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O'Dwyer's

Newsletter

The Inside News of
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RACEPOINT PICKS PRODROMOU AS CEO

Peter Prodromou, president of **Racepoint Global**, has been named chief executive officer of the Boston-based tech, healthcare and public affairs agency.

Prodromou's promotion is effective immediately. He will retain the title of president.

Prodromou, who's been with the global marketing agency since its inception in 2003, was previously Racepoint's chief global accounts officer before being named president in 2013. Prior to joining Racepoint, he was a senior vice president at **Weber Shandwick** as well as its predecessor, Weber Group, which was founded by Racepoint leader Larry Weber in 1996 and later merged with Shandwick International and BSMG to form the global Interpublic powerhouse in 2001.



Peter Prodromou

Weber now holds Racepoint's founder and chairman title.

Before teaming up with Weber, Prodromou was previously a partner at advertising agency CC and D Communications (Cosmopoulos Crowley and Daly) and a senior financial analyst at Lehman Brothers affiliate, The Boston Company.

Racepoint, which maintains additional offices in San Francisco, Washington D.C. and Ann Arbor, MI, as well as outposts in London, Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong, staffs about 200 and accounted for more than \$29 million in net fees in 2015. The agency lists AT&T, IBM, Dassault Systèmes, Huawei and Samsung as clients.

MILLS LEAVES AMGEN. JOINS MARS PETCARE

Mars Petcare, the world's leading pet nutrition and health care business with 41 brands in its portfolio, has named Helen Mills VP of corporate affairs to start in March.

For the past five years, Mills led corporate affairs for biotech giant Amgen's global commercial business. She will be charged with using her pharmaceutical and healthcare industry background to lead Mars Petcare's strategy of providing holistic care of pets from nutrition to veterinary care.



Helen Mills

Prior to Amgen, the 20-year veteran managed a global corporate affairs team at AstraZeneca in Sweden and the UK, led external communication for one of GlaxoSmithKline's global therapeutic franchises based in the UK, and spent three years at Hill + Knowlton in London and Australia.

FLEISHMAN SIGNS PACT WITH VRIENS

FleishmanHillard has signed an affiliate partnership with Southeast Asia corporate advisory firm Vriens & Partners to generate new business opportunities and expanding both agencies' capabilities and expertise.

Vriens & Partners, which is headquartered in Singapore, specializes in government affairs, public policy and political risk analysis.

The newly formalized partnership will provide the firm with access to the Omnicom unit's global network of public affairs experts outside of Asia.

Fleishman, in turn, will have access to Vriens' regional policy and monitoring services capabilities, as well as its team of local policy experts, allowing clients resources to help them better navigate Asia's market.

FleishmanHillard maintains regional headquarters in Hong Kong.

GOOGLE CAN MAKE OR BREAK JOB SEARCH

A new survey from staffing and recruiting agency The Creative Group shows that gathering additional information on prospective employees online is a shockingly common practice among advertising and marketing executives.

Even worse, what hiring managers find is also often cause for declining to hire those potential candidates.



An overwhelming number of executives surveyed admitted using Google or a similar search engine to find information on prospective employees, with more than a third — 34 percent — of ad executives and more than one-quarter — 26 percent — of marketing executives saying they do this at least some of the time.

Nearly a third — 29 percent — of advertising

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GOOGLE CAN MAKE OR BREAK JOB SEARCH

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executives, as well as 18 percent of marketing executives, said they always conduct online searches to gather additional information on a prospective new hire.

Moreover, many of the ad and marketing executives surveyed admitted that their online sleuthing has compelled them not to hire potential candidates. Nearly half — 48 percent — of advertising executives, as well as 26 percent of marketing executives, said they've declined to offer candidates a job simply based on what they've uncovered via the Internet.

When it comes to managing your online presence, the Creative Group survey concludes that job seekers shouldn't only shape online content to mitigate red flags; given the number of potential eyes watching, they should also use the Internet to showcase their assets.

The staffing agency suggested that professionals moderate their online posting and exhibit caution in what they share, and suggested putting skills and insights on display by posting a digital portfolio showcasing work, as well as commenting in relevant forums or authoring industry-relevant online articles.

The Creative Group survey was conducted in November by research firm SSRS. It included 400 telephone responses from randomly selected U.S. advertising and marketing executives, 200 of whom are stationed at companies with 100 or more employees and 200 who work at agencies with 20 or more employees.

The Creative Group is a division of professional staffing service Robert Half.

UF STUDENTS VISIT PR/AD AGENCIES, BIG APPLE

The Agency, a communication firm affiliated with the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, took a field trip earlier this month to New York City to visit 15 PR and advertising agencies.

This was part of "The 100 Project," a goal to make sure 100 percent of The Agency's student staffers are employed upon graduation. The Agency is staffed by 100 students who take guidance from faculty advisors and full-time communications pros.



The Agency team takes Manhattan

Nineteen team members met with PR heavy hitters Weber Shandwick, Edelman, MSLGROUP, and Prosek Partners, plus ad giants BBDO, Grey, Droga5, and Publicis Health.

The Agency specializes in understanding and marketing to millennials (born between 1980 and 1998) using MAVY™, a virtual community of over 1,000 it has built up. Through quizzes, discussion forums and mobile games, MAVY offers insight to advertisers and marketers on the attitudes, behaviors and preferences of millennials.

The Agency has completed projects for P&G, Best Buy, McDonald's, BBVA Compass, Infinite Energy, and the Florida Departments of Citrus and Transportation.

TRUMP & MEDIA DESERVE EACH OTHER

By Eric Starkman, co-founder and president of Starkman, a corporate and crisis communications firm.



If I had a client that was disliked and distrusted by most Americans, I would counsel them not to aggressively promote a "Saturday Night Live" parody skewing their arch enemy if the skit also portrayed them negatively.

While seeing a nemesis torched on national television is satisfying, companies whose business success is predicated on trust and credibility must focus their reputation management on how they are publicly perceived.

Unless you're in the cable or telecom businesses, being viewed as less deplorable than your competitors isn't a winning strategy.

The media has been clacking with considerable delight about Melissa McCarthy's damning SNL parodies of Sean Spicer, President Trump's press secretary. The skits ([see here](#)) are indeed brilliant and hysterical; after watching them it's hard to see or listen to Spicer and not look for signs that he's off kilter. For people who loathe Trump and want to see him and his minions vanquished, McCarthy hit the bull's-eye.

But what has been lost on the media is how reporters are portrayed in the skits. They aren't presented as fearless crusaders in search of the truth, but rather, cowering, disheveled, pain-faced gnats who ask questions to demonstrate their own self-importance. The portrayal is accurate and deadly.

As Jody Powell, President Jimmy Carter's former press secretary, presciently noted in his book "[The Other Side of the Story](#)" published decades ago, most Americans wouldn't trust what they read in the media if they knew who was behind it. Cable news and the Internet have since allowed mainstream reporters to develop public personas and the results have been disastrous; the [majority of Americans don't trust mass media](#) to report the news fairly.

Bobby Moynihan's portrayal of Glenn Thrush wearing a fedora is particularly delicious. Thrush is well known to Breitbart's supposed 45 million readers as the poster boy for reporters who were in Hillary Clinton's hip pocket; [WikiLeaks made public an email correspondence Thrush sent](#) when he was a reporter for *Politico* to John Podesta seeking approval on a portion of article that mentioned Clinton's campaign chairman. The email, with the subject header "Sorry to bother you," pleads with Podesta not to "share or tell anyone I did this."

Thrush was hired by the *New York Times* a few months after the disclosure, which optically speaks volumes.

Then there's Jacob Bernstein, the New York Times feature writer who called first lady Melania Trump a "hooker" while seated next to the model Emily Ratajowski. [Ratajowski was disgusted](#) by the comment.

In addition to his poor judgment stating unfounded rumors as fact, Bernstein's supposed "apology" also is laughable. "Speaking at a party in what I thought was a personal conversation, I nevertheless made a stupid remark about the first lady," he posted on Twitter.

A "personal conversation?" The rules of engagement

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STANTON REBRANDS, REFINES

Stanton Public Relations & Marketing is now known as **Stanton** after a branding initiative.

The team at Stanton took a dose of their own medicine and sized up their image to see whether it was telling the right story about the agency.

What resulted is a new identity focusing on the ability to offer integrated PR and marketing solutions.

Elevate Communications

STANTON

“Dividing public relations from marketing is outdated thinking and we’ve enhanced our services so that we’re able to deliver a more cohesive communications approach to clients,” said CEO and founder Alex Stanton.

The revamp includes a **new website** and logo with tagline “Elevate Communications.”

Founded in 1995, New York City-based Stanton provides media relations, financial communications, thought leadership, crisis & reputation management, social media and digital marketing.



Alex Stanton

AMAZON TOPS HARRIS POLL’S REP STUDY

The latest **reputation report** from The Harris Poll shows Amazon topping the list with the highest rating ever given in the 18 years of the study.

Top ten 2017 reputation quotient ratings: #1 Amazon - 86.27; #2 Wegmans - 85.41; #3 Publix Super Markets - 82.78; #4 Johnson & Johnson - 82.57; #5 Apple - 82.07; #6 UPS - 82.05; #7 The Walt Disney Company - 82.04; #8 Google - 82.00; #9 Tesla Motors - 81.70; #10 3M Company - 81.50.

Not surprisingly, Wells Fargo had the largest reputation drop in Harris Poll history, coming in at #99 on the 100-company list.

Beleagued Volkswagen Group, still reeling from the dieselgate disaster, came in at #91, but according to Harris, actually posted a slight gain in reputation this year.

Takata (#100), with its massive airbag scandal, and Mylan (#78) with its EpiPen price gouging controversy, made the list for the first time because of the visibility generated by their actions.

Others near the bottom are: #90 Comcast; #92 AIG; #95 Bank of America; #96 Halliburton; #97 Monsanto; and #98 Goldman Sachs.

Harris Poll’s research shows that Americans are increasingly viewing the reputations of some companies as aligned with their individual values.

For example, Republicans view Chick-fil-A and Hobby Lobby, which have vocally expressed their conservative beliefs, more favorably than Democrats. And a more liberal-leaning company such as Target is favored by Democrats.

“Consumers are keenly interested in how companies engage with the world, and that includes corporate ideals. As the red versus blue duel of politics impacts corporate reputation, we expect to see more alignment along party beliefs,” said Mark J. Penn, managing partner and president of The Stagwell Group LLC, which owns The Harris Poll.

NEW ACCOUNTS

New York Area

5W Public Relations has been named agency of record for interactive miniature world **Gulliver’s Gate**. The company is currently building an indoor interactive display in the center of Manhattan, which will feature more than 300 built-to-scale miniature models of buildings and landmarks from around the world. The \$40-million, 49,000-square-foot attraction, which is expected to draw over a million visitors annually, will open this May in Times Square.



BackBay Communications has been named agency of record for **Bluefin** payment systems, the leading provider of secure payment technology for retailers, enterprises and small to medium-sized businesses. Fintech specialist BackBay has already launched a campaign to raise awareness of Bluefin in both national and trade media.

Midwest

Tunheim has been named consumer PR agency of record for Twin-Cities-based Select Comfort Corp., creator of the **Sleep Number®** bed.

The agency search began last year and Tunheim came up with a winning solution that includes a team of experts to service the account from IPREX partners Crossroads, Eisbrenner, French | West | Vaughan, Hanser & Associates, Makovsky, and Walt & Company.



PEOPLE

Joined

Adam Pawluk to **JPA Health Communications** as senior VP. The 17-year veteran most recently was executive director of healthcare and creative for Golin in New York. Pawluk also did time at Ogilvy Public Relations and Ketchum in New York.



Adam Pawluk

Debora Pratali and Thiago Massari to **JeffreyGroup**, Latin American strategic communications agency, as group directors. Both will be stationed in the agency’s São Paulo office and report directly to managing director and market leader for Brazil, Rodrigo Pinotti.

Pratali comes over from FSB Comunicação, Brazil’s largest agency, where she was executive director for 14 years. Massari, digital communications specialist, ends a 12-year run at S2Publicom/Weber.

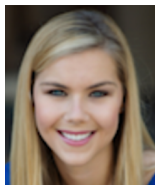


(L to R) Thiago Massari, Debora Pratali, and Rodrigo Pinotti.

Pratali comes over from FSB Comunicação, Brazil’s largest agency, where she was executive director for 14 years. Massari, digital communications specialist, ends a 12-year run at S2Publicom/Weber.

Promoted

Kelsey Dean to sr. A/E of **BoardroomPR**, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, where she focuses on real estate and is co-chair of the firm’s real estate practice group.



Kelsey Dean

TRUMP & MEDIA DESERVE EACH OTHER

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that reporters have long adhered to have been that unless someone agrees in advance that something is off-the-record, it's fair game to quote them with attribution.

Moreover, I'm guessing Bernstein wasn't seated next to Ratajkowski based on his personal merits, but solely because he's a reporter with the New York Times.

The idea that a representative from the newspaper of record was openly spreading unfounded rumors was definitely newsworthy.

And finally, there's Brian Stelter, CNN's media critic, who credits "investigative journalism" for being responsible for Michael Flynn's resignation from his national security adviser post.

I'm sorry, but when reporters break stories based on leaked confidential information from people with an agenda who wish to remain anonymous, that's carrier pigeon journalism, not investigative work.

And as someone who's leaked considerable information over the years, I can tell you with authority that when people choose to leak information to individual reporters, the selection is never based on perceived integrity and smarts, but rather who will give the information the biggest bang. Publishing leaked information should rarely be regarded as a badge of honor.

A growing narrative is that the media is on the cusp of uncovering a scandal of the magnitude of Watergate. Perhaps.

But there are even a few level-headed journalists in the mainstream media who acknowledge the media's reckless zeal and have taken note of the myriad errors and dubious stories that have appeared lately in the New York Times and *Washington Post* about Trump and Russia.

T.A. Frank, a writer for *Vanity Fair*, has counseled that "both outlets, and many others, must be treated with even more skepticism than usual."

I wouldn't bet against the mainstream media ultimately bringing down Donald Trump. But if the media achieves its goal, they are going down with him.

Of this I'm certain: The Trump Administration and the media deserve each other.

GOULD+PARTNERS CONDUCTS PR STUDY

Gould+Partners [2017 PR Benchmarking Survey](#) is now available. The goal is to collect financial stats stemming from many areas that are relevant to PR agency growth, profitability, operations and building value for the firm.

This is the 30th consecutive year that managing partner Rick Gould, CPA, J.D., has conducted this research for the PR industry.

Firms responding will receive the following survey reports four-to-six weeks prior to their official release this summer: best practices benchmarking report, billing rates & utilization report, industry growth report, and healthcare & perks policy report.

Deadline to reply is March 24.

PR OPINION

People should not be silent when they see something that is wrong, says Brooke Deterline, CEO of Courageous Leadership. PRSA chapter leaders need to go to her workshops on how to "act with ethical courage."

They are practically comatose after one indignity after another is dumped on them by the imperious national staff.

Deterline, a former journalist at *SmartMoney*, helps boards, executives and teams to "act with ethical courage to overcome complex social and business issues.

"Knowledge obligates you to do something—act heroically," says [Philip Zimbara](#), Stamford University, psychology professor.

Latest affront to the chapter leaders and their members is the announcement on the front page of the February *Tactics* that "We've moved."

It does not say, "Your h.q. has moved." The "We" in the *Tactics* headline signifies what the staff believes—that PRSA belongs to them. That's how they act. No details are yet available on the multi-million lease in offices far from midtown PR/ad, media firms, ad/marketing and PR groups. New York and other chapter leaders are afraid to ask for them.

The Society once before made a stealth move—in 2004 to 33 Maiden Lane. No one found out about that until the deal was closed and announced at the 2003 conference in New Orleans.

Muzzled Bystander Syndrome

Zimbara wears a shirt with the imprint, "HERO in Training."

One of the findings of his "Heroic Imagination Project" is "the bystander effect—the more people who are on a scene, the less likely it is for anyone to help."

In this case, 21,000 members are standing by in silence. That is the figure on the new PRSA website, down from 22,000.

In a shocker, the 21,000 includes 48 members of the staff when typically only 2-3 staffers were members. Included are all the top staffers such as CEO Joe Truncala, CFO Phil Bonaventura, controller Wai Cheung and VP-information technology Alex Ortiz who do not have traditional PR backgrounds.

Who Paid for PRSA Memberships for 48 Staffers?

Also on the site are 18 staffers with no titles and two administrative assistants. A question is who paid the \$255 dues and \$75 initiation fees of the 48 staffers? Companies and organizations typically pay "professional" dues of staffers. Only two of the 48 are APR—PR director Laurent Lawrence and Mindy Hughes. Whether any joined the New York chapter has yet to be determined.

The Society at one time required five years in PR positions for membership. Rules have been relaxed in recent years.

The public area of the new site is even less informative than the previous one. Only five staffers are listed whereas eight were previously shown. For many years, the Society listed the entire 40+ staffers by name, title, phone number and email.

— Jack O'Dwyer