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WPP 1H REVENUES SLIDE 12.3%

WPP reported a 12.3 percent decline in first-half revenues to \$7.4B as CEO Mark Read wrestled with the negative impact of COVID-19.

The company suffered a \$3.4B pre-tax loss, which included a \$3.6B impairment charge largely connected to the 2000 acquisition of Y&R.



Mark Read

Consumer packaged goods, technology and pharmaceutical clients, which account for 56 percent of revenues, were either less impacted, or slightly enhanced by COVID-19.

Auto, luxury, travel and leisure accounts (22 percent of revenues) were the hardest hit.

WPP's BCW, Hill+Knowlton Strategies, Finsbury and Ogilvy PR group "held up relatively well," as clients

sought advice on how to engage with their stakeholders, according to Read. PR revenues declined 8.1 percent to \$298M, though it "outperformed" in North America, but was "down significantly" in the UK.

Assuming there's no second wave of COVID, Read expects the second quarter will turn out to "to be the toughest period of the year."

He remains cautious about the speed of the recovery.

More than three-quarters (77 percent) of WPP staffers in China are back in their offices. That's followed by Germany (17 percent), UK (three percent) and US (one percent).

TENEO GRABS GOLDIN ASSOCIATES

Teneo has acquired Goldin Associates, a financial advisory firm focused on corporate restructuring that was founded in 1990 by former New York City comptroller Jay Goldin.

Goldin Assocs. has worked on high-profile bankruptcies including Enron, Drexel Burnham Lambert, City of Detroit and Bernie Madoff's Madoff Investment Securities.



It is now part of Teneo's capital advisory group, the investment banking arm of the strategic communications shop.

Michael Madden, chair of Teneo's capital advisory group, praised Goldin Assocs for its "exceptional track record of advising clients through distressed situations."

Teneo was founded by Declan Kelly, ex-Financial Dynamics CEO, executive VP at FTI Consulting and economic envoy for Northern Ireland for Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; Paul Keary, senior managing director at FTI; and Doug Band, who was President Clinton's chief counsel.

SKDKNICK PUSHES CA. VOTER DRIVE

SKDKnickerbocker is working the \$35M "Vote Safe California" marketing communications program to bolster voter participation in the November election.

The effort will pitch voting during the COVID-19 pandemic as simple, safe and secure. California plans to send a ballot to every registered voter in the state ahead of the Nov. tally.



SKDKnick has close ties with the Biden presidential run

as partner Anita Dunn is a senior strategist for his campaign. She was White House communications director and senior advisor to Barack Obama's presidential campaigns.

The firm's Los Angeles office will handle the advertising, PR and digital Vote Safe California push, which will play up outreach to first-time voters.

Stagwell Group owns SKDKnick.

FDA AXES CHIEF SPOKESPERSON

Food and Drug Administration commissioner Stephen Hahn today fired chief spokesperson Emily Miller in the aftermath of the botched handling of messaging about blood plasma treatment for COVID-19.

President Trump touted the treatment as "a very historic breakthrough" when the announcement was made Aug. 23 just ahead of the beginning of the Republican convention.

Scientists criticized Hahn for overplaying the benefits of plasma therapy and for undermining trust in the FDA. Hahn on Aug. 25 walked back his comments about the plasma, explaining that he could have done a better job in explaining the data about its effectiveness against COVID-19.



Emily Miller

Trump appointed Miller, who was a PR staffer on Ted Cruz's re-election campaign and a journalist at the conservative One America News, to the FDA post on Aug. 17.

Hahn plans to hire a spokesperson on an interim basis.

The ouster of Miller follows the decision of Dept. of Health and Human Services, parent of the FDA, to terminate the contract of Wayne Pines, who is president of APCO Worldwide's healthcare group. He helped Hahn correct the record on blood plasma therapy.

Pines said he advised Hahn, a personal friend, outside of the APCO practice.

A spokesperson for the DH&HS maintains that the dropping of Pines has nothing to do with the plasma messaging.

COLUMBUS HOUSING AUTHORITY SEEKS AOR

The Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority is searching for a branding/digital marketing agency of record.

Scope of the work includes: developing and executing a consistent brand messaging strategy; producing content for media outlets; creating presentation and marketing materials; and providing recommendations to increase brand awareness.

The selected agency will be offered a one-year contract with the option of a two-year renewal. Budget for the work is \$150,000, which includes production and agency fees.

Proposals must be received by 11:00 a.m. (EST) on Friday, Sept. 18. The technical portion of proposals should be sent to technicalresponse@cmhanet.com. Proposed fees and pricing should be submitted to feeproposal@cmhanet.com.

Electronic responses are preferred, but agencies may also submit one original and three bound hard copies to: CMHA Purchasing Department; Purchasing Manager, Andrea Quinichett; Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority; 880 E 11th Avenue; Columbus, Ohio 43211

Questions should be directed to purchasing manager Andrea Quinichett, aquinichett@cmhanet.com.

A pre-proposal conference is scheduled for 11:00 a.m. (EST) on Friday, Sept. 11, by joining this [Zoom Meeting](#). (Meeting ID: 882 3101 8016 ; Passcode: 771017).

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

EDELMAN TABS DUBOIS FOR ESG-US POST

Edelman has recruited Heidi DuBois, a veteran of the BNY Mellon and PepsiCo corporate responsibility practices, for the executive VP & head of the environmental, social and governance practice in the US. It's a new post.



Heidi DuBois

DuBois joins the firm from the Society of Corporate Governance where as ESG director she advised general counsels, board members and sustainability executives on best-in-class programs. She will work with Chuka Umunna, who recently joined Edelman in London as executive VP and head of ESG for the EMEA region.

Umunna served in the British parliament from 2010-2019 as shadow

business secretary and other economic, business, trade and foreign policy posts.

BEYAH TAKES RIDE ON UNION PACIFIC

Clarissa Beyah, who stepped down in April as VP-strategic communications at Northwestern Mutual, has signed on as chief communications officer at Union Pacific, the freight railroad that serves 23 states.

She is responsible for driving corporate communications strategy, overseeing executive and employee communications, media relations, digital and social media, and serving as the communications adviser to the chairman and senior leadership team.

Beyah has also served as chief communications officer for GE Transportation and led communications teams at Aon, Exelon and Pfizer.

Currently a professor at USC Annenberg's School for Communication and Journalism, Beyah is the founder of [Writer's Block Ink](#), a nonprofit organization that helps at-risk youth ignite social change through writing and acting.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Idea Grove has added **Perpetual Motion**, a disinfecting drone distributorship that aims to make arenas and other indoor and outdoor facilities safer during COVID-19, to its client roster. The agency will develop and distribute the company's first press release, execute a media relations campaign, create the brand's social media profiles and launch their website.



Hemsworth Communications has been engaged by apartment-hotel brand **Domio** to support the brand's position as an alternative lodging leader, driving a development-centric communications strategy showcasing its innovation. Co-founded in 2016 by Bank of America Merrill Lynch alumni Jay Roberts and Adrian Lam, Domio operates properties in such destinations as Miami, Chicago, Nashville and New Orleans.

V2 Communications has added **CarePort Health**, which provides care transitions software, to its client portfolio. V2 is working to leverage CarePort's proprietary data and executive thought leadership and has already secured coverage in business press publications including the *New York Times*, Bloomberg and the *Washington Post*. The agency is also cultivating influencers, customers and partners to validate and extend the reach of key messages.

Rubenstein Public Relations has been named agency of record for **Q Hydrogen Solutions Corporation**, a Park City, UT-based company that has developed a technology for turning water into hydrogen gas for use in energy and electricity production, transportation and industry. The agency will work on crafting corporate messaging and developing brand positioning for the company.

Diffusion has been named North American public relations agency of record for furniture and mattress retailer **Raymour & Flanigan**. It will provide corporate and consumer media relations support for the company and work to elevate R&F's brand awareness, targeting a growing base of millennials. The campaign will position the retailer as a go-to resource for interior design needs and seed R&F's catalog to mainstream and consumer media, targeting key shopping dates throughout the year.



M Booth Health is partnering with the Institute for **Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington** and **Penn State University** on initiatives aimed at containing the COVID-19 pandemic and educating the public about virus-prevention protocols. For the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, the agency will provide communications counsel and support for the organization's COVID-19 data forecasts. M Booth Health will produce an integrated communications campaign for Penn State University that will encourage students, faculty, and staff to follow public health guidelines designed to limit the spread of COVID-19 as the fall semester resumes across 24 campuses.

DRIVEN360 has been retained by **Galaxy Magnesium**, a mine-to-customer source of magnesium, as agency of record. The agency will work with Galaxy as it expands its strategy to transform the world of industrial metals with reasonable, stable cost, guaranteed quality and sustainable alloys.

HOW TO SAVE THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

While the president was demanding a fourth debate with his challenger, an opinion piece in the *New York Times* suggested that debates be scrapped altogether. Yes, the debates have certainly devolved over the years but this is a classic



Paul Oestreicher

“throw the baby out with the bathwater” reaction. Let’s fix them instead. Here are three changes to elevate the debates and increase their value to the public:

1) Ditch the audience. In her NYT piece, Elizabeth Drew wrote that debates were less about conveying a vision or a plan than they were about upstaging the opponent. “Points went to snappy comebacks and one-liners. Witty remarks drew laughs from the au-

audience and got repeated for days and remembered for years,” she said. She’s not wrong, of course. But it’s the debate format that has helped to create the reality TV atmosphere. The candidates have been playing to the audience; they look for applause or a laugh. Let’s get serious and let’s remove the audience. The point might be made moot because of the pandemic this year but the editorial board of the *Washington Post* endorsed this idea, calling the debates “quip contests.”

2) Level the field. I mean this literally. The candidates should be seated, anchored to their chairs. The freewheeling Town Hall format, where the candidates roam the stage, should be banned. In 2016, candidate Trump tried to intimidate Secretary Clinton when he alternated between standing and pacing back-and-forth behind her. Clinton said he was breathing down her neck, which made her feel “incredibly uncomfortable.” *Politico* magazine called it “the ugliest debate ever seen.” Pressing a physical advantage—bullying—must not be allowed.

3) Check the facts. A consequence of our glorious First Amendment is that political speech is highly protected—essentially any half-truth or lie may be told. While there are plenty of post-debate analyses, it’s too late. Many viewers tune-out after the practiced smiles and forced handshakes. And our brains tend to cling to misinformation even after it’s refuted. We need real-time (or near real-time) fact checking. Let’s use technology to help the experts to sift through speech transcripts and testimony; almanacs and atlases; laws, regulations and policy statements; credible survey data, and non-partisan news articles, journals, and research reports. Let’s ensure the public gets the facts and not the flimflam.

While we’re more polarized than ever and fewer people are undecided, more information, more opportunity for side-by-side comparison, is still crucial to the democratic process. In a society that’s increasingly stressed by the health and economic consequences of COVID-19, systemic racism, and so many other issues, political discussion can be dispiriting, infuriating, and sometimes incendiary. But, as Ray Bradbury wrote in *Fahrenheit 451*, “If you don’t want a man unhappy politically, don’t give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none.”

Paul Oestreicher, PhD is a recognized expert in strategic communications, marketing, and public affairs, and issues, crisis and reputation management. He is the author of Camelot, Inc.: Leadership and Management Insights from King Arthur and the Round Table and the blog C-O-I-N-S: Communication Opinions, Insights and New Strategies. Follow him @pauloestreicher.

DISINFORMATION SEEN AS BIG PROBLEM

A majority of Americans now consider the spread of fake news to be among the worst societal issues facing the country, [according to a report from the Institute for Public Relations](#).

The report, which examined Americans’ trust in the media as well as the perceived prevalence of misleading or biased information in the U.S., found that an overwhelming majority of respondents (84 percent) think disinformation is a problem in this country, more than two-thirds (69 percent) believe disinformation undermines our election process and nearly three-quarters (72 percent) consider disinformation to be a threat to democracy.

In fact, the 61 percent of Americans who said they’re currently concerned about disinformation surpassed the percentage of Americans concerned about other societal problems such as illegal drug use or abuse (55 percent), crime (55 percent), gun violence (54 percent) and political partisanship (53 percent).

Disinformation has now altered how Americans consume news. Nearly a third (31 percent) claim they avoid watching or listening to the news because of the amount of disinformation in the U.S., and a quarter (24 percent) said they’re now more likely to turn to foreign news sources over domestic sources.

Nearly half of respondents (49 percent) said they encounter false news or disinformation almost every day.

Respondents said they consider Facebook and politicians (both 70 percent) the sources most responsible for spreading fake news to the public. This was followed by fake social media accounts (65 percent), the government (63 percent), Republican members of Congress (62 percent) and political activist groups and journalists (both 61 percent).

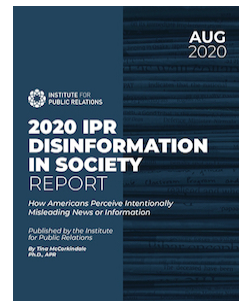
A few concerns take precedence over fake news. According to the report, Americans think infectious disease outbreaks (74 percent) and healthcare costs (72 percent) are the two most significant problems facing Americans this year.

The report also found that, comparatively, the public’s anxiety toward disinformation also appears to have declined somewhat in the last year: the 61 percent of those surveyed who said they’re concerned about misinformation revealed a dip from the 65 percent reported in IPR’s previous 2019 study on media trust.

Naturally, respondents identifying as conservative and liberal differ widely regarding what news sources they consider trustworthy: the former trust Fox News, while the latter gravitate toward CNN, the *New York Times* and MSNBC. But there remains one media source that appears to have largely avoided political polarization: local news. Overall, 70 percent of respondents said they have at least “some trust” in local broadcast TV news and 60 percent said they trust local newspapers.

IPR’s “2020 IPR Disinformation in Society Report” was written by IPR President and CEO Dr. Tina McCorkindale and [Peppercomm](#) founder and IPR chair Steve Cody. The report surveyed 2,200 Americans in late March. Surveys were conducted online by data intelligence company The Morning Consult.

IPR is the nonprofit PR research organization based at the University of Florida.



PRAIA LANDS \$1.2M QATAR PACT

Qatar has hired newly formed Praia Consultants for strategic counsel and guidance on developments in the political climate of the US. The one-year contract, worth \$1.2M, may be extended for another year if both parties agree in writing.

Vladimir Petrovic, former Serbia ambassador to the US and now government relations consultant, launched DC-based Praia on July 30. Prior to accepting his diplomatic post in 2009, Petrovic raised money for Barack Obama's Senate campaign and worked for Democratic political candidates.

Chicago-based Dan Shomon, who was Barack Obama's Senate campaign manager and political director, is a consultant to Praia and active on the Qatari effort.

Praia is working the Qatar business as a subcontractor to Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman.

Qatar has been under a political and economic blockade since 2017 erected by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Egypt for its alleged support of terrorism and cozy ties with Iran.

DCI GROUP REPS EX-COLOMBIA PRESIDENT

DCI Group, which has strong ties with the Republican party, is providing communications and public support for former Colombia president Alvaro Uribe, who is under house arrest in a probe of witness tampering.

Uribe, 68, who headed Columbia from 2002 to 2010, is noted for his ruthless efforts to wipe out the leftist FARC guerrilla group and narco-terrorists.

Colombia's Supreme Court on Aug. 24 called on Uribe, a Colombia Senator, to testify in its probe into three massacres, which could determine whether he had ties to paramilitary groups.

DCI, which began representing Uribe on Aug. 20, receives a \$40K monthly fee. Its contract expires Nov. 30, but can be extended if both parties agree.

Managing director Justin Peterson, who worked on Elizabeth Dole and George W. Bush's presidential campaigns; VP Kevin Ivers, co-founder of the Log Cabin Republicans; and senior account manager Andres Taborda, a citizen of the US and Colombia, handle Uribe's PR effort.



Alvaro Uribe

MERCURY FENDS OFF ALIBABA SANCTIONS

Mercury is working the Washington beat for Alibaba Group, China's most valuable technology company, as trade tensions grow between the US and China.

The Omnicom unit is handling technology policy, access to US capital markets and issues related to e-commerce.

President Trump has threatened to sanction China social media companies ByteDance and Tencent, owners of the TikTok video site and WeChat messaging app, respectively.

Alibaba CEO Daniel Zhang told investors on Aug. 20 that his company is keeping a close eye on the "very fluid" US policies toward China. He reassured Trump that Alibaba poses no threat to the US.

Mercury's Alibaba team features Adam Bramwell, chief of staff to Senator Chris Coons (D-DE), a good friend of Joe Biden; Bryan Lanza, communications director for the Trump transition team; and John Lonergan, long-time consultant to former New York Republican governor George Pataki.

FACEBOOK FANS SPLIT IN TRUST OF SITE

While a large majority of Facebook users say that they visit the platform at least once a day, they are more evenly split as regards their level of trust in Facebook and the brands that advertise on it, according to the results of a new survey from Lippe Taylor.

More than eight out of 10 of the 1,000 Facebook users surveyed (86.5 percent) said they check in at least daily, with the remaining 13.5 percent saying they use the platform at least once a week.

When it comes to how much they trust the information they get from those frequent visits, almost half (46.2 percent) said they usually believe what they read in Facebook posts, with 6.8 percent saying they always trust that information. On the other side, 38.6 percent said they rarely trust Facebook content, with another 8.4 percent saying that they always assume the platform's content is not trustworthy.

That split also holds for the brands that advertise on Facebook, with 46.8 percent saying they usually trust those brands and 5.1 percent saying they always trust them. The naysayers include the 38.6 percent who say they rarely trust those brands and the 7.4 percent who always assume that those brands are untrustworthy.

When asked if they would be more likely to buy from a boycotting brand, 32.6 percent agreed, while 14.8 percent would be less likely to purchase from such a brand, and 52.6 percent said it would not affect their purchasing decision.

NEWS OF FIRMS

BCW has introduced the BCW NeuroLab Powered by Lab of Misfits, which will use perceptual neuroscience to gain a deeper understanding of why audiences think, feel and behave the way they do. Led by neuroscientist R. Beau Lotto, the Lab of Misfits is a perceptual neuroscience lab composed of scientists, artists, designers and technologists. BCW NeuroLab offers four solutions for clients: neuroscience for brand communications strategy; experiential experiments; behavioral neuroscience for organizational engagement and business transformation; and marketing neuroscience and immersive experiential design.

Edelman and **RHR International** have formed a strategic alliance that will work with C-suite and board-level clients to reposition firms and their leaders in times of transition. The partnership will combine RHR's capabilities in executive and organizational development with Edelman's business transformation expertise. It will be co-led by Adam Gerstein, GM and lead of business transformation at Edelman and Paul Ofman, senior partner for client management at RHR International.

FLM Harvest, which works with clients in the agriculture, food and lifestyle markets has selected the Produce for Better Health Foundation as the recipient of its 2020 Seed to Succeed pro-bono program. The agency will provide up to \$75,000 in services to promote PBH's 2020 "State of the Plate" fruit and vegetable consumption research. FLM Harvest will work with PBH to develop an overall launch and communications strategy for the research, including creative content development and media planning.



SORTA SEEKS PR PITCHES

The Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority, the public transport agency serving Cincinnati and its suburbs, is seeking a firm to provide public relations strategy, public affairs, government affairs and community relations services that support the transit agency's overall strategic plan.

Scope of the work includes developing strategic public relations plans, identifying key messages, social media, research, production of collateral materials, coordinating with outside agencies and making recommendations for dissemination and implementation of information and programs. The hired agency must also provide services related to an expansion plan following a successful sales tax levy.

The contract runs for two years, beginning January 1, 2021, and ending December 31, 2022, with the possibility of renewal for one additional year.

Deadline for proposals is 2:00 p.m. (EST) on September 9. All proposals should be submitted electronically via the [Public Purchase website](#).

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

DASCHLE PUSHES FOR RIGHTS IN HONG KONG

Former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle represents Project Hong Kong, a New York-based group pushing for democracy and human rights in the former British colony.

China imposed a sweeping new national security law on Hong Kong on June 30, which severely curbs freedom of expression and civil rights in the city.



Tom Daschle

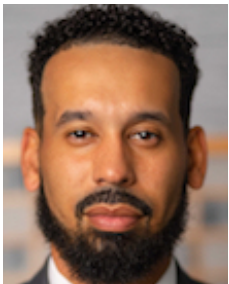
Beijing rolled out that harsh measure though the city was promised a "high degree of autonomy" for 50 years when Britain returned it to Chinese control in 1997.

The US Treasury Dept. sanctioned Hong Kong officials, including CEO Carrie Lam, on Aug. 7. She called the sanctions "shameful and despicable."

Daschle, who was a Democratic Senator from South Dakota, is working Project Hong Kong, as head of The Daschle Group, the public policy advisory group of Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz.

HOWARD U. NAMES TRAMBLE CCO

Howard University has named Frank Tramble VP of communications and chief communications officer, effective Sept. 2.



Frank Tramble

Tramble comes to Howard from Georgetown University, where he was senior director, strategic communications and operations.

He previously served as Georgetown's associate director for annual giving marketing and operations.

In his new position, Tramble will be responsible for refining and executing Howard's communications strategy and overseeing marketing, brand, media relations, crisis communications and reputation management.

Tramble takes over from Crystal Brown, who joined Hager Sharp in June to lead its education, labor and economy practice.

ON THE MOVE

Allied BioScience has hired **Jess Hilton** as chief marketing officer. Hilton joins the Dallas-based company from Rauxa, where she served as managing director and senior vice president. She was previously senior vice president of client partnerships at Ansira. Hilton directly manages all public relations, social media, digital and global marketing efforts for Allied as it brings its antimicrobial coating, SurfaceWise2, to market. The product is the first to receive EPA approval for use to provide surface protection against COVID-19.



Jess Hilton

GRSi, which provides services that include IT infrastructure modernization, software engineering and technology assessment, has named **John Graziano** corporate communications director. Graziano comes to GRSi from Leidos Health Group, where he served as communications manager. In his new post, he duties will include growing brand recognition and thought leadership as well as internal communications and social media campaigns.

Cohesion Marketing Partners has brought on **Laura Willis** as chief marketing officer. Willis comes to Cohesion from Encore Revolution, a branding firm she founded in 2014. She previously served as director of marketing at Traditions Home Health Services and creative director at Fidelity Investments. At Cohesion, Willis will act as a strategic marketing consultant and marketing team leader for clients in the Boston area.

Finn Southeast, the southeastern hub of FINN Partners, has named **Rebecca Warren** partner and co-lead of its health group. Warren joined Finn Partners in 2018 as vice president of client services. She was previously director of communications at Battle Ground Academy in Franklin, TN, and has served as a senior director in the global CEO's office at Burson-Marsteller in New York.

The PRSA Health Academy has given **Ellen Greene** its 2020 Excellence in Public Relations Award. Greene is the vice president of strategic corporate communications for RWJBarnabas Health in New Jersey. The award recognizes leaders in health care PR and communications who advance and elevate the practice of health care public relations, facilitate the discovery of innovative strategies and tools, and represent enrichment, leadership and excellence in the practice of public relations. "Ellen stood out as not only a strategic counselor to leaders within the health system, but a mentor to a number of employees both inside and outside her department," said Marina Renneke, 2020 chair of the PRSA Health Academy and member of the award review committee.



Ellen Greene

D S Simon Media has brought on **Colleen Flood** as account director. Flood previously served as national sales manager and vice president of agency relations at media intelligence company Burrelles. "She is a dynamic and savvy executive who provides knowledge and insights," said D S Simon Media CEO Doug Simon. "She'll be an incredible asset to our company and to the organizations she counsels."

COMMENTARY

Pandemic spurs purpose among CEOs, is the takeaway from KPMG International's special COVID-19 edition of its 2020 CEO Outlook survey released Aug. 24.

The firm originally questioned 1,300 CEOs in January and February-- just prior to the lockdowns--and then followed up in July and early August with a "pulse" survey of 315 executives to gauge how their thinking has evolved.

At the beginning of the year, 54 percent of CEOs took a purpose-driven approach to management focused on meeting the needs of multiple stakeholders, while 23 percent prioritized "managing for shareholder value."

In the follow-up, 79 percent of respondents said they feel a stronger emotional connection to purpose than what they felt prior to the pandemic.

KPMG believes the personal and emotional connection to purpose during the pandemic reflects the fact that CEOs face the same health and family challenges as their employees and communities when it comes to COVID-19.



Bill Thomas

Almost four-in-ten (39 percent) of respondents have had their health, or the health of one of their family, affected by COVID-19, and 55 percent changed their strategic response to the pandemic as a result.

"COVID-19 has prompted CEOs to meaningfully re-consider purpose as a key driver of corporate success, both today and in the future," wrote Bill Thomas, global CEO of KPMG.

Thanks for the heads-up, Larry. President Trump's economic guru Larry Kudlow let the cat out of the bag during the alternate reality show that was the Republican convention when he declared that COVID-19 is over.

"It was awful," he said. "Health and economic impacts were tragic. Hardships and heartbreak were everywhere. But presidential leadership came swiftly and effectively with an extraordinary rescue for health and safety to successfully fight the COVID virus."

Kudlow spoke on Aug. 25, the day 1,147 Americans died from the virus and the US death toll headed for the 180,000 mark. A second wave of COVID-19 is expected during the fall.

You can bet Donald Trump is ready to jump on Larry's bandwagon. He desperately wants to move on from his disastrous handling of the virus.

Though science has made great strides in developing a vaccine for COVID-19, a cure won't be available until after the presidential election.

That's too late for Trump, which is why he pressured Food and Drug Administration chief Stephen Hahn to join him at the White House on Aug. 23 to exaggerate the benefits of plasma therapy in treating COVID-19.

The snake-oil salesman-in-chief already has told more than 20,000 lies since he took office. What's one more lie about plasma therapy?

Melania Trump told the GOP convention that she's been moved by the way Americans have come together in such an unfamiliar and often frightening situation," to fight the virus.

What is the First Lady thinking? Americans can't even get it together when it comes to wearing a mask, which is the most effective way to stop the spread of COVID-19.

A Gallup poll released Aug. 7 found that only 47 percent of Americans wear a mask while outdoors. Less than a quarter (23 percent) of Republicans don masks while outside, compared to 64 percent of Democrats and 43 percent of Independents.

Masks have gotten so toxic that the CDC has issued guidelines for shop keepers, urging them not to argue with customers who refuse to mask up.

The agency warned retailers about the threat of physical and verbal assaults from irate customers told to put on a mask.

It suggests limiting contact with customers via curbside pickups, home delivery or personal shoppers; having employees work in pairs; setting up "safe rooms" for employees who feel endangered and installing security systems.

Whatever happened to that "We are all in this together" slogan from the early days of the pandemic?

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos is delivering some very bad news for the beleaguered US Postal Service.

The online retailer has been buying up real estate and opening facilities to handle online orders. The Post Office currently delivers a third of Amazon's packages.

Consulting firm MWPVL International predicts that Amazon could handle about 85 percent of its volume by the end of 2022, which would be a terrible financial blow to the USPS.

It would be sweet revenge for Bezos, whom Trump has accused of ripping off the Post Office.

See ya, Kellyanne. Presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway has called it quits. She's getting out just in the nick of time. Good riddance.

To her discredit, Conway justified the barrage of lies, misinformation, falsehoods, exaggerations and distortions that have become the hallmark of the Trump administration.

On Jan. 22, 2017, Conway introduced the term "alternative facts" to the world in defending then press secretary Sean Spicer's lie on his first day on the job that a record number of people attended Trump's inaugural.

Conway told NBC's Chuck Todd:

"Don't be so overly dramatic about it, Chuck. You're saying it's a falsehood, and they're giving — our press secretary, Sean Spicer, gave alternative facts to that."

It's been all downhill since then.

The *Washington Post* fact checker reports that Trump has made more than 20,000 false and misleading claims since he took office. Conway spun them all.

It's little wonder that Conway has decided to spend more time with her family, especially since the president plans to unleash a torrent of falsehoods to fend off Joe Biden.

There's only so much one can take in defending the indefensible.

—Kevin McCauley