



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

February 8, 2021 Vol. 54 No. 6

BAER JOINS BRUNSWICK GROUP

Former Burson-Marsteller CEO Don Baer has joined Brunswick Group as senior partner in Washington.

He led the WPP unit for six years and exited in 2020 as global chair of the revamped BCW firm.



Don Baer

Prior to B-M, Baer was senior executive VP for strategy and development at Discovery Communications, communications director/chief speechwriter in Bill Clinton's White House and senior journalist at US News & World Report.

Neal Wolin, Brunswick CEO, called Baer "one of the most experienced, strategic and creative practitioners in our industry," and a communicator who "understands deeply the pressures facing organizations today and is a trusted confidante to business leaders."

zations today and is a trusted confidante to business leaders."

HUAWEI TAPS WPP'S ADLAB FOR DIGITAL WORK

Huawei Technologies has hired WPP's ADLAB LLC digital marketing shop for a one-year campaign to bolster its image in the US. That company is the Plano, TX-based affiliate of the Chinese smartphone/telecom equipment maker that was sanctioned by the Trump administration.

Under the master services agreement, ADLAB stands ready to provide PR, issues counseling, crisis management, corporate positioning, consumer marketing solutions, merger and acquisitions communications, and government lobbying services, as specified under individual statement of work orders.

The one-year contract began Jan. 25 and is handled by ADLAB's Brian Breach and Nicolas Lawhead in the Portland, OR office. Lawhead leads client/agency communications, provides insight in the development of deliverables and handles project oversight and the edit of creative concepts, according to his federal filing.

The Trump administration barred Huawei from purchasing components from US companies without approval from Washington government officials.

Ruder Finn signed a \$1.4M contract with Huawei Technologies in November to provide communications services.

Racepoint Global also inked a one-year contract in November worth \$2.7M for Huawei Technologies for PR, marketing, events, video and social media work.



ST. PETE/CLEARWATER SEEKS TRAVEL PR

Florida's St. Petersburg/Clearwater region, the No. 1 travel destination on the Gulf Coast, attracting more than 15M visitors in 2019, is looking for a PR firm.

The Pinellas County Convention and Visitors Bureau oversees the promotion of world-class beaches and 24 communities, including St. Pete/Clearwater, which it bills as the "crown jewel of Florida's west coast."



The CVB wants a firm to increase awareness of the County in the US and Canada. The push will include outreach in high-value traditional and digital media outlets in markets in which the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area has not yet been featured," according to its request for letters of interest.

The CVB prefers a firm located in the New York City area to handle the five-year PR push.

It will develop targeted pitches, press releases, newsworthy trend stories and creative angles to gain media attention and put St. Pete/Clearwater in the spotlight.

The PR partner will arrange 12 media trips, organize two media missions to targeted markets (New York, Chicago, and Boston), arrange one-on-one media appointments for CVB staffers in Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia and other cities, and coordinate trade show participation.

Letters of interest are due Feb. 23 by 3 p.m. They must be submitted to the Pinellas ePro procurement website at www.ebids.pinellas.gov.

Click [here](#) for Request for Letters of Interest.

IBM NAMES NEW CMO

IBM has named Carla Piñeyro Sublett senior vice president and chief marketing officer.

She succeeds Michelle Peluso, who left Big Blue in January to join retail pharmacy giant CVS Health as chief customer officer, a new position.

Sublett joins IBM from National Instruments, where she was executive vice president, CMO and general manager of that company's portfolio business. Prior to that, she served as CMO of cloud company Rackspace. She previously spent 16 years at Dell.



Carla Piñeyro Sublett

Sublett will oversee all of IBM's global marketing, brand initiatives and client feedback. Her team will include marketing professionals located in dozens of countries.

GAGNIER COMMS HAS 'CURE' FOR EXXON

Gagnier Communications is handing the Coalition United for a Responsible Exxon, which is disappointed with the oil giant's financial performance (e.g., \$20B Q4 loss),



poor capital allocation decisions and failure to capitalize on business opportunities tied to the clean energy transition, according to its Feb. 2 letter to ExxonMobil's board.

The Coalition of 135 members represents \$2.2T in assets. It includes the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Merck Family Fund, US Trust, Wallace Global Fund, Sisters of Bon Secours USA, Majority Action, Sierra Club Foundation, Arjuna Capital, Nathan Cummings Foundation and Fulcrum Asset Management.

CURE raps Exxon's investments in upstream projects that are based on unrealistic expectations of future oil and gas prices and demand.

It criticizes the company's "current myopic and entrenched board and leadership team" that has failed to stem its corporate decline over the last decade and calls for "refreshed leadership and a new vision for Exxon."

Gagnier Communications' Dan Gagnier and Jeffrey Matthews handle the CURE.

EX-PHILLY MAYOR NUTTER STARTS PA SHOP

Former Philadelphia mayor Michael Nutter has launched [40 North Advocacy, LLC](#) with his former aides Michael Berman and Kevin Kinross.



Michael Nutter

The PA shop is targeting corporate and nonprofit clients dealing with policy issues at the state and local levels.

Nutter served as mayor of the City of Brotherly Love from 2008-2016. Kinross ran his 2011 campaign, while Berman worked with then-councilman Nutter on the push to make the city smoke-free.

The trio worked on Mike Bloomberg's presidential campaign in which Nutter was national political chair.

Based in Philadelphia, 40 North Advocacy debuts with Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities, Protect Our Care and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids as charter clients.

EVINS REBRANDS SCHALLER & WEBER

EVINS rebrands Schaller & Weber, a purveyor of traditional German sausages and cuts. The agency will be responsible for developing the outreach strategy for the rebrand, as well as conducting all outward-facing communications efforts relating to the new packaging and brand identity being introduced.

Founded in 1937, Schaller & Weber sells its products from a store in Manhattan's Yorkville neighborhood, as well as online.



NOVELLI SHOWS WAY TO DO 'GOOD BUSINESS'

There's probably no one more qualified to talk about how properly executed messaging can make a difference in the world than Bill Novelli.

When he and Jack Porter started up Porter Novelli, one of the first social marketing companies, in 1972, Novelli had basically made the switch from marketing products to promoting behavior and social policy. A veteran of Unilever, the Peace Corps and the November Group (the advertising arm of Richard Nixon's re-election campaign), he had already set the template for the career that followed.

The story of that career is just one of the plot threads of Novelli's "Good Business: The Talk, Fight, Win Way to Change the World." By taking us through the many twists and turns of his professional life, Novelli also gives us an object lesson in how the rules of good marketing can be as easily applied to an anti-tobacco campaign or drive to improve health care as they can be to household products.

"Doing good by doing well" stands as the central principle of "Good Business." While making a positive contribution to society is job number-one for social marketing, Novelli never forgets the second word of that term. For him, the principles of persuasion, of maintaining relationships and creating value don't lose their importance even when the profit motive is taken out of the equation.

Novelli's advice on how to negotiate a room full of professional politicians makes worthwhile reading for any communicator who has to deal with getting messages across to a diverse group of stakeholders. One of his primary recommendations is to always keep the lines of communication open.

But communicating does not always mean agreeing. A primary strategy that Novelli says he used during his years of trying to sell his ideas in Washington is to "talk and fight."

In the fight to help shore up the future of Social Security, which he worked on while at the AARP, Novelli had to use all of the tools and strategies in his marketing arsenal, and he clearly and entertainingly goes through them here.

The last chapters of the book go into how Novelli is passing on his knowledge to the next generation through the Business for Impact center at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business.

And what he is selling to his students at Georgetown goes right to the heart of the whole idea of this book. He teaches them the value of social marketing and the principles that should be employed when practicing it.

Under the header "Advice to the Next Generation," Novelli sets out what he says are the three overriding rules he's learned over the course of his career: aim high and strive hard ("We can all be better and achieve far more than we think"); be ethical ("This sounds painfully obvious and commonplace. It is, but it's also hard to do.") and always balance personal responsibility with working for causes bigger than yourself.

At a time when social responsibility often seems like little more than the biggest catch-phrase of them all, Novelli gives the readers a guide to making it both an idealistic, and a practical, way to do business. "Good Business" shows how to make a career in communications both a way of making a living, and of making the world a better place.



OPINION AND BELIEF VS. FACTS AND TRUTH

We've all experienced the feeling. Our hopes get raised and then... splat. No payoff. No satisfaction.

I got excited when I saw the title of Adam Grant's recent [article](#), "The Science of Reasoning With Unreasonable People," published in the *New York Times*. Could "motivational interviewing" help win over people who choose beliefs, faith and opinions over facts? What wonderful news! We need a breakthrough when it comes to persuading people to accept the facts around a host of science-based issues including climate change and vaccine safety.



Paul Oestreicher

Alas, it was not to be. In one example detailed in the article, an intensive effort managed to get an anti-vaxxer from negative to, well, a tiny bit less negative. At the end of his piece, there was a tinge of resignation. Grant wrote, "All I can do is try to understand their thinking and ask if they're open to some rethinking. The rest is up to them."

All I can do? There has to be more, right?

It turns out that motivational interviewing might have a limited role in addressing the vaccine hesitancy of some new mothers. A [study](#) cited in the article demonstrated a seven percent (statistically significant) increase in vaccination coverage in a subset of infants. While a good outcome, the authors recognized a number of study design limitations. And in actual practice, there's a huge amount of ground to gain.

The chasm between hard data and belief exists because facts don't matter to a big chunk of the population. We've known this for years. If facts were all it took, we'd be done: People wouldn't smoke cigarettes, abuse drugs, be racist, or refuse to wear motorcycle or bicycle helmets.

So, it's clear that information and insight by themselves don't produce change. It's the desire to change and seeing the value in change that drives us forward.

One desire killer is inertia. We've heard the excuse: "That's the way we've always done things." There may be no consequences: "Who's going to notice, who's going to care?" We may feel powerless: "I don't have the resources, I don't have the access."

A second drag on change is simple ignorance.

Dr. Marijn Dekkers, former CEO of Bayer and former chairman of Unilever, pointed out at a financial conference several years back, "Even the most outstanding ideas and scientific breakthroughs have no chance if people do not accept, appreciate and support them. All too often, people are afraid of—or uneasy about—new ideas, inventions, processes or products." Dropping information—even crucial or compelling data—onto the heads of an unprepared public, or expecting a response to another "call to action," is unproductive and unrealistic.

We're in this situation partly because our science literacy is abysmal. The United States ranks 18th out of 78 countries, according to the most [recent analysis](#) by the National Center for Education Statistics. China, Estonia, Japan, Korea, Canada, Poland, Slovenia, UK, Netherlands, and Germany are among those ahead of us.

And it's an even bigger issue than the public health or economic competitiveness. Poor science literacy can eat at the core of our democracy. Professor Jon D. Miller (now at the

University of Michigan) told the *New York Times* in 2005 that "...people's inability to understand basic scientific concepts undermines their ability to take part in the democratic process." He continued that for so many issues affecting society, "if you don't know a little science [it's] hard to follow these debates. A lot of journalism [will] not make sense to you."

It's not a problem that can be addressed by a one-year budget cycle or even a five or ten-year plan. It will take a generational blueprint that needs to be comprehensive, coordinated, and well capitalized in order to see a return on the investment. Let's get started.

Paul Oestreicher, PhD is a recognized expert in strategic communication, 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.

NEVADA TURNS ON \$3M WATER PR SEARCH

Southern Nevada Water Authority is looking for a firm to provide communications, marketing and public outreach services to educate residents/businesses about conservation and water quality programs.

Budget for the campaign is capped at \$3M annually.

The selected firm will help guide SNWA's mission to manage resources and develop solutions to ensure high-quality water and adequate future supplies for the Las Vegas Valley, while managing progressive conservation efforts.

It will develop an integrated marketing campaign, provide brand planning and project management activities and implement robust media strategies and advertising buys.

The one-year contract kicks off July 1. There are two one-year renewal options.

Responses are due Feb. 18. They go to the Las Vegas Valley Water District's Bonfire hub portal at <https://lvvwd.bonfirehub.com/opportunities>.

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



EDELMAN'S SCANNELL SHIFTS TO PROSEK

Joe Scannell, who built and led a digital communications team at Edelman, has joined Prosek Partners as senior VP and head of digital communications.

Scannell had been at Edelman since 2013 and was a senior VP within the firm's digital communications practice.

Before that, he was a commissioned officer in the United States Navy Reserve, serving as a public affairs officer in the Navy's public affairs headquarters.

In his new post, Scannell will advise Prosek's client base on strategic digital communications, including corporate brand marketing, executive positioning and reputation management.

"Joe's deep experience in both financial services and digital is a rare mix and will be extremely valuable to the firm and our clients," said Prosek Partner founder and managing partner Jennifer Prosek.



Joe Scannell

SMITHFIELD'S SUSTAINABILITY PR KNOCKED

A coalition of advocacy groups charges Smithfield Foods, the world's No. 1 pork producer, routinely makes false and misleading claims about the sustainability of its products and environmental record.



In its Feb. 4 Federal Trade Commission filing, the Food & Water Watch-led coalition charges that Smithfield's use of anaerobic

digesters to transform pig manure, which is captured from barns as it falls through slated floors into temporary concrete storage bins, into biogas is just an attempt at greenwashing.

Smithfield puts its manure-to-energy program at the centerpiece of its plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2025.

"Instead of actually cleaning up its act, Smithfield is investing in slick tag lines and false solutions like factory farm anaerobic digesters to dupe consumers," Tyler Lobdell, Food & Water Watch attorney, said in a statement.

The complaint also knocks Smithfield's claims of running an "industry-leading sustainability program" and being close to achieving an environmental goal of "100% compliance, 100% of the time." It asks the FTC to investigate and take enforcement action against Smithfield by requiring it to drop misleading claims, and refrain from making similar misrepresentations in the future.

"This letter, from groups that repeatedly attack agricultural companies and farmers, contains false allegations and is without merit," said Keira Lombardo, Smithfield's chief administrative officer.

Besides F&WW, the coalition includes Cape Fear River Watch, Pennsylvania Farmers Union, Socially Responsible Agriculture Project, Dakota Rural Action, Family Farm Action Alliance, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement.

China's WH Group bought Smithfield Farms for \$5B in 2013.

PEEKSKILL, NY NEEDS COMMS SUPPORT

The City of Peekskill, New York seeks proposals from agencies that can provide communications services and serve as a communications consultant for the 2021 calendar year.

Scope of work includes drafting press releases for review and distribution; coordinating media coverage as well as coordinating city communications efforts among external agencies; updating Peekskill's website; coordinating weekly email blasts, as well as communications across Twitter, Instagram and other platforms; developing and maintaining a calendar of communications tasks; and evaluating the communication needs for various city departments and proposing communications improvements.



Proposals are due by 11:00 a.m. (EST) on February 15. Submissions should be submitted electronically (in PDF format) with the subject line "Response to RFP Peekskill Communications Consultant" to city clerk Debra Petrosky, dpetrosky@cityofpeekskill.com.

Questions should be directed to city manager Andy Stewart, astewart@cityofpeekskill.com.

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

NEWS OF FIRMS

Purpose Worldwide, an "accountable marketing and communications consultancy," has officially set up shop. Originally slated to launch at SXSW 2020, the firm, founded by former Blast PR principal Lana McGilvray, Xcelero chief marketing officer Julie Ginches and Blast account supervisor Cassidy Nordeen, now plans to launch on Feb. 16. The agency says it is aimed at helping clients connect their purpose to their growth.



Purpose Worldwide

WORKSHOP Washington, a public affairs and communications services initiative, is started up by Winston Agency managing director Bess Winston and Metro Strategies principal Maurice Daniel. The venture is designed to support organizations with small or inexperienced in-house teams, provide clients with quick access to senior counsel, or help clients with limited resources who are unable to enter into long-term commitments with traditional agencies. WORKSHOP's sessions match clients with up to three senior specialists with the relevant functional expertise and issue or industry background.

Hotwire launches its Ignite Possibility Program, an initiative that will commit up to \$1 million in services to support tech and tech-enabled organizations led by or supporting minority communities. Any tech or tech-enabled organization that is either minority-led or providing a product or service benefitting minority communities in a country with a Hotwire office may qualify.

ROKK Solutions and research firm **Engagious** are joining forces to offer a combination of communications and research capabilities aimed at helping organizations win their public policy campaigns. The strategic partnership will allow the two firms to co-market each other's communications and message testing services and present an expanded suite of capabilities to current and potential clients.

McNees Wallace & Nurick, a Harrisburg, PA law firm, has launched **Apollo Communications**, which specializes in building and enhancing brands and reputations, crisis and issue management, media relations and content marketing. The agency is led by Brett Marcy, who was most recently senior director of public relations and communications for WellSpan Health. He has also served as communications director for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, an associate vice president at Tierney Communications and a reporter for several news organizations in Pennsylvania.



Brett Marcy

The Public Relations Student Society of America has joined with **Finn Partners** to create a dedicated mentorship program for PRSSA members from historically Black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions. "Partners for Diversity: The Internship Preview" pairs 50 students of diverse backgrounds with professional mentors that can provide guidance as they start their careers. Participating students will also have the opportunity to apply for future internship opportunities. A resume, brief cover letter and PRSSA adviser reference are required as part of the application process. Students will be selected by a panel of Finn Partners' professionals. For more information, [click here](#).

TEAM BIDEN'S RIDDER MOVES TO PRECISION

Jenn Ridder, who was national states director of Biden for President, has joined Precision Strategies to lead its mobilization & campaign management practice.



Jenn Ridder

During the campaign, Ridder led a team of 3,000 staffers in 32 “battle-ground” and “expansion” states and oversaw a \$120M budget. That push led to a record vote for Biden/Harris amid a political environment challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to joining Team Biden, Ridder was campaign manager for the Democratic presidential primary run by then-Montana governor Steve Bullock.

In 2018, she handled the successful campaign of Jared Polis for Colorado governor.

At Precision, Ridder will provide clients with organizing, data targeting, political strategy and movement-building expertise.

Jen O'Malley Dillon, who ran Biden's campaign, is a co-founder of Precision. She moved to the White House as deputy chief of staff.

MICHIGAN GROUP SEEKS ANTI-GAMBLING PR

Community Mental Health Partnership of Southeast Michigan is looking for a PR firm to handle a gambling disorder prevention media campaign. The push aims at gambling behaviors that “compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits,” according to the RFP.

Those behaviors include “increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, ‘chasing’ losses, and loss of control manifested by continuation of gambling despite mounting, serious, negative consequences.”

CMHPSM and the regional gambling disorder prevention workgroup will provide marketing materials for the media campaign that will target youth and parents.

The five-month campaign will kick off April 1 and be budgeted at \$75K. Proposals are due Feb. 15 and must be submitted at www.cmhpsm.org/procurement.

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

SVC, FTI HANDLE 23ANDME SPAC DEAL

[Sard Verbinnen & Co.](#) and [FTI Consulting](#) are handling 23andMe's merger with Richard Branson's VG Acquisition, special purpose acquisition company, in a deal that will take the genetics/research firm public during the second quarter.

23andMe helped pioneer the direct-to-consumer genetic testing market. More than 80 percent of consumers have opted to participate in research to create a database to analyze data and discover new genetic insights.

“As a fellow industry disruptor as well as early investor in 23andMe, we are thrilled to partner with Sir Richard Branson and VG Acquisition Corp.,” said Anne Wojcicki, CEO and co-founder of 23andMe.

Sard Verbinnen's Paul Kranhold, John Christiansen and Chris Kittredge represent 23andMe.

FTI Consulting's Antonia Gray, Grace Altman, Charles Palmer handle VG Acquisition Corp.



MARYLAND WANTS OPIOID OUTREACH HELP

Maryland's Dept. of Health is looking for a firm to bolster its outreach to healthcare providers to improve the prescribing/dispensing of opioids to prevent morbidity and deaths. The selected firm will review and update the Office of Provider Engagement and Regulation's strategic communications plan.



That outreach covers behavior change goals related to opioids; controlled substance prescribing/dispensing and overdose prevention; identified messaging framing that is most persuasive to target audiences; creative strategy to guide educational materials development and recommended metrics, according to the RFP.

OPER wants a firm with experience in developing public health-related experience, possessing the ability to translate complicated medical research into plain language, and creating materials that are clinically relevant and actionable.

Minority-owned businesses are encouraged to respond to the RFP. Responses are due Feb. 19 and go to Anna Gribble at anna.gibble@maryland.gov.

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

FEROX ADDS ARGENTINA, ECUADOR

Ferox Strategies has signed on to provide government relations and public policy services to Argentina and Ecuador as a subcontractor to Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer law firm.

The DC firm will receive a flat fee of \$110K for its services, covering the period from Jan. 19 through May 31.

Cristina Antelo launched Ferox in 2017 after an eight-year stint at Podesta. She is a founding member and former president of the Hispanic Lobbyists Assn., ex-interim CEO of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute and a legal fellow with the Senate Democratic Steering Committee, when it was chaired by Sens. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Tom Daschle (D-SD).



MEDIA MANEUVERS

The Philadelphia Inquirer is the latest news outlet to shut down comments on most of its stories, following similar decisions by platforms including NPR, *The Atlantic* and NJ.com. The only content exempt are the Inquirer's sports stories and Inquirer Live events. Readers will still be able to comment through letters to the editor and social media.

The New European, a British pro-EU newspaper that started up in 2016, has been purchased by its management and investors. The buyers include Mark Thompson, the former BBC director-general and chief executive of the *New York Times* and Lionel Barber, former editor of the *Financial Times*. Launched as a “pop-up,” the New European was expected to have a print run of a few weeks. It is still publishing, with a weekly print and online circulation estimated at 20,000.

Microsoft is offering to fill in the digital gap that would be created in Australia if Google pulls its search engine there, a Reuters report says. Australia has introduced laws that would force Google and Facebook to negotiate payments to domestic media outlets whose content links drive traffic to their platforms. Australian prime minister Scott Morrison said that Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella told him the company was ready to grow the presence of its search tool Bing, the distant No. 2 player, to make up for any loss of Google's services.

COMMENTARY



Hail, hail the gang's all here.

Fox Corp., Fox News Network, Lou Dobbs, Maria Bartiromo, Jeanine Pirro, Rudy Giuliani and Sidney Powell are named defendants in Smartmatic's \$2.7B defamation and disparagement lawsuit.

The 276-page complaint is a good read.

Smartmatic alleges that the defendants cooked up a story about a rigged presidential election. But they needed a villain to make it fly, so they concocted a tale in which Smartmatic's election software rigged voting machines to swing the election to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

Millions of Fox watchers swallowed the stolen election lie. Smartmatic officers got death threats, while clients panicked.

"The company's reputation for providing transparent, auditable, and secure election technology and software was irreparably harmed," according to the complaint.

The fake news push did more than just jeopardize the future of a company.

"The story turned neighbor against neighbor. The story led a mob to attack the U.S. Capitol.

"Defendants started a fire for selfish and financial reasons and they cared not the damage their story caused to Smartmatic, its officers and employees, and the country," says Smartmatic.

It will take the country a long time to put out that fire.

Fox News provided a statement, saying it is proud of its 2020 election coverage and "will vigorously defend against this meritless lawsuit in court."

It claims to be "committed to providing the full context of every story with in-depth reporting and clear opinion."

Fox Business canceled "Lou Dobbs Tonight," one of its top shows, on Feb. 5, a day after the filing of the lawsuit.

Fox News Media says Dobbs' exit is part of an earlier plan to change programming.

Let's hope for the better.

Trump's grand entry into the political arena "greatly helped the cable news television business" and "created thousands of jobs," according to his Feb. 4 letter of resignation from SAG-AFTRA.

The letter follows a recommendation from SAG-AFTRA's disciplinary committee to boot him from the membership ranks for inciting the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and "sustaining a reckless campaign of misinformation aimed at discrediting and ultimately threatening the safety of journalists."

Trump's response to the recommendation: "Who cares!"

And then, of course, Trump hit back at the union.

He dismisses the disciplinary move as nothing more than a publicity stunt, "a blatant attempt at free media attention to distract from your dismal record as a union."

The master of distraction knows what he is talking about when it comes to shifting the focus from a dismal record.

America's democracy just barely survived four years of distractions from the White House.

The sky's the limit for the *New York Times*, according to CEO Meredith Kopit Levien, who has targeted the world's 100M people willing to pay for online news in English. That's 10 percent of the 1B global digital news readers.

Kopit Levien sees an opportunity to increase the NYT's 6.7M digital subscriber base three or four-fold "over time."

She is getting a little ahead of herself. Her bullishness comes as the New York Times Co. reported flat Q4 revenues of \$509.4M and 3.3 percent uptick in operating profit to \$80.5M. Net income plummeted 84.3M to \$10.8M.

The NYT did scoop up 627K new digital subscribers during Q4, but 202K of them were for cooking, games and audio products.

Conservatives like to rail against "cancel culture" but the idea of withholding support for companies and public figures after they've done something deemed objectionable does have its fans.

More than one-third (34 percent) of Americans say cancel culture is good for society, according to a survey by Porter Novelli. That easily tops the 20 percent who say cancel culture is bad. Three-in ten believe cancel culture is effective, but overused.

PN's "Business of Cancel Culture Study" puts a positive spin on cancel culture, concluding that cancellation is not the end but the beginning of creating a positive public discourse.

SEC does ESG... Securities and Exchange Commission has named Satyam Khanna its first senior policy advisor on environmental, social and governance matters. His job is to advance ESG initiatives.

Khanna will coordinate efforts related to climate risk and other ESG developments, issues of great significance to investors and capital markets, said acting chair Allison Herren Lee in announcing the Feb. 1 appointment.

Most recently, Khanna was a resident fellow at NYU School of Law's Institute for corporate governance and finance. He also was a counsel to SEC commissioner Robert Jackson.

Ceres, the nonprofit that advances sustainability issues at companies and in the capital markets, applauded Khanna's appointment.

His hiring to the newly created position is "a critical step forward on the path to mandating climate risk disclosure and addressing climate change as a systemic financial risk," said Steven Rothstein, managing director of the Ceres Accelerator for Sustainable Capital Markets.

"Chief diversity officer" ranks among the top of executive hires in 2020, according to a survey by LinkedIn. Unlike other top titles like "chief revenue officer" and "chief growth officer," the diversity post has nothing to do with bread-and-butter issues.

The role of a CDO is to make sure a company's workforce is representative of America. Let's hope their success eliminates the need for the CDO job. CDO can follow the footsteps of chief digital officers, which was a hot job more than a decade ago.

—Kevin McCauley