

The Coalition, which was officially launched by French president Emmanuel Macron at the G7 summit in Biarritz, is dedicated to advancing workplace inclusion, diversity and value chain inclusiveness.

Marion Darrietort, GM of the Paris office, represented Edelman at the G7 session. Her firm has established a goal that 50 percent of top

leadership positions will be held by women in 2020. Females currently hold 47 percent of the top jobs.

The No. 1 independent shop also says it will reach a racially/ethnically workplace diversity ratio of 30 percent in the US by 2022, up from 27 percent now.

## **NEBRASKA CITIES FLOAT RFP FOR CLEAN AIR**

The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency wants to hire a PR firm to promote its clean air partnership campaign for 2020-2022.

The desired firm is experienced in public surveying, graphic design, marketing, advertising and media placement. It will provide creative, project management, and material production and sourcing support to MAPA and allied organizations' public education and outreach efforts.

The objectives of MAPA's campaigns are 1) to enhance awareness of ozone and other air quality issues through the five-county region via targeted media placement and community outreach efforts; 2) to coordinate and communicate MAPA's air-quality initiatives, and 3) to promote the MAPA's travel demand management strategies to reduce single-occupancy auto vehicle trips.

Responses of no more than 20 pages are due Sept. 6. Send seven printed copies and a PDF to: Sue Cutsforth, Issuing Officer; Metropolitan Area Planning Agency; 2222 Cuming Street; Omaha, NE 68102.

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

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**Version 2.0 Communications** has added **Rave Mobile Safety** to its client roster. Version 2.0 has been brought on to help build the company's profile nationally, with a focus on demonstrating the value of its solutions through customer stories and thought leadership. The agency managed Rave's inclusion in an "ABC News Nightline" broadcast segment about the role technology is playing in helping police, 911 centers and other first responders better interact with those with autism or mental health conditions. In April, Rave received a significant investment from TCV, a growth equity firm that backs such tech companies as Netflix, Facebook, Spotify and Airbnb. Version 2.0 will work to favorably position Rave among its peers in TCV's portfolio.



**SourceCode Communications** has been named agency of record for **Everlast**, the world's leading manufacturer and licensor of boxing, MMA and fitness equipment. SourceCode will develop and execute upcoming campaigns and broaden awareness for the company's products, owned media entities and ambassadors. The relationship officially kicked off in July, with the agency focusing on launching the next version of Everlast's Be First, a global integrated campaign challenging consumers to carve their own path to success.

**Hemsworth Communications** has been named PR firm for **Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line**. Owned by the family of ex-Norwegian Cruise Line CEO Kevin Sheehan, BPCL sails to Grand Bahama Island from Palm Beach. Hemsworth is tasked with creating a global PR and communications plan for the cruise line, as well as developing media relations programming to introduce new offerings.

**5W Public Relations** has been tapped by measurement technology company **My Size, Inc.** 5W will work with My Size to boost awareness of its products (My-SizeID, BoxSize and SizeUp) and engage new and potential clients. The firm will also work to elevate My Size founder and CEO Ronen Luzon's presence in retail and technology. The company's flagship product, MySizeID, allows customers to use a personal smartphone to record their body measurements, without the need for a camera. Consumers can then create a secure profile complete with their individual dimensions, which can be used with online partner retailers.



**AMP3** has been engaged to rep a line-up of **Fossil Group's** licensed brands: Kate Spade New York, Michael Kors, Tory Burch, Armani Exchange, Emporio Armani, BMW, Chaps, Diesel, DKNY and Puma. AMP3 will manage publicity & influencer marketing across brands for all traditional watches, smartwatches and jewelry. The agency has also been engaged by Sequential Brands Group to represent three of its fashion brands: Ellen Tracy (contemporary womenswear), William Rast (men's and women's denim and apparel), and Heelys (shoes with wheels).

## **FINANCIAL COMMS: THINKING PAST DAY ONE**

The traditional financial communications roadmap, particularly in the case of M&A transactions, has always pointed to the importance of “day one.” Communications advisors have—justifiably, under the old paradigm—devoted their energies to preparing for announcement day, strategizing how communications would be orchestrated, how outreach to stakeholders would be managed, and above all, securing the best possible headline in the financial paper of record.



**David Roady**

Media was the focus, and if a financial communications professional obtained the media coverage that her client hoped for, she could head home with a feeling of a job well done. All of that has now changed, and companies undertaking financial transactions that focus their attention solely on announcement day risk catastrophe.

The financial crisis signaled a seismic shift in the way companies do business in this country in more ways than one. But lost amidst the attention on mortgage-backed securities and subprime loans was the fundamental change that took place in the financial communications industry. In response to the 2008 financial crisis, the federal government assumed an activist role in the private sector that it won't relinquish any time soon.

That's not to say antitrust regulators, CFIUS or any other government body that influences the M&A landscape is new, but their influence on the successful execution of transactions has grown exponentially. Case in point: the average time to close an M&A transaction has increased from 124 days in 2010 to 212 days in 2018, and some of the most highly scrutinized transactions take longer: Bayer-Monsanto closed after 745 days, and AT&T-Time Warner closed after 600 days.

One need only examine the sectors driving M&A activity to understand why this is happening. With highly regulated industries such as industrials, energy, technology and healthcare dominating the transaction landscape, announcement day is just the first step in what may be a long process to ensuring close. And that's what companies now look for from their communications counsel: a partner that can play a key role in ensuring certainty to close.

What does that look like? It can depend on the transaction, the jurisdictions involved and the various regulatory concerns, but fundamentally it looks like a communications firm that looks beyond the New York financial media and towards the beltway and the broader universe of stakeholders. In tactical terms, it means taking a campaign approach to M&A transactions, much like one would with issues advocacy or crisis management.

Thinking about transactions as strategic advocacy campaigns is the most effective way to ensure that deals are consummated. This campaign must be seeded on announcement day with messages that resonate beyond Wall Street; there's nothing more challenging than at-

tempting to walk back day-one rhetoric that touts increased pricing power at the expense of consumers.

This isn't to say investors should be neglected, but they can't be the only focus of a company's communications and must be balanced with other stakeholders who can just as easily terminate a deal. M&A transactions are fundamentally longer-term plays for value creation. A day-one stock price jump is nice, but consistently improved revenue and margins two years down the road is nicer.

Building an advocacy campaign around a transaction requires taking a unique approach to every client, but there are three guiding principles that can inform a successful communications program.

**Companies and their advisors must map their key influencers and conduct coordinated, regular outreach to them.** This requires going a level deeper than, say, finding lawmakers on a congressional map that are responsible for districts touched by a particular deal. Companies need experts who understand what those officials' priorities are, what issues their committees are examining, and what outside groups might exert influence that could positively or negatively impact a deal's ability to close.

For example, if a company was acquiring a competitor in the agricultural space, it would need to not only communicate with members of the House Committee on Agriculture, but also influential industry groups and farmers who have the willingness and capability to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill.

**Companies should always look to secure third-party advocates who can speak to a transaction's merits with an independent voice.** It's a given that a company will support a deal it's seeking approval for—but having respected opinion leaders lend their support can be instrumental in ensuring close. Once again, this requires specialized expertise—to use our previous example, communicators with deep knowledge of the agricultural industry who know the key players, know what their issues are and can craft outreach strategies that will effectively garner their support.

**Companies need to understand that not everyone is going to like the transaction announcement they've made, and need to prepare to communicate effectively in the face of opposition.** This could be anything from consumer advocates to activist shareholders and, increasingly, the active fund managers playing a role in shaping M&A negotiations and creating obstacles to closing major transactions. Being able to plan for the known detractors and react to the unforeseen opponents can make or break any M&A deal.

There's no magic bullet to ensuring that an M&A deal is closed, particularly in our increasingly uncertain political environment. But it's critical to understand that the game has changed, and that closing the book on announcement day is only the beginning of an effective financial communications strategy. Everyone likes to see their name in the *Wall Street Journal*—but only when the ink is dry on the final regulatory approval is a communicator's job done.

*David Roady is a Senior Managing Director in the Strategic Communications segment at FTI Consulting.*

## **WESTCHESTER WANTS MARKETING SERVICES**

Westchester County, NY's Department of Social Services is requesting proposals from agencies to provide promotional and marketing services for the Westchester Putnam Local Workforce Development Board.

An agency is needed to design, develop and implement strategic advertising and public relations campaigns to raise the profile and awareness of WPWDB and Career Center Network programs, as well as support a comprehensive brand strategy for WPWDB and Career Center Network programs across key stakeholders and support WPWDB website's content, enhancements and redesign.

Terms of the contract run for four years, beginning in September and ending in June 2023.

Proposals are due by 2 p.m. (EST) Friday, Sept. 13. They should be mailed or hand delivered to: Sonda Norris-Lowe; Westchester/Putnam Local Workforce Development Board; 120 Bloomingdale Road, 2nd Floor; White Plains, NY 10605

Bidders must submit one original and four copies of their proposals, as well as one electronic version on a USB drive, saved with these labels: (1) Program narrative, (2) Budget, (3) Samples of deliverables, (4) Scope of work to be performed, (5) Timetable, and (5) other (resumes, signed schedules, references). All packages/envelopes must be labeled "Marketing and Promotional RFP."

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

## **JOELE FRANK REPS EMPIRE RESORTS DEAL**

Joele Frank is guiding Empire Resorts as it agrees to be acquired by majority owner Kien Huat Realty and Genting Malaysia, global gambling operation.

Formed in 1993, Empire owns Resorts World Catskills, hotel/casino located in Sullivan County 90 miles from New York City, and Monticello Raceway, upstate harness horseracing track.



The \$9.74 per-share takeover offer represents a 15 percent premium over the August 16 closing price of the NASDAQ-listed company.

Empire CEO Ryan Eller called the deal a "win-win" for shareholders, employees, customers, creditors and Catskill communities.

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher's Matthew Sherman and Ed Trissel are working the deal.

## **BATEMAN'S MUSSANTE TO HOFFMAN NA POST**

Syreeta Mussante, who was executive VP at Bateman Group, will be the new North America managing director of The Hoffman Agency on Sept. 3.

She'll take over for Steve Burkhart, who is stepping down.

Lou Hoffman called Mussante the rare individual who is a rainmaker and somebody who "deeply cares about the service delivery for existing clients."

San Jose-based THA has offices in the Portland (OR) area, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, Jakarta, Seoul, Tokyo, Berlin, Paris and London.

It registered \$13.7M in 2018 fee income, up 7.4 percent from 2017.

## **WARNING LABELS MAY COMBAT 'FAKE NEWS'**

Curbing the dissemination of false and misleading information has become a sort of clarion call among social media networks in recent years, as Facebook and other social media companies have found themselves under increased pressure from users, the government and journalism advocacy groups to do something about the proliferation of "fake news" online.

Facebook in late 2016 began tagging some false news stories as "disputed" by third-party fact-checking organizations, only to halt the practice in late 2017 and instead merely show related articles in an effort to give readers more context to news stories. Now, new research suggests that flagging false news stories with a warning label could indeed be one of the most effective ways social media networks can decrease the spread of misinformation.



The study, authored by Paul Mena, a professor of journalism at the University of California, Santa Barbara, sought to examine social media users' news-sharing behaviors, specifically, whether a warning label might influence users' intentions to share misleading content.

Mena conducted an online experiment to test whether there was a connection between the flagging of false Facebook posts and the perceived credibility of those posts. Participants were shown Facebook posts containing fabricated headlines and news content, some accompanied by a warning flag and others without.

Respondents were then asked to rate how believable, accurate and authentic the fabricated Facebook post was, and the likelihood that they'd share that content.

Overall, 23 percent of respondents said they were likely to share one of the simulated posts, while 63.5 percent said they believed others would be likely to share that fabricated post.

However, the study also discovered that respondents who saw one of the fabricated posts with a fact-checking warning label reported lower intentions to share that deceiving content on their Facebook timelines than respondents who didn't see a warning label.

A majority of respondents also said that the likelihood that others would share items perceived to be false would be diminished in light of a warning label.

"This study found that the flagging of false news had a significant effect on reducing false news sharing intentions," Mena concluded.

Finally, the study found that the flags' effect on user sharing intentions remained significant after controlling for participants' political leanings, as the appearance of a warning flag decreased sharing intentions among Democrats, Republicans and Independents. However, the study found that Democrats and Independents were more likely than Republicans to share false news posts both when the warning label was absent and when it was present.

Mena's research polled more than 500 participants across the political spectrum. Respondents were sourced through Amazon's crowd-sourcing service Mechanical Turk. His findings were published the July edition of peer-reviewed academic journal *Policy and Internet*.

## UK PR LEGEND TIM BELL DIES AT 77

Controversial British PR man Tim Bell, who made his name as Margaret Thatcher's image-maker, died Aug 25. He was 77.

Leaving Saatchi and Saatchi ad agency in 1979, Bell played a major role in Thatcher's rise to power and handled communications for her during her prime minister stint and for the Conservative party.



**Tim Bell**

He went on to form Bell Pottinger PR firm, which handled controversial clients such as Saudi Arabia, Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian ruler of Belarus.

Bell left the Bell Pottinger chairman role in 2016, a year before the firm imploded for its role in orchestrating a racist campaign in South Africa on behalf of the Gupta family. Britain's PR watchdog Public Relations and Communications Assn. expelled Bell Pottinger for its South African work.

The *Financial Times* reported that though Bell was very ill with vascular Parkinsonism, he was instrumental in getting Boris Johnson elected as UK leader of the Conservative party, which led to his installation as PM.

## BLICKSILVER LIFTS AE'S COLUMBIA DEAL

Blicksilver PR is handling private equity firm AE Industrial Partners' deal to acquire Oregon's Columbia Helicopters, makers of heavy-lift Chinook helicopters used in defense, firefighting and mining.

Columbia thought it had a \$560M deal with Bristow Group last year but that transaction fell apart and the Texas company ultimately filed for bankruptcy.

Based in Boca Raton, AE invests in aerospace, defense, power generation and specialty industrial markets.

AE says current Columbia majority owner Nancy Lemata will keep a "significant ownership stake" in the company and CEO Stave Bandy will remain at the helm.

Blicksilver's Jennifer Hurson and Kristin Celauro represent AE.

Michigan's Lambert owns Blicksilver.

## BRANDWARE RECRUITS LASTE FOR CEO SLOT

Atlanta's Brandware Group has recruited Lou Laste, a PR veteran of Cox Automotive and Verizon Communications, as CEO effective Sept. 9.



**Lou Laste**

He'll be in charge of strategy development, operations, talent, and business development of the PR, digital and marketing communications shop.

As senior director of PR at Atlanta-based Cox, Laste handled corporate, brand, reputation, thought leadership and crisis communications.

During a 10-year stint at Verizon in Basking Ridge, NJ, and Dallas, he rose to the director of communications and PR position.

Most recently, Laste was running Your Story Communications.

## MEDIA MANEUVERS

**Brian Karem**, a senior White House correspondent for *Playboy* magazine and CNN contributor, is suing president Trump and press secretary Stephanie Grisham over the Aug. 16 suspension of his press credentials, according to a report on Politico. Karem's hard pass was temporarily revoked following a confrontation between him and former deputy assistant to the president Sebastian Gorka in the Rose Garden following the White House's Social Media Summit on July 11. Karem's lawyer says that Grisham violated his due process rights, since the revocation of his pass was based on unwritten rules, and that the power to revoke a reporter's credentials lies with the Secret Service, not with the press secretary.

**Facebook** plans to use humans, as opposed to algorithms, to select some stories in News Tab, the effort it is launching in an attempt to get itself back into the publishing game. "For the Top News section of the tab we're pulling together a small team of journalists to ensure we're highlighting the right stories," said Facebook head of news partnerships Campbell Brown. According to the *New York Times*, Facebook says that the use of human news curators will be limited to the Top News section, while the stories across the rest of NewsTab will still be chosen by algorithm. News Tab, which is to begin testing later this year, will be separate from the platform's main feed.



## NEWS OF FIRMS

**WPP** is expanding its reach in India with co-location campuses in Mumbai and Gurugram. The Mumbai campus, which will employ more than 3,800 people is opening this month, with the Gurugram location slated to begin operations next year. Located in a new complex next to the international airport, the Mumbai co-location will bring together more than 16 companies under one roof. "India represents a region with immense opportunities for WPP," said CEO Mark Read.

**Hudson West**, of Scottsdale, has opened an office in Brooklyn. Lori Jung, who co-founded the agency in 2012 with Jen Rogers, will head up the Brooklyn office, which is located in the borough's Park Slope neighborhood. Hudson West's client roster will be divided between the Scottsdale and Brooklyn offices, with staff on both coasts working on each of its accounts.

**REQ** has acquired **Internet Marketing Inc.**, a performance marketing company. IMI's executive management will remain in place, with Jason Brigham serving as EVP, west coast operations and Justin Cohen as EVP. IMI's San Diego and Las Vegas offices will remain open, with REQ's headquarters continuing to stay in Washington, DC. The deal will allow REQ to integrate its expertise and proprietary technology in SEO, search marketing, digital technology and brand management with IMI's strengths in earned media and social media as well as enterprise performance advertising. The combined company is expected to bring in annual revenue of \$50 million, with 120 employees across six offices.



## COMMENTARY

**Donald Trump finally got down to business today during the closing session of the G7** when he shamelessly pitched his Miami golf club to host next year's summit.



The president boasted that the Trump National Doral Miami has fantastic buildings and huge ballrooms, putting it among the leading locations that his team is considering for 2020

when the G7 is scheduled to be held in the US.

"My people looked at 12 sites," said Trump. The Doral has a series of "magnificent buildings, we call them bungalows. Incredible conference rooms. Incredible restaurants. Ballrooms are among the biggest in Florida, and the best."

He also said the Doral has plenty of parking spaces and is close to the airport, a selling point to politicians like French president Emmanuel Macron who may want to make a fast getaway.

And our ever-gracious president isn't offering the Doral just to make some dough. "I don't want to make money," he said. "I don't care about money." In fact, Trump pushed the canard that the presidency is costing him from \$3B to \$5B. I have a hunch the president will propose a national fund-raising effort so the grateful nation can reimburse him for money lost during his time in office.

At the press conference, Trump failed to mention that Florida Department of Health officials have cited the Doral pools for violations at least 10 times in the last year, while other luxury properties received clean bills of health.

The Doral could use the G7 PR boost as its revenues have fallen 69 percent during the past two years due to "some negative connotation that is associated with the brand," according to the *Washington Post*. E.g., Trump as president.

It's a no-brainer that Team Trump will choose the Doral for the 2020 G7. After all, hyping the Doral was probably on top of Trump's "to-do" list at Biarritz.

See you at the Doral G7. It promises to be the best session ever.

A word to the wise: Though you might be tempted by the August heat and humidity of Miami, leave your bathing suit at home.

**Sarah Huckabee Sanders aced the audition and "officially" will become a Fox News contributor on Sept. 6.**

As White House press secretary, Sanders was a Fox contributor in all but name. Once she killed the daily press briefing, Sanders planted herself on Fox taking questions from anchors and singing praises of Donald Trump.

The only new wrinkle: she will be paid next month

by Fox and not by the White House.

Sanders will make her debut appearance on "Fox and Friends," which is "must-see" TV for the president.

Her recruitment may put Fox back into the good graces of the president. Trump flew into a tizzy and even questioned Fox's loyalty after it deviated from its normal "fake news" beat to report that Democratic presidential wannabes Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders and Kamala Harris are whipping him in polls.

"There's something going on at Fox," said the president on Aug. 18. He complained that his worst polls have always been on Fox and that the network "is a lot different than it used to be."

Brett Baier, Fox host, defended the reporting, saying the coverage is "fair, balanced and unafraid." We will see how Brett's bluster turns out.

My hunch is that Sanders will help Fox mend its fences with the president. After all, there's a presidential election coming up and Fox has big ratings to pursue. There's also a new kid in town: Sinclair Broadcast Group poses a new challenge to Fox from the right.

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology apologizes for providing PR cover for Jeffrey Epstein** by accepting about \$800K from foundations of the disgraced and now dead financier.

University president Rafael Reif posted the following Aug. 22 on MIT's website:

"To Jeffrey Epstein's victims, on behalf of the MIT administration, I offer a profound and humble apology. With hindsight, we recognize with shame and distress that we allowed MIT to contribute to the elevation of his reputation, which in turn served to distract from his horrifying acts. No apology can undo that."

That's a good start for MIT. It promises to donate \$800K to a charity that benefits victims of Epstein and other victims of sexual abuse.

MIT is hardly alone in providing reputational cover to the detestable Epstein. What institution will be next to admit to burnishing the image of the sexual abuser?

**The PR community praised Business Roundtable's decision to say increasing stockholder value should not be the only objective of companies.**

There is some pushback from those who wonder how do you put a value on or prioritize the sometimes conflicting interests of various stakeholders?

Shareholders may cheer a CEO's decision to close a money-losing plant, but what about the interests of workers, suppliers and the local community? Class action lawyers are going to have a field day.

One thing is for sure: corporate PR people will be busy revising corporate mission statements to adapt to BR's revised statement of purpose. —Kevin McCauley