



**Kevin McCauley**  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of PR & Marketing Communications

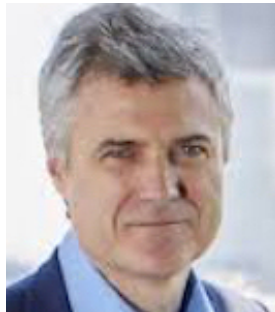


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## WPP POSTS 16% H1 GROWTH

WPP chief Mark Read reported a 16.1 percent gain to \$8.5B in H1 revenues (like-for-like) and a \$672.7M operating profit, compared to a \$3.8B year-ago loss.



**Mark Read**

The upbeat financial performance comes as successful vaccination programs in major markets accelerated the easing of restrictions and stimulated economic activity.

Read noted that clients continue to reinvest in marketing, especially for digital media, e-commerce and technology. He said WPP has returned to its 2019 level of performance, a year ahead of plan, and enjoys “good momentum into 2022.”

WPP’s PR unit jumped 7.5 percent to \$625.5M for the half. Second quarter revenues grew 14.1 percent to \$328M.

“We have seen strong growth in our public relations and public affairs companies,” Read told O’Dwyer’s. Read noted high-demand for purpose-driven communications as clients sought to engage with stakeholders on sustainability issues.

He said WPP is at the heart of many of the environmental, social and governance issues “that we face as a society and the actions and judgments we make as a business are critically important.”

## MEDTRONIC HIRES BP AMERICA’S HANSERD

Valerie Corr Hanserd has joined Medtronic, the \$30B medical devices giant, after a 17-year run at bp America.

She has the VP-communications, global operations & supply chain position.



**Valerie Corr Hanserd**

Hanserd reports directly to Greg Smith, executive VP, global operations & supply chain; and functionally to Torod Neptune, senior VP, chief communications officer & corporate marketing.

She exited bp America in July as senior government affairs manager, customers & products.

Hanserd played a key role in bp America’s handling of its 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

Prior to bp America, she did PR and advance work for the Obama for Senate campaign and worked as senior account executive at Jasculca/Terman and Assocs. in Chicago.

## EDELMAN TABS \$10M FOR GLOBAL ADVISORY

[Edelman](#) is committing \$10M to build out its newly formed global advisory unit, which will help governments, businesses and non-profit organizations deal with the rapidly changing geopolitical and economic landscapes.

The [No. 1 independent firm](#) has acquired DC-based Basilinna strategic consulting firm and long-term Edelman partner to serve as foundation of Edelman Global Advisory, which is a unit of the DJE holding company.



Basilinna founding partners, CEO Deborah Lehr and COO Leigh Wedell, are CEO and co-COO of EGA, respectively.

Edelman Public Affairs COO Gurpreet Brar, who joined the firm seven years ago from Bell Pottinger, is co-COO of EGA.

Based in Washington, EGA has offices in New York, Mexico City, Ottawa, Paris, Brussels, Dubai, Tokyo and Beijing.

Edelman’s initial \$10M investment will fund EGA’s expansion into new markets and the hiring of regional and sectoral leadership.

## FINN ADDS OGILVY VETS TO HEALTH UNIT

[Finn Partners](#) has named Richard Hatzfeld senior partner-global health and head of the DC offering, and Ritesh Patel as senior partner-global digital health.

Hatzfeld, who has worked in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America in a 25-year career, joins Finn Partners after five years as Ogilvy team leader, where he supervised various national vaccination efforts.

He will work closely with Finn Health chair Gil Bashe and practice leader Kristie Kuhl.



**Richard Hatzfeld, Ritesh Patel, Pepe Aguilar**

Patel, who was chief digital officer at Ogilvy Consulting, will collaborate across Finn’s practices and work at the “intersection of health and wellness decision-making and health-professional voice,” according to the firm.

Finn Partners also has hired Pepe Aguilar, whose work has earned 18 Cannes Lions and 26 Effie Awards for a number of global shops, as executive creative director.

Bashe told O’Dwyer’s the three hires “demonstrate the firm’s commitment to delivering powerful, integrated solutions that make a difference in our global community and deliver for client brands.”

## **TUCSON WANTS HELP FOR CLIMATE PLAN**

Tucson, which saw its driest and hottest year on record in 2020 with only 4.2 inches of rain and more than 100 days of 100-degree-plus temperatures, is looking for a partner to develop a “people-centered” climate action and adaptation plan.



Tucson wants a firm “to provide a roadmap for Tucson to mitigate its contributions to climate change and adapt to future climatic disruptions,” its RFP says.

The plan will 1) “consider Tucson’s unique social fabric, economy, history, indigenous community and physical climate;” 2) incorporate diverse knowledge and expertise; 3) address racial, economic, health and environmental systemic inequities in climate solutions; 4) ensure that Tucson’s frontline and low-income communities of color are centered in the decision-making process; 5) ensure that client action does not lead to displacement of vulnerable and low-income communities of color, and 6) “be a living document that is bilingual (English and Spanish), visually engaging, easily understood and accessible to diverse audiences.”

The climate action plan is expected to be completed within eight to 12 months upon selection of a communications partner. Proposals are due Aug. 13 at the city portal. Information about submitting a proposal is available [here](#).

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

## **BCW PROMOTES DEMOCRACY IN TUNISIA**

[BCW](#) re-engaged with Tunisia’s Ennahdha political party following president Kais Saied’s power grab on July 26 that upended the democracy that sprouted in that northern African country in the wake of the “Arab Spring.”

The president suspended parliament, fired the prime minister and briefly detained leaders of Ennahdha, a moderate Islamist/Muslim movement that is the leading democratic party in Tunisia.

The WPP unit had wrapped up its business with the London-based Ennahdha Party Diaspora Group at the end of last year, but re-upped on July 28. That engagement letter calls for media support, strategic communications counsel and outreach to key stakeholders in the US. It covers work through September 28 and a \$15K monthly fee.

BCW has executive VP Bill McQuillen and senior VP Shaila Manyam handling the Tunisian account.

## **BERLINROSEN ADDS MWW’S GARNER**

[BerlinRosen](#) has recruited [MikeWorldWide](#) senior VP-corporate communications Chip Garner for the executive VP slot.

At MWW, Garner focused on reputation management, social strategy, executive publicity and multicultural marketing.



**Chip Garner**

His previous position include VP-PR British Airways and VP-digital strategy at Rubenstein Communications.

Valerie Berlin and Jonathan Rosen also elevated Andy McDonald to the principal position.

Since joining BerlinRosen in 2010 from Pew Charitable Trusts, McDonald has grown the firm’s issue advocacy unit from a single person to a practice of more than 100 strategists.

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

[North 6th Agency](#) signs [Everscore](#), which bills itself as “a safe, friendly marketplace for cannabis lovers everywhere.” N6A will support Everscore on a variety of corporate communications, external media and marketing initiatives to drive competitive awareness and capital raise goals. Everscore’s platform connects consumers directly with THC and CBD brands, and offers both free two-day shipping and a home delivery service. “We wanted to find a team that is not only successful traditional public relations but has in-depth knowledge of the cannabis market,” said Everscore CEO and founder Jeffrey Sampson.

[Clarity](#) picks up self-storage startup [Stuf](#). Clarity will work with Stuf to raise awareness of the brand’s services as it grows its national presence. With locations in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland and Washington, DC, Stuf partners with landlords via revenue-sharing agreement to bring storage options closer to where people live and work. The brand currently has plans to expand to additional cities.



[Hemsworth Communications](#) leads PR efforts for the launch of Three Mills, a brand from UK-based beverage company [Broadland Drinks](#). Hemsworth is responsible for crafting Three Mills’ regional and national media relations campaigns, in addition to forging relationships with retail partners and influencers to increase consumer awareness and drive sales for the brand’s new Botanicals line. Three Mills’ offerings range from classic wine varietals to more innovative products such as their Fruit Fusions and Botanicals.

[Champion](#) lands digital marketing duties for [Milkshake Concepts](#), which includes such brands as Vidorra, Stirr, Dirty Bones, Serious Pizza and Citizen. Champion, which has been the company’s public agency of record since last year, will now also develop and implement its targeted digital advertising. “Champion has proven to be an invaluable partner as our PR agency, and we have no doubt they will continue to be as successful on the digital front,” said Milkshake Concepts co-founder and CEO Imran Sheikh.

[CJ Media Solutions](#) adds [Essex Hotel Management](#) to its roster of clients in the hospitality space and Addigy to its tech list. CJ Media is tasked with raising Essex’s visibility by developing and implementing proactive media strategies, as well as evaluating and garnering earned media opportunities. The agency has been engaged by Addigy to increase its visibility through media relations; evaluating and garnering earned media opportunities; and developing owned media content. Addigy provides a full-stack, cloud-based management application platform for Mac and iOS devices.



[VARCom Solutions](#) signs on as PR shop for [GCS Fibers](#), whose patented technology produces non-toxic mineral fiber through repurposing coal ash. VARCom will support GCS’s communications efforts with services that include marketing strategies, messaging and positioning, as well as public, government and media relations. GCS says its technology repurposes coal ash into mineral fibers that can be used to manufacture such products as automobile parts, clothing, construction materials, paper, plastic and rubber products.



## **WILL SOCIAL AUDIO REPLACE PODCASTING?**

Social audio has risen faster than summer gas prices, capitalizing on a strong audio establishment and thirst to participate in live discussion. Clubhouse, which gained notoriety and a massive following during the COVID-19 pandemic, surpassed 10 million active users in May and was recently valued at \$4 billion, leading the drive to mirror that success among social platforms to a fever pitch.



**Chris Gasiewski**

Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are now all in, working to launch or improve on an audio product. As the social audio movement continues, the question is, will it replace podcasting as the most powerful form of audio consumption?

Put simply: No. Both offerings can and should coexist as effective tools to build trust, develop personalized connections and fortify relationships with your audience. For healthcare specifically—where consumer trust reigns—these platforms can accelerate organizational storytelling, offering diverse perspectives from patients, physicians, nurses, executives and researchers.

While each offering is unique, both can elevate your brand. Here's how.

### **Different formats for different audiences**

Social audio and podcasts are thought leadership vehicles with two very different formats. The former is ephemeral, an “in-the-moment” live conversation that allows listeners to connect with various individuals within your organization.

Social audio can also serve as a home for various healthcare audiences, such as like-minded HCPs evaluating the latest data during or after medical meetings, patients forming bonds by sharing experiences or administrators collaborating on impactful solutions to address ongoing health issues.

Some question whether social audio will evaporate when daily life resumes post-COVID. It's doubtful that this will happen, though, as even the platforms are calling audio the future of their brands.

On the other hand, healthcare has been a growing and popular podcast genre among news organizations and brands for several years. This trend should continue as podcasts reach more diverse populations with new topics.

The latest from the 2021 Infinite Dial study showed:

- 116 million Americans can now be considered monthly podcast listeners—a 37 percent increase from the year prior.
- 80 million Americans can now be considered regular weekly podcast listeners—up 24 percent from the year prior.

The fact is, podcasts are healthy and should be a big boon for health communicators in the coming years, well after the COVID-19 pandemic wanes and more motorists tune in to the traditional radio alternative.

### **Content matters. Personal styles sell.**

In audio, style matters. Sure, celebrity hosts can draw attention to a podcast. But it's been the subject matter experts and some “regular Joes” who have driven growth by building authentic connections.

According to Chartable, three of the top 10 health and wellness podcasts on Apple Podcasts are hosted by physicians. The rest feature a nice blend of mindfulness, health and wellness coaches. And that's just the top 10.

Healthcare is ripe with topics—everything from tech to policy to meditation—that are covered and consumed daily.

## **Evolving products and landscape**

Both podcasts and social audio have demonstrated adaptability to helping their format remain viable. Podcasting, for example, began as a “radio-like” offering, but has evolved into full-fledged series, episodes available on video, advertising opportunities and various ways to download and share.

Consider this... Reports by Reuters, Nielsen and the IAB highlight the growth, with about 25 percent of all podcast listeners tuning in for the first time within the past six months.

While the hot offering, social audio is still in its infancy, and has the potential to be lucrative for the platform and user. Yet, it will need to continue to expand its reach as newcomers like Facebook and LinkedIn come aboard.

Twitter is offering “ticketed” Spaces to help monetize sessions. Imagine the top healthcare conferences taking some of their agenda to the airwaves via a “ticketed” event. It's possible, and these are the kinds of tweaks that can keep social audio as a valuable communications tool, not just a fad.

*Chris Gasiewski has nearly 20 years in journalism, marketing and communications. He is currently vice president, digital health at Edelman.*

## **WESTERN MAINE SEEKS ECODEV PARTNER**

The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments wants proposals from firms to help update its five-year comprehensive economic development strategy.

Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties compose AVCOG. The territory borders New Hampshire and Quebec and covers 4,200 sq. miles of mountains, rivers and lakes.

Western Maine is transitioning from a manufacturing economy based on wood, pulp & paper, plastics, textiles and electronics to one geared to healthcare, telecommunications and recreational/hospitality services.

AVCOG's RFP calls for a firm to assess its existing data & plans; research market trends; engage with stakeholders; draft an economic resiliency plan; and recommend actions to retain/create jobs, attract investment and spur entrepreneurship.

Proposals are due Aug. 16.

They go via mail or email to: Dina Jackson; Economic Development Specialist; Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments; 125 Manley Road; Auburn, Maine 04210; [djackson@avcog.org](mailto:djackson@avcog.org).

Jackson requests that bidders call her at (207) 783-9186 to confirm that she has received their submissions.

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

## **FTI GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS HOPS ON FLIXBUS**

FTI Government Affairs is monitoring DC developments related to transportation and infrastructure legislation for FlixBus Inc. The Los Angeles-based intercity bus company is a unit of Munich's FlixBus GmbH, which launched in 2013 with the deregulation of Germany's bus market. It expanded to France, Italy, Denmark and Croatia in 2015 and launched in 2018 in the US.

It currently serves 187 American destinations, offering one-way \$29 New York-Boston fares and \$44 for San Francisco-Los Angeles rides.

FTI Government Affairs managing director Russ Kelley, a former counsel on the House committee on transportation & infrastructure; and John Whitcomb, managing director in FTI's strategic communications practice's industrials sector, handle FlixBus.



## **'NATIONAL SECURITY' A TOP EXEC PRIORITY**

Despite the increasing influence of the global economy, a new study from Weber Shandwick and KRC Research finds that the national interests of a company's home country carry a surprising amount of weight.

Almost six in 10 (58 percent) of the more than 1,200 business executives from 12 countries polled for "[Home Country as Stakeholder: The Rising Geopolitical Risk for Business Leaders](#)" say that their company's home country is a "very" important stakeholder to their business, second only to customers (63 percent) and even with shareholders (58 percent).

More than half of those surveyed (56 percent) say that national security is very important to their companies' business decisions—outranking diversity and inclusion (50 percent), the protection of human rights (50 percent), ESG (49 percent) and climate change (46 percent).

A sizeable number of corporate leaders in each of the countries surveyed say their companies are more vulnerable to geopolitical risks than they were five years ago. Many expect that increase to continue over the next five years.

When it comes to building a workforce that extends across national boundaries, 77 percent of respondents agreed that increasing tensions between countries will make it more difficult to recruit talent outside of their company's home country.

Many of those surveyed feel that their companies are not adequately prepared to meet the potential risks. More than half feel that their companies' Board of Directors (55 percent) and senior leaders (56 percent) are not well prepared for geopolitical risk.

"As corporate leaders reset their strategies for a new geopolitical and post-COVID era, they are considering how they deliver and communicate value to their home country stakeholder," said Weber Shandwick executive vice president of geopolitical strategy & risk Michelle Giuda. "Executives are saying corporate responsibility includes national responsibility, and leaders must plan accordingly."

## **TALIBAN KILL AFGHANISTAN'S MEDIA CHIEF**

The Taliban murdered Dawa Khan Meenapal, who headed Afghanistan's government media & information office, as he was traveling in Kabul, according to the Associated Press.



**Dawa Khan Meenapal**

The shooting is part of an assassination wave launched by the Taliban, targeting government officials in the wake of America's decision to end its involvement in the "forever war."

The Taliban on Twitter called the killing of Meenapal, who had earlier served as a spokesperson for Afghan president Ashraf Ghani, a "special attack of the Mujahedeen."

Ross Wilson, US Charge d'Affaires, is "saddened and disgusted" by the targeted killing of Meenapal, whom he called a friend and colleague, whose career was focused on providing truthful information to all Afghans about Afghanistan, according to his tweet.

He called the murder "an affront to Afghans' human rights and freedom of speech."

## **HP BANKS ON WELLS FARGO ALUM**

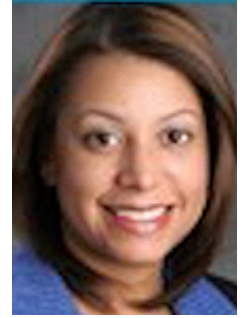
HP has hired Wells Fargo veteran Erica Van Ross as head of communications for CEO Enrique Lores, a 32-year veteran of the \$56B computer/printer giant who took the helm in November 2019.

She will oversee Lores' PR strategy, content development and engagement plan, reporting to head of corporate communications Jeff Dahncke.

Most recently, Van Ross was VP of communications, community engagement and customer care for Schnuck Markets, an independent grocery retailer with operations across the midwestern US.

At Wells Fargo, she was VP of corporate social responsibility and community relations communications.

Earlier in her career, she was director of public information for the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.



**Erica Van Ross**

## **ICR HANDLES FRENCH TROPICANA TAKEOVER**

[ICR Inc.](#) handles French private equity firm PAI Partners as it acquires a 61 percent stake in Tropicana and Naked Juice brands from PepsiCo for \$3.3B.

The juice business chalked up \$3B in 2020 revenues, but had lower operating margins than PepsiCo's energy drinks, zero-calorie beverages and snacks.

Pepsico retains exclusive distribution rights to the juice brands for US food-service channels.

PAI boasts of a strong position in the food & beverage space. It owns Froneri, the world's No. 2 ice cream maker (Häagen-Dazs, Cadbury) via a 50/50 venture with Nestle, and Ecotone, a leader in healthy/sustainable foods.

Frederic Stevenin, managing partner at PAI, sees growth potential for PepsiCo's juice brands via stepped-up investment in product innovation and expansion into adjacent categories.

ICR's Brian Ruby and Chris Gillick handle PAI Partners.



## **BRUNSWICK GROUP RECRUITS ECI'S DENT**

Brunswick Group has hired Caroline Dent, a ten-year veteran of ECI Partners, a private equity firm in the UK, as a partner-group strategy.

She has experience in strategic planning, operational improvement, systems upgrades and organizational design.

Prior to ECI, Dent did a three-year stint at KPMG in the transaction services (commercial due diligence, M&A advisory assignments) unit in the UK and Australia.

She began her career at the Oliver Wyman consultancy.

Dent joins Brunswick's Singapore office.



**Caroline Dent**



## **ONLY 8% OF PITCHES MAKE IT TO PRINT**

All PR pros are aware of the grim numbers game behind the practice of media pitching. How bad is it? A [study](#) by PR software platform Propel says only about eight percent of the pitches sent to journalists result in a published article.

Propel's study, which sought to uncover insights about the pitching process, including what topics PR pros pitch about the most and which ones are most likely to receive attention from the media, discovered that journalists open only 29 percent of the pitches they're sent and respond to only about three percent (3.27 percent) of them. In total, only about eight percent of the pitches sent by PR pros result in a published article.



In reality, that eight percent publishing rate might paint too rosy of a picture. Because determining when content is published is an optional, manual feature in Propel's software, the eight-percent article-published rate applies only to top-performing agencies in Propel's client base.

The Propel study found that the top 10 topics most-often pitched to the press are: technology and computing, business and industrial, health and fitness, art and entertainment, finance, family and parenting, education, food and drink, society and law, government and politics.

According to the Propel study, the pitch categories that resulted in the most responses were business and industrial (4.17 percent), society (3.56 percent), art and entertainment (3.37 percent), food and drink (3.27 percent), finance (3.11 percent) and technology and computing (2.74 percent).

Finally, the study found that PR pros send the highest percentage of pitches to the press at around 9 a.m. However, the study also discovered that media pros actually open a majority of the pitches they receive a little later, at around 11 a.m. Also, most journalists will open a pitch within the first 30 minutes after receiving it.

Propel's latest "Media Barometer" study was based on an analysis of more than 1.2 million pitches to journalists from March 2020-March 2021.

## **BCW'S 'PEOPLE PERSON' SHIFTS TO STAGWELL**

Stephanie Howley, executive VP, managing director, people team, North America, at [BCW](#) has joined Stagwell Inc. as its first chief people officer. She reports to CEO Mark Penn.

She joined BCW in 2019 after a 19-year run as executive VP-human resources at its sister firm, Cohn & Wolfe.



**Stephanie Howley**

Her job is to create programs and the infrastructure to help nurture talent and create development opportunities.

"By doubling down on our investment in our talent and the culture across the organization, we're building a greater runway to client success and growth," Penn said in a statement.

Stagwell's PR units are SKDKnickerbocker, [Allison+Partners](#), [Hunter](#), [KWT Global](#), and [Sloane & Co.](#)

Stagwell Marketing Group, which formally merged with MDC on Aug. 2, to become Stagwell Inc, reported a 12.7 percent rise in H1 revenues to \$390.8M and a 33 percent spurt in net income to \$21.7M.

Its stock trades on the NASDAQ at \$5.72.

## **ON THE MOVE**

Westwicke, [ICR](#)'s healthcare PR practice, hires Michael O'Brien as managing director. O'Brien most recently served as VP of corporate communications for the University of Maryland Medical System. He previously led the Washington, DC office of JPA Health, was global head of corporate communications at MedImmune and served as senior VP, healthcare practice leader at imre. "Mike is a highly strategic communications advisor who helped grow a leading healthcare agency to scale," said ICR Westwicke partner Terri Clevenger.



**Michael O'Brien**

**Cargo** appoints **Richard George**, a former executive at Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide and Publicis, as public relations director. At Publicis, George served as U.S. Director of Business Operations. He was previously a vice president in the New York office of Ogilvy and has also held positions with Rubenstein Public Relations and Grant PR as well as serving as director of public relations for the Public Relations Society of America.

**VyTrac Health**, which provides Remote Patient Monitoring digital health technologies, adds Finn Partners global health chair **Gil Bashe** to its corporate strategic advisory board. Bashe will advise VyTrac executives on their public health and communications efforts in addressing health equity and overcoming racial disparities. VyTrac's smartphone-enabled technology supports the move toward reduction in hospital readmissions through daily monitoring and early intervention.

**Infinite Global** hires **Jean-Luc Renault** as an associate VP, based in Los Angeles. Renault comes to the agency from LA law firm Jenner & Block, where he was communications manager, overseeing media relations around high-stakes litigation, sophisticated transactions and law firm business matters. He has also served as a staff writer at the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*. In his new post, Renault will work with clients to develop initiatives including media relations, social media and content campaigns.



**Jean-Luc Renault**

"Jean-Luc has seen the nexus of media, communications and the legal industry from every angle," said Infinite Global president Zach Olsen."

**Reddit** hires Instagram head of business marketing **Timo Pelz** as its first VP of business marketing. At Instagram, Pelz led the company's global business brand and product marketing across all channels. He was previously industry lead, financial services for Facebook across Austria, Germany and Switzerland. At Reddit, Pelz is tasked with setting go-to-market strategy for the company's advertising products and will oversee all aspects of business marketing for managed and self-serve ad clients.

**Of Home, Family and Future**, an organization that helps college-bound foster youth and survivors of domestic violence, has named [Montieth & Company](#) CEO and global managing partner **Montieth Illingworth** to its board of directors. OHFF provides comprehensive and customized support services to people who possess the desire and drive to succeed but lack the opportunity and resources.

## COMMENTARY

**The Republican cult that marches to the tune of former president Trump** may soon be plunging over the cliff, according to a Quinnipiac Poll released Aug. 4.



It found the beaten ex-president has lost much of his mojo. Less than one in five (19 percent) of Americans say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate endorsed by Trump.

Forty-one percent are less likely to support a candidate blessed by Trump, and 37 percent don't give a fig who the former reality show host backs.

Though Republican politicians cover before Trump, a robust 34 percent of GOPers say a Trump endorsement would not make a difference in their vote. More than half (54 percent) of Republicans say they would be more likely to vote for a Trump-supported candidate, and six percent say less likely.

A solid majority (60 percent) of Democrats, Republicans and Independents told Quinnipiac a Trump for president campaign in 2024 would be bad news for the US.

Thirty-two percent say a Trump run would be good for the country.

Russia is perhaps the country they were referring to.

**Back to Earth for Jeff “Space Cadet” Bezos.** It's been all downhill on the PR front for the King of Amazon in the aftermath of his 11-minute July 20 joy ride to the edge of space on Blue Origin's New Shepard spaceship.

Though the billionaire staged a photo-op in which he received “astronaut wings” made by his Blue Origin space company, the Federal Aviation Administration determined Bezos didn't exactly have the right stuff.

It redefined the definition of astronaut as one who “demonstrated activities during flight that were essential to public safety, or contributed to human spaceflight safety.”

Sorry, Jeff. Hitching a ride doesn't cut it.

Bezos got more bad news on Aug. 2 when an official at the National Labor Relations Board recommended that workers at an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, AL get a second chance to vote for a union.

The NLRB official determined that Amazon used hardball tactics to defeat an April vote to unionize and recommended holding another tally.

Amazon claims the workers turned down the big bad union because they prefer the cozy relationship they enjoy with the company and their managers.

“Our employees had a chance to be heard during a noisy time when all types of voices were weighing into the national debate, and at the end of the day, they voted overwhelmingly in favor of a direct connection with their managers and company,” Amazon said in a statement.

A *New York Times* blockbuster report found that Amazon loses three percent of its hourly workforce each week, which translates into a 150 percent annual turnover rate.

Nevertheless, Amazon plans to appeal the NLRB decision.

Once safely back on Earth, spaceman Bezos said: “I want

to thank every Amazon employee and every Amazon customer because you guys paid for all of this.”

He could show his gratitude to workers by letting them hold a union vote, free from corporate intimidation.

**The Biden administration is a breath of fresh air** for the media, which were branded as the “enemy of the people” by the previous occupant of the White House.

The State Dept. forcefully took China to task last month for the harassment of the foreign media covering the deadly floods in Henan that killed scores of people and dealt a serious blow to Beijing's propaganda machine.

“The United States is deeply concerned with the increasingly harsh surveillance, harassment, and intimidation of U.S. and other foreign journalists in the People's Republic of China, including foreign journalists covering the devastation and loss of life caused by recent floods in Henan,” Ned Price, State Dept. spokesperson said on July 29.

Price went on to say that while China's government claims to welcome foreign media, its harsh rhetoric toward any news it perceives to be critical of its policies “has provoked negative public sentiment leading to tense, in-person confrontations and harassment, including online verbal abuse and death threats to journalists simply doing their jobs.”

China's anti-press policies may have severe consequences. “We call on the PRC to act as a responsible nation hoping to welcome foreign media and the world for the upcoming Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games,” Price warned.

A US downgrade of representation at the Chinese Olympics would be a massive blow to president Xi Jinping's effort to burnish the PR image of China.

**He/she is back...** “Bartleby,” The Economist columnist who skewered PR in the July 3 issue, took a whack at business jargon in the July 31 number.

As they climb the corporate ladder, executives lose the ability to speak or write clearly. Rather than sticking to relevant information in a memo/statement (e.g., profits are up or down), they prefer to roll out grand statements about “team spirit or the corporate ethos” that have nothing to do with the subject at hand, according to Bartleby.

Jargon establishes their credentials or membership in the club. Since there are no exams or physical training required for management, executives use lingo to appear qualified to rule the roost. “In a sense, managers are acting rather like medieval priests, who conducted services in Latin rather than in the local language, adding to the mystical nature of the process.”

To Bartleby, the use of obscure language signals that the speaker is not thinking clearly, which is bad for business. “People who are in real command of details are able to explain things in a way that is easily understood.

“And if a manager's colleagues understand the message, they are more likely to get the right things done. Jargon gets in the way.”

Bartleby is not the management type. —Kevin McCauley