



Kevin McCauley
Editor-in-Chief

O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of PR & Marketing Communications



271 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016
212/679-2471. Fax: 212/683-2750
www.odwyerpr.com; jobs.odwyerpr.com

August 3, 2020 Vol. 53 No. 31

OMNICOM'S PR UNITS DROP 15.3% IN Q2

Omnicom's PR group suffered a 15.3 percent drop in Q2 revenues to \$295.8M as the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on its travel, lodging, entertainment, energy, retail and automotive clients. Organic growth slipped 13.9 percent.



John Wren

The FleishmanHillard, Porter Novelli, Ketchum, Mercury, Portland, Cone and Marina Maher Communications operation posted \$627.5M first-half revenues, down 8.2 percent on a reported basis and 7.0 percent organically.

Healthcare, technology, telecommunications, financial services and consumer products spending held up "relatively well," though conditions are volatile and

economic uncertainty cuts across all clients, industries and geographies, according to Omnicom's financial report.

CEO John Wren expects demand for his firm's services will decline "as marketers reduce expenditures in the short term."

Omnicom has realigned agencies' cost structures via layoffs, furloughs, right-of-use asset impairments and other real estate costs, and disinvestments.

Those actions "were taken to tailor their services and capabilities to changes in client demand."

Overall, Omnicom registered a \$24.2M Q2 loss, compared to a \$370.7M year ago profit, as revenues tumbled 24.7 percent to \$2.8B. The company earned \$234M for the six-month period, down 63.1 percent from last year's period.

EQUITABLE NAMES WEAVER CMO

Connie Weaver, a seasoned financial services veteran, is now chief marketing officer of Equitable.



Connie Weaver

She has served as executive VP-CMO & CCO at TIAA, senior VP-CMO & CCO at The Hartford, executive VP-CMO at Bearing-Point and executive VP-PR, brand & marketing at ATT.

Weaver also has held IR & marketing posts at Microsoft, MCI Communications and McGraw-Hill.

At Equitable, she will oversee and align marketing, digital and insights to advance the company's business objectives and positioning.

Weaver reports to Nick Lane, president, who believes her leadership "will help further Equitable's important mission to help our clients, especially in this time of great change."

INTERPUBLIC POSTS \$45.6M Q2 LOSS

Interpublic CEO Michael Roth reported a \$45.6M net loss for the second quarter as revenues plunged 19.6 percent due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It had earned \$169.5M a year ago.

Roth said IPG initiated a "program of structural operating cost reduction to lower our expense base and raise our margin opportunities." He added that IPG "remains business positive year-to-date, and our pipelines of business opportunities is solid."

IPG's constituency management group posted a 17.6 percent decline in Q2 revenues to \$267.7M. It was down 15.6 percent on an organic basis.

For the first half, revenues slipped 7.7 percent to \$575.3M and 6.4 percent organically.

Andy Polansky, who heads the CMG, told *O'Dwyer's* the PR units registered an organic revenue decline in the high-single-digit range during the quarter vs. low-single-digit growth a year ago.

On a reported basis, the Q2 PR decline was in the low double-digit range.

Healthcare is a bright spot across the PR group, according to Polansky. "Our specialty firms, most particularly Revive-Health, continue to have standout performance," he said.

Looking ahead, Roth said "visibility will remain unclear for as long as COVID is disrupting everyday life and macro-economic conditions."



Michael Roth

W2O GOES SHOPPING AGAIN

W2O Group has acquired Discern Health, the Baltimore-based health economics and outcomes research firm.

DH, which also has an office in DC, advises clients on performance measures and payment models that shape the market for its products and services.



Founder Guy D'Andrea called "value-based care" a key driver in health system change.

"Being part of the W2O team means that we can supercharge our capabilities and incorporate world-class analytics and insights into our work," said Tom Valuck, DH partner-bringing even greater resources to our clients and, ultimately, improving patient outcomes."

The DH deal is the sixth acquisition made by W2O since New Mountain Capital invested in the San Francisco firm a year ago.

HAWAII SEEKS FIRM FOR COVID-19 OUTREACH

Hawaii is looking for PR help to promote its effort to provide crisis counseling to targeted communities who are at risk of developing emotional problems as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Dept. of Health wants to focus on people who lost incomes, livelihoods or were displaced or isolated because of the virus.

It also will target people of “low economic status, as well as children, minorities, persons with mental health illness and/or substance disorder; veterans

and other populations deemed to be at risk as a result of the disaster,” according to the DoH’s RFI.

The goal is “to return persons to the extent possible, to their previous levels of functioning.”

The desired PR partner will create a website to serve as a hub of information relevant to those affected by COVID-19.

It will conduct social media/virtual outreach, handle media and PSAs, develop educational materials and host public meetings.

Responses are due Aug. 6 and must be sent via fax to:

Ms. Amy Yamaguchi, Procurement Officer Department of Health; Adult Mental Health Division; Fax (808) 586-4745
[Download RFI \(PDF\)](#).

BUSINESSES PICK UP GOVERNMENT’S SLACK

Businesses are increasingly being called upon to fill in the gap created by falling levels of trust in government institutions, according to a new study released by Weber Shandwick, United Minds and KRC Research.

“The Workplace as a New Town Square” finds that employers are taking a major role in ensuring the health and safety of their employees during the pandemic, as well as making progress on racial inequality. It also finds that many people think governments are coming up short.

Only 43 percent of those surveyed said that they were confident that the U.S. has the leadership to guide the nation through the hurdles presented by COVID-19, rising unemployment and systemic racism.

Employers got higher scores. In June, 72 percent of employees surveyed said that their employer’s response to the coronavirus is exactly what it should be.

In addition, most workers said their employers were adequately addressing racial inequality in the workplace, though there was a sizeable gap between how black and white workers view discrimination in the workplace. While 80 percent of white employees said that discrimination was not tolerated in their workplace, that number drops to 64 percent for black employees.

To capitalize on the increased trust in businesses, the report says companies should put communications front and center.

For example, 88 percent of workers who said their employers have communicated about recent crises said they were proud to work for that employer. For those who did not receive such communications, that number is 51 percent.



● Confident ● Not Confident

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Matter Communications has been named agency of record for influencer marketing software platform **GRIN**. Matter will spearhead a comprehensive PR program, including media relations and thought leadership, to amplify GRIN’s brand awareness while highlighting the platform and its relationship-based approach. GRIN helps brands find and engage with high-quality influencers, automate email outreach, activate campaigns, develop authentic relationships within a private CRM, and provide an in-depth reporting suite to analyze the success of influencer campaigns.

rbb Communications has been named agency of record for Denver-based cannabis brand **Binske**. The agency will lead the development and implementation of strategic communications campaigns focused on enhancing brand awareness and engagement. rbb will also work to refine Binske’s social assets around a unified strategy, driven by enhanced design, content development and experiential connections. Binske serves over 83 million consumers in North America, across 12 U.S. states and Canada. “rbb’s work is touching on all of the different facets we needed from creative/strategy/social/media/PR, and more,” said Binske executive vice president Alex Pasternack.



Uproar PR has been chosen as agency of record for **U.S. Waterproofing**, which provides basement waterproofing for buildings in the Chicago area, and **NetBlaze**, a digital marketing software company designed for small businesses.

Both clients will be working with Uproar PR’s Chicago office. U.S. Waterproofing has tasked the agency with generating interest in local media and assisting in the launch of its newest business, U.S. Remediation, a disinfectant and decontamination company. NetBlaze, which serves as a one-stop-shop for business owners to manage all their digital marketing, came to Uproar PR to help generate awareness of its services and showcase the work it does for businesses nationally.

Ink & Roses has been named public relations agency of record for **Medicine Mama’s Apothecary**, which currently encompasses two brands, Sweet Bee Magic and Vmagic. The agency will lead earned media outreach and content creation to drive brand and product awareness, manage influencer relations, and spearhead future product launches. Sweet Bee Magic is a pure, natural, organic skincare brand, and Vmagic is a feminine care brand that offers products that are 100 percent natural.



Agency Ten22 has added web-based revenue cycle software company **Vispa** to its healthcare IT customer roster. The agency will be leading media relations, public relations, press releases, articles and blog services for the company. Agency Ten22 has already secured media placements for Vispa with trade outlets including HealthLeaders, HFMA and HIMSS Healthcare IT News. Vispa, which helps hospitals and health systems boost revenue, features a quick implementation and moment-by-moment metrics that give insights into staff performance.

NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL EVENT LANDSCAPE

Live events are a vital component of every PR program. Brands rely on events of all sizes to showcase their latest innovations and corporate news, network with other industry professionals, meet new customers, and engage with media



Ben Chodor

to garner press coverage. However, as of February, all in-person events came to a complete halt, and PR pros had to adjust their planned 2020 programming and revamp their strategies quickly.

With millions of dollars on the line, event organizers found a scalable solution—virtual events.

If there is one thing we have learned it's that virtual events are here to stay.

While nothing can truly replace an

in-person event, there are several benefits to having both in-person and hybrid events. That said, PR professionals must learn to navigate the virtual event landscape and find ways to get creative and generate opportunities for their clients.

Having the right tools makes a difference: While the nature of virtual events might appear to make it more challenging to interact with attendees directly, PR professionals can quickly remedy this by using the right tools at the right times. Are you hosting a press conference? Consider launching a branded live stream or webcast. With the right platform, you can also offer breakout rooms or 1:1 personalized video meetings and interactions.

Personalization is key: Similar to live events, personalization is critical. PR pros should still attempt to interact as much as possible. Go the extra mile when it comes to media outreach. Consider creating personalized agendas, event plans, and activity links for reporters to navigate through the event.

Remember to engage: To strike the best engagement, you must bring the show to life. Whether you include gamification options, giveaways or swag bags, it helps! Reporters and influencers do not have the opportunity to touch, feel, or interact with your product or team. Instead, you can consider creating “booth kits” or “to-go” bags that they can unbox on a live feed alongside you.

Lean into your digital channels: Put time into crafting an ongoing digital media plan to broaden your audience and reach. Be sure you are promoting it on company channels, individual channels, and others continuously.

Train to the platform: To create the smoothest experience possible, become a pro at whatever platform a given event is using. This will take some training leading up to the event, but the long-term pay-off from knowing how to use platforms properly makes a difference. Hosting a pre-event training session for media members might allow you to stand out and guarantee a perfect virtual experience come event time.

Post-event takeaways: While following up with media members who attended your event is nothing new for PR pros, virtual events offer even more opportunity for post-event promotion. Be sure to check what kind of access you have to video archives, press releases, and other useful content following any given virtual event.

In summary, while the transition to virtual events might seem like a significant leap, PR professionals have an array of tools and strategies at their disposal to navigate this new landscape. As the industry continues to evolve, we must too!

Ben Chodor is president of Intrado Digital Media, which owns the PR workflow platform Notified.

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCES UNINFORMED

Americans who depend on social media platforms for their political news tend to be less likely to follow major news stories and also generally possess less political knowledge than other groups, according to analysis recently released by the Pew Research Center.

Pew's survey, which quizzed Americans on topics such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the presidential election, found that only eight percent of U.S. adults who get their political news primarily from social media platforms said they're following news about the 2020 election “very closely,” the lowest share among the six media platforms analyzed.

Levels of engagement for election news was about four times higher among those who get their political news mostly from cable TV (37 percent) or print media (33 percent). The only group to reveal comparably low levels of engagement were audiences who rely on local TV (11 percent).

Less than a quarter (23 percent) of U.S. adults who get their news from social media said they're following news surrounding the COVID-19 crisis very closely. By contrast, the percentage of Americans who rely on cable TV, national network TV, news sites and apps or local TV all revealed higher levels of attention to coronavirus-related news (50 percent, 50 percent, 44 percent and 32 percent, respectively).

The survey also asked respondents 29 fact-based questions focusing on current events ranging from COVID-19 to the economy to President Trump's impeachment. Pew's findings discovered that those who rely most on social media for political news were least likely, on average, to exhibit high political knowledge: only 17 percent of individuals who turn to social media fell into the high political knowledge category, while 45 percent of those who rely on news websites/apps, 42 percent of radio listeners and 41 percent of print readers earned this designation.

About one-in-five U.S. adults (18 percent) reported that social media is currently their main source for political news. That's more than the number of Americans who said they get most of their political news from print (three percent), radio (eight percent), network TV (13 percent), local TV (16 percent) or cable TV (16 percent). According to Pew's findings, news websites and apps are now the number-one source a majority of Americans turn to for political news (25 percent).

Finally, Pew's analysis found that Americans who use social media for political news were less likely to express concern over the fake news phenomenon. While 58 percent of those who rely on cable TV expressed high levels of concern regarding fake news' potential influence on the 2020 election, only 37 percent of social media users reported being concerned about it.

Despite this, social media news users were more likely to have been exposed to false or unproven claims than other media audiences. About eight in ten (81 percent) have heard the conspiracy theory that COVID-19 pandemic was intentionally planned, higher than any other audience. Altogether, 68 percent admitted they've encountered coronavirus-related misinformation.

Pew's analysis was based on data from five surveys conducted between October 2019 and June 2020 as part of the nonpartisan think tank's Election News Pathways project, an ongoing initiative that examines how Americans are getting their news in the months leading up to the 2020 election.



FTI CONSULTING'S PR UNIT DIPS 3.8%

FTI Consulting posted a 3.8 percent dip in Q2 strategic communications revenues to \$56.8M, while operating income slipped 3.7 percent to \$8.8M. First-half revenues fell 1.2 percent to \$115.3M and operating income declined 15.5 percent to \$16.3M.



Mark McCall

Mark McCall, stratcom group leader, said FTI's performance stacked up against a record-setting year-ago period and was made during an "extraordinarily challenging" business environment.

He told *O'Dwyer's* the stratcom unit has been realigning its business to provide clients the services that they need (restructuring, transactions, crisis, activism, ESG, and public affairs).

The overall challenge is "finding ways to operate" during these uncertain times so FTI will be well-positioned for more robust growth in 2021 and 2022.

McCall said the stratcom division continues to invest in people as its headcount rose 13.2 percent to 761 employees from the 2019 period.

MWWPR SIGNS UP R3SCORE TECHNOLOGIES

MWWPR has added R3 Score Technologies, an AI-powered fintech, software-as-a-service business, to its roster of tech and social impact clients.

MWWPR, which is to provide fifty percent of its services for R3 Score on a pro bono basis, will support R3's corporate communications strategy, executive visibility, and the launch of a campaign to call the financial services sector to action on equality.

R3's core product allows business decision-makers to conduct criminal background screenings that provide context to who a person was, is and could be, providing a path toward financial inclusion and economic justice for the more than 70 million Americans living with a criminal record.

HOOD TAKES HYUNDAI'S DC DRIVER'S SEAT

Robert Hood, assistant secretary for legislative affairs at the Dept. of Defense, has moved to Hyundai Motor Co. to lead its federal and state government affairs efforts. He joined Team Trump after serving on the presidential transition team.

Earlier, Hood did an eight-year run as VP government affairs at engineering giant CH2M Hill.

Hood, who began his career as an aide to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, also held different jobs in the George W. Bush administration, exiting as special assistant to the president in the White House's office of legislative affairs.



Robert Hood

Yong Sohn, Hyundai VP, said Hood will help the Korean car company navigate the complex and dynamic US political landscape.

Hyundai manufactures cars at its Montgomery, AL plant, which opened in 2005. The company says it has invested \$10B in the US, which includes outlays in California for its US headquarters (Fountain Valley), design center (Irvine) and testing grounds (Irwindale), as well as a Detroit engineering complex.

UAE FOUNDATION GIVES TENEO \$500K RAISE

The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, which promotes social development in the United Arab Emirates, has agreed to shell out a one-time \$482K payment to Teneo Strategy for more detailed research than what was anticipated in its April 12 engagement letter.

Under that \$250K monthly retainer pact, Teneo was to conduct perception research across specific audiences and global markets, as part of its stakeholder research & insight services. The research bonus will be paid out in three equal installments by Sept. 30.

The Foundation focuses on art, culture, healthcare, early childhood development and heritage. Its Muntada ("forum in Arabia), program features seminars of thought leaders and innovators from the UAE and internationally.

It was founded by the wife of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi's crown prince and deputy supreme commander of the UAE armed forces.

NEOM, the \$500B mega-city that is being developed by Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, is Teneo's other big ticket in the Middle East.

The firm received \$2M in fees for Neom work during the six-month period ended in January.



AF INT'L REPS SYRIAN DEMOCRACY GROUP

AF International has a six-month agreement to provide government affairs and media relations services to the US mission of the Syrian Democratic Council, the political wing of the Syrian Defense Forces.

The SDF has been a major US ally in the fight against ISIS, losing more than 11K of its male and female fighters in the campaign. The SDC, which represents Arab and Kurdish political and civil society groups in north and east Syria, says its goal is to work towards a democratic country through conversations, consensus building and diplomacy.

The Oct. 9 Turkish invasion, which displaced 130K Syrians, was an act of genocide against the Kurdish people, SDC executive president Ilham Ahmed told Congress on Oct. 23.

The subsequent "ceasefire" ironed out by the US, Turkey and Russia ceded a large portion of SDF-controlled territory to Turkish control. "Now the same fighters who defeated ISIS are being told to retreat like criminals, and being labeled 'terrorists,'" said Ahmed.

SKDKNICK TAKES OUT CALIF. PIZZA KITCHEN

SKDKnickerbocker is handling the Chapter 11 filing of California Pizza Kitchen, which is restructuring to reduce its debt and shutter money-losing restaurants.

The "unprecedented impact of COVID-19" on CPK's business also triggered the need to declare bankruptcy, according to CEO Jim Hyatt.

He views the financial reorganization as "a step towards a stronger future" for the chain of more than 200 restaurants.

Founded in 1985 in Beverly Hills, CPK is expected to emerge from Chapter 11 in three months.

Heather Wilson, who heads SKDK's west coast operations, is working the CPK filing.

Mark Penn's Stagwell Group owns SKDK.



BRUNSWICK REPS BERKSHIRE CROSSFIT DEAL

Brunswick Group represents Berkshire Partners, which is teaming with former Datalogix CEO Eric Roza, to buy the PR-tainted Crossfit fitness platform.



Crossfit CEO/owner Greg Glassman resigned in June following comments he made on Twitter and Zoom about the murder of George Floyd.

The *New York Times* reported June 20 about allegations that Glassman fostered a toxic sexist culture at Crossfit, which has 14K affiliated gyms in more than 150 countries.

Berkshire, a Boston-area investment firm, says it's thrilled to partner with Rosa, owner of a Crossfit gym in Boulder, CO, as the company begins a new chapter.

Berkshire has invested in Kendra Scott Design (fashion accessories), Carter's (baby apparel), Portillo's (Chicago restaurant chain), Bare Escentuals (cosmetics) and Aritzia (fashion retailer).

TEXAS SCHOOL DISTRICT FLOATS RFP

The Amarillo Independent School District, the school district serving the city of Amarillo, Texas, is seeking proposals from agencies providing marketing and branding services.

AISSD wants an agency that can implement and develop a logo, colors and marketing campaign in an effort to raise awareness of its newest campus, the Amarillo Career Academy, among students and the community.

Responses are due by 4:00 P.M. (CST) on August 6. Proposals should be sent to: David Harder, Director of Purchasing; 7200 Interstate 40 West; Amarillo, Texas 79106-2598

Bidding agencies should include three hard copies of their proposals as well as three electronic copies on three flash drives. All envelopes should be marked as follows:

PROPOSAL FOR: Marketing and Branding Services

PROPOSAL NO: 3603

OPEN UPON RECEIPT

RECEIPT DEADLINE: August 6, 2020

Firms may also submit their proposals through the [Public Purchase web portal](#), and all questions concerning this RFP should be directed to [Public Purchase web portal](#).

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

M&T BANKS ON LAGUTAINE

M&T Bank Corporation has brought on Francesco Lagutaine as senior vice president and chief marketing and communications officer, effective Aug. 17.



Francesco Lagutaine

Lagutaine joins M&T from financial services company Manulife, where he was chief marketing and experience design officer. He was previously head of customer franchise at Citibank Asia Pacific.

"Francesco's expertise in leading transformative, customer-focused marketing and communications strategies, coupled with his passion for creativity, design and innovation, make him uniquely qualified to help us present the very best version of our company," said Christopher Kay, M&T executive vice president and head of consumer banking, business banking and marketing.

JAMES MURDOCH EXITS NEWS CORP BOARD

James Murdoch, former CEO of 21st Century Fox and son of media baron Rupert Murdoch, has quit the board of family-controlled News Corp, owner of Fox News, *New York Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Times of London* and Australian newspapers.

"My resignation is due to disagreements over certain editorial content published by the Company's news outlets and certain other strategic decisions," he wrote in his July 31 resignation letter.

Murdoch did not spell out the reasons for his departure, but he and wife, Kathryn, have been critical of the WSJ and Fox News' coverage of climate change, reported the BBC.

Murdoch stepped down as 21CF chief following the sale of its entertainment assets to Walt Disney Co. His brother, Lachlan, then took over the Fox CEO slot.

Since departing Fox, Murdoch set up Lupa Systems, which has invested in technology companies and Vice Media.



James Murdoch

MEDIA MANEUVERS

Condé Nast Entertainment has hired Disney + senior vice president of content **Agnes Chu** to serve as the division's president. Chu has been at Disney since 2008 and before being named to her post at Disney + served as a story and franchise development executive at Walt Disney Imagineering, the company's research and development arm. Chu succeeds current CNE president Oren Katzeff, who has faced allegations of racism in its video department. According to a report in *Variety*, Katzeff will take on a new position at the company, though details have not been released.

FOLIO:, which has covered the magazine industry since 1972, has decided to eliminate its regular industry reporting. In a note on the publication's website, Access Intelligence group publisher Bill Amstutz said that the Folio brand would continue to exist, with a focus on such aspects of its current business as executive roundtables and the Eddie and Ozzie Awards. Access Intelligence purchased Folio as part of its acquisition of Red7Media in 2011.



GASTHALTER HANDLES RUSH STREET'S DEAL

Gasthalter & Co. is handling the merger of Rush Street Interactive, online casino company, and dMY Technology Group, publicly traded special purpose acquisition company.

The deal makes RSI a New York Stock Exchange-listed company with an initial valuation of \$1.8B and projected fiscal 2021 revenues of \$320M.

Founded in 2012 by gaming veterans Neil Bluhm, Greg Carlin and Richard Schwartz, RSI operates gaming sites in Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana and Colorado.

"RSI has achieved leading online casino and sportsbook market positions by focusing on what players want—a high-quality product, helpful customer services, transparency and honesty," said Schwartz. "This transaction will help enhance and broaden our product offering and attract more players."

G&C's Jonathan Gasthalter, Carissa Felger and Nathaniel Garnick are working the RSI deal.

COMMENTARY

Hope springs eternal in the hearts of travel PR people who believe they soon will be busy pitching destinations to crazed Americans eager to travel far and wide from their quarantined homes.



Not so fast, says the International Air Transport Assn. It announced on July 28 that global passenger traffic wouldn't return to pre-COVID-19 levels until 2024, a year later than was previously projected.

The IATA points to America's failure to contain COVID-19 vis-à-vis other developed countries among reasons for pushing back the travel recovery time.

It also projects reduced corporate travel due to stressed economies and the unlinking of GDP growth and business travel "as video conferencing appears to have made significant inroads as a substitute for in-person meetings." Zoom is the arch-enemy of travel people.

The IATA also takes issue with travel PR's belief in pent-up demand.

While there is demand for leisure travel and visiting friends/relatives, IATA believes worries about job security, rising unemployment rates and fears of catching COVID-19 will keep most people hunkered down at home.

See you next July... Alphabet CEO Sundar Pendar dealt a blow to those who are itching to reopen the economy with his decision to allow Google's 200,000 full-time workers and contractors to work at home through next July.

Google originally planned to have workers back into their offices by January.

Pander made the move because many Googlers don't think schools will open their doors anytime soon, no matter what the president says, and will have to home school their kids.

That point is well taken in the aftermath of the July 27 news that 14 members of Major League Baseball's Miami Marlins team and support staff tested positive for COVID-19.

As the *New York Times* points out: "If baseball, a \$10B industry operating in a controlled environment and employing frequent testing cannot prevent infections, then how are schools, restaurants and other retail businesses going to do so?"

Pandar made the right call. Other tech companies are bound to follow his lead.

Looking out for No. 1... Many Republicans are upset about spending more money to help Americans survive the country's economic collapse. But they did tuck \$1.75B into their COVID-19 relief bill for a new FBI headquarters at its current Pennsylvania Ave. location.

Officials in the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations had suggested building a more secure and much cheaper campus for the FBI in the Maryland or Virginia suburbs. That move also would have returned the Pennsylvania Ave. site to the DC tax rolls.

The president, though, has demanded the FBI stay put because the grifter-in-chief's Trump International Hotel is located across the street. Donald Trump fears competition from a new hotel would hurt the family business.

Democratic leaders Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi were surprised but hardly shocked to see the \$1.75B FBI money buried in the COVID-19 bill. They've been dealing with the shenanigans of the president for almost four years.

Republican Senator Richard Shelby, who chairs the Appropriations Committee, conceded it was a "stretch" to include the FBI building in a pandemic bill.

Shelby should know better. There's never a stretch for Trump when it comes to taking care of his personal business.

Trump hit a PR double on July 30, floating the idea of delaying the election.

Republican leaders like Mitch McConnell, quickly shot down Trump's trial balloon, saying, "Never in the history of the country, through wars, depressions and the Civil War, have we ever not had a federally scheduled election on time. We'll find a way to do that again this Nov. 3."

King Trump doesn't have the authority to fiddle around with Election Day. The Constitution empowers Congress to set the day of the vote. That hardly matters to the president.

His Election Day gambit succeeded in diverting attention from the historic contraction of the American economy and the funeral of Congressman John Lewis, which was attended by three presidents not named Trump.

The Commerce Dept. reported that the GDP contracted 9.5 percent from April through June, the steepest decline since 1947 as states shut down to deal with COVID-19.

The Labor Dept. added to that gloomy news, reporting that 1.43M Americans filed for unemployment benefits during the week ended July 25. That marked the 19th straight week of a million or more claims—unheard of prior to COVID-19.

Trump's election tweet stole some of the national spotlight from the Atlanta funeral of civil rights advocate John Lewis. President Barack Obama eulogized Lewis, while Bill Clinton and George W. Bush delivered remarks at the ceremony held at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Lewis, an advocate for voting rights who was called the "conscience of the Congress," would have been appalled by Trump's delay-the-election idea.

That would have suited Donald just fine.

The *New York Times* on July 30 published an essay that Lewis wrote a couple of days before he died.

In it, he wrote: "The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it."

Lewis also wrote: "Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself."

The anti-Lewis doesn't give a fig about democracy or a world at peace with itself.

To Trump, it's all about maintaining a grip on the presidency, even if means whining day after day about delaying or cancelling the election.

Trump may have hit a double, but he will be called out at third base by the American people if he tries to stretch it into a triple.

—Kevin McCauley