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MA STEERS \$600K TO TRAFFIC SAFETY PITCHES

Massachusetts has allocated \$600K for two outreach campaigns to educate people about state motor vehicle driving laws and best safety practices.



It expects a successful communications push will reduce fatalities, injuries and economic losses resulting from vehicle crashes on the state's highways.

Campaign topics could include seat belt use, distracted driving, pedestrian/bicyclist safety, impaired

driving, speeding and aggressive motoring.

Massachusetts wants one PSA to run from June through September about pedestrian/bicyclist safety, police enforcement of traffic laws and the new safe passing law with an emphasis on the Greater Boston area.

It wants another PSA to support the "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" effort aimed at drivers under 34 years of age living in Bristol, Hampden, Middlesex and Worcester counties.

Responses are due Feb. 9. They go to the state's COMMBUYS electronic portal.

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

SHOPIFY'S FENG JOINS EDELMAN SMITHFIELD

Amy Feng, who headed investor relations at Shopify, has joined Edelman Smithfield financial communications advisory as executive VP and senior leader in New York.

She also worked at financial PR powerhouses Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher as managing director and Abernathy McGregor as executive VP.

Earlier, Feng did stints at JMP Securities and Lehman Brothers.

Edelman Smithfield, which has more than 250 advisors, also added Citigroup's Marco Castellani to boost its shareholder activism capabilities.



Amy Feng, Marco Castellani

He was a director in the bank's shareholder advisory group, focusing on shareholder activism defense and contested M&A.

Castellani was at Boston Consulting Group, handling corporate development, strategy, and turnarounds.

PUBLICIS SETTLES OPIOID CLAIMS FOR \$350M

Publicis Health has agreed to shell out \$350M to settle claims that its predatory and deceptive marketing for Purdue Pharma designed to increase sales of OxyContin helped fuel the opioid crisis, according to New York attorney general Letitia James. Her office co-lead a coalition of 50 state attorneys general.

The French healthcare firm created ads, brochures and pamphlets that promoted OxyContin as safe and unable to be abused.

It implemented McKinsey & Co.'s "Evolve to Excellence" campaign that targeted doctors who prescribed the most OxyContin and flooded them with sales calls and marketing that touted the "abuse-deterrent" aspects of OxyContin and the so-called benefits of increasing dosages.

The aggressive marketing resulted in a rise in opioid prescriptions nationwide, which led to abuse, addiction and overdose deaths.

Publicis, which also handled Purdue's Butrans and Hysingla opioid, is required to pay the \$350M within 60 days and refrain from accepting future opioid marketing or sales work.

For its part, Publicis Groupe said that its opioid efforts were carried out by its Rosetta ad agency that was shuttered ten years ago.



GPP'S LIPIN REPS ROWAN'S MOVES AT PENN

[Gladstone Place Partners](#) chief Steve Lipin personally handles PR for Marc Rowan, CEO of Apollo Management Group private equity firm, in his campaign to mold the direction of the University of Pennsylvania.

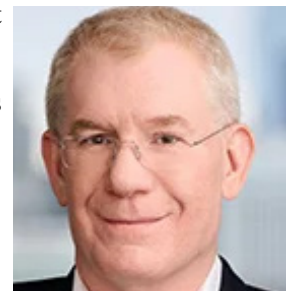
Rowan, a Penn alumnus and benefactor of the school, played a key role in the effort to oust Penn president Elizabeth Magill, who stepped down in December.

He sent an email to Penn trustees that critics say is a road map that leads to a more conservative university. Penn professors staged a protest against Rowan's plan.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* gave Rowan's email major play by publishing the complete document.

Lipin said Rowan is just raising questions about Penn's future, but it is up to the trustees and faculty to determine the best course of action for the school.

Gladstone Place does PR for Apollo.



Steve Lipin

NIDES TAKES BLACKSTONE VICE CHAIR POST

Tom Nides, who did a short stint as CEO of Burson-Marsteller, has joined Blackstone as vice chairman for strategy and client relations.



Tom Nides

Howard Paster, who led WPP's PR division after serving as CEO of Hill & Knowlton, recruited Nides in 2004 from Credit Suisse, where he was chief administrative officer.

Paster had been chief lobbyist for President Clinton and COO of Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign.

After eight months at B-M, Nides went to Morgan Stanley as COO and advisor to CEO James Gorman.

He then exited the investment banker to become Hillary Clinton's deputy at the State Dept. Nides returned to Morgan Stanley in 2013 as managing director and vice chairman.

President Biden appointed Nides as ambassador to Israel, a post that he held from 2021 to 2023.

At Blackstone, Nides will work on special projects and global client relationships.

FL SEEKS PARTNER FOR HIV MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Florida's Department of Health is requesting proposals for the design, development and implementation of a statewide HIV prevention media campaign aimed at minority markets.

The English and Spanish language effort should prioritize HIV prevention but also address prevention of hepatitis, STDs and other conditions affecting populations at risk of contracting HIV.



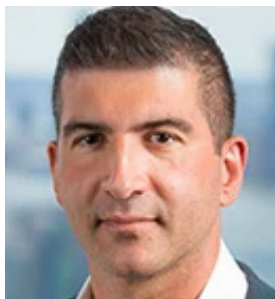
The Department requires that its communications partner have an account executive stationed in Tallahassee. It plans to issue a three-year contract.

Responses are due Feb. 14. They go to: Florida Department of Health; Central Purchasing Office; Attention: Voncelia Meeks; Suite 310; 4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin B07; Tallahassee, FL 32399-1749
[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

BCG'S SIMON TO LEAD BELIEVECO PARTNERS

Mario Simon, managing partner and director at Boston Consulting Group, will take the helm of Toronto's Believeco: Partners, which has more than 300 staffers in ten North American offices, on Feb. 20.

Based in New York, he will take over for acting CEO Arlene Dickinson, who will retain the executive chair spot.



Mario Simon

For the past seven years, Simon was BCG's global topic leader for brand strategy and development. He counseled consumer products, financial services, energy and healthcare clients.

Dickinson praised Simon's knowledge of the challenges facing businesses today and his "ability to solve complexity and deliver results for clients."

Believeco is the parent company of Argyle corporate communications shop that was founded by journalist Ray Argyle in 1979.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Colangelo & Partners is named PR agency of record for the **Washington State Wine Commission**. The agency will support the commission's mission to grow Washington State wine through marketing, communications, and viticulture and enology research. In tandem with WSWC, Colangelo & Partners will work on key initiatives and consumer events, including Taste Washington, the nation's largest single-region wine and food festival; and Road Trip Washington Wine, an experiential wine trip. The WSWC is launching a new five-year strategic plan in 2024.



Hopscotch USA, the US-based hub of Hopscotch Global PR Group, which provides digital, event management, influence, public relations and marketing services, signs on as exclusive PR representative for **Wamba Technologies**, an Esports company that holds the exclusive patent for in-game wagering on skill-based online video games. Hopscotch USA to will work to establish the profiles of the brand and company founder Gary Denham.

Trust Relations is selected by MunchPak, an international snack box provider, as its agency of record. MunchPak initially partnered with the agency for a short-term media relations campaign, and has now expanded the partnership to include an affiliate marketing-driven PR campaign and an influencer relations program. The efforts will focus on elevating awareness of the company's unique subscription snack boxes. "We hired Trust Relations because of the agency's nimble structure and solid media relationships with key reporters in the food and beverage industry," said Munch Pak co-owner Alina Joseph.

Bubble Agency picks up **GlobalM**, a software-defined video network provider. Following on from an initial six-month project, Bubble Agency will work with GlobalM to provide such services as an industry-specific thought leadership initiative, an awards program and media relationship management. The agency's marketing team will plan and deliver campaigns tailored to technical and commercial targets within news, sports, and entertainment organizations. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, GlobalM offers IP delivery services to broadcasters, content owners and operators.



Trinity Brand Group is selected by **Founders Brewing Company** as agency of record for all omnichannel marketing efforts. In 2023, Founders, the lead US brewery in Spain's Mahou San Miguel's holdings, partnered with Trinity to build a brand strategy platform for its flagship brand All Day. The agency will continue to build out communications and omnichannel strategies and build out the Founders-wide portfolio architecture, executing consumer and trade marketing campaigns across digital and social.

Fastlane, which works with clients in sectors including retail, tech, sports and health, is named marketing agency of record for **KEH**, a purchaser and reseller of pre-owned camera gear. The agency will work to expand KEH's brand and further promote its story through its leadership, employees, partners and community of consumers and creatives.

DATA TELLS THE CRISIS STORY

What's the secret to managing a reputational crisis? Having great instincts, communication skills and the ability to see around corners can help. Increasingly, however, it's also knowing how to harness the power of data and insights.

For CEOs, CMOs, CCOs and General Counsels who are on the spot when something goes wrong, data can be a critical instrument. Data informs and inspires confidence in decision-making and reassures executives with hard-to-budge points of view. It can reinforce a gut instinct, or push back against assumptions, leading to a different, better strategy.



Kendall Fitter, Deirdre Walsh

Here's how data, analysis and actionable insights can be integrated into the three phases of crisis communications.

Phase 1: before the crisis

Creating a data-informed preparedness plan starts with monitoring the brand, its issues and stakeholder opinion. Who's talking on X (formerly Twitter)? What's the context? How much engagement does that news outlet get online?

Common themes and insights will emerge, creating robust benchmarks that can inform decision-making and provide needed context when an issue arises. In addition, identifying the influential voices in the brand's space and building proactive relationships with them allows for faster outreach and a greater chance of being heard.

That covers some of the basics: The data sources public relations experts and marketers think about every day. But there are more. This is also the best time to identify alternative data sources. Take a look at all the inputs, from call center reports to website product reviews. Understanding what's happening in these channels can help gauge the situation on the ground and lead to a more strategic response.

Also useful is pulling data that reveals how others have managed crises, for better or worse. Analyzing what's available publicly about a peer's or competitor's recent crisis provides important intel into understanding tactics that worked—messages, spokespeople, content formats—and how key constituencies responded and organized.

Use these takeaways from across information sources to build scenarios and pre-determine decision points and when to escalate response.

Finally, use this phase to build consensus internally that data is important and the communications team is prepared to use it to provide counsel.

Phase 2: in the midst of a crisis

As a crisis unfolds, providing clear, understandable and actionable insights is key. The challenges to this seemingly simple task are myriad: The data comes too fast and is unstructured, facts shift, internal expectations for updates come too often, and more. Answering these needs often requires different "sizes" of monitoring, analysis and reporting.

At the high level, real-time dashboards provide the ability to visually inspect data and detect general trends: changes in

When is the best time to turn to data and insights in a crisis? All the time. This means creating a plan in advance that's rooted in data that can be rolled out quickly, drawing on data in real-time as a crisis unfolds and using data to inform future situations.

conversation volume, top themes and most influential voices. These can be helpful in the hands of a seasoned team that has experience with the specific issue or crisis communications in general and understands the context and general lifecycle of issue management.

While dashboards can help keep the pressure for real-time data in check, detailed analysis by an experienced insights team is critical. Often, online engagement consists of sharing headlines without going much deeper. An assessment of the level and tone of the original commentary, and if speculation and misinformation are being spread, can be stronger signals of the public's true investment in an issue.

As the data unfolds, the next step is to evaluate the best ways to respond, whether prioritizing media outreach or suggesting the best channels or influencers on social media. In crisis, go to where your audience is getting information and the conversation is happening. What's most important is to identify how and where to best reach your audience.

Phase 3: post-crisis

Often, new data emerges during the post-crisis phase, so it's important to continue monitoring, evaluating and reporting. This has the side benefit, too, of helping to reassure executives that their CMO or CCO is still mindful and on top of the issue. The vehicle for ongoing reporting is an impact report that evaluates the crisis.

Another tactic is a tracking poll, which allows regular check-ins on brand reputation as it relates to key issues like quality, safety and customer experience.

Finally, a data-driven crisis or reputation management plan needs to be a living, breathing document. Don't put it on a shelf; update it continuously with fresh insights.

Refreshing the data and reexamining the plan regularly is also a way to get continued buy-in from stakeholders who aren't in marketing or communications. And it ensures that the next time a crisis hits, everyone's ready.

Maura Farrell is a Parter at [Avocq](#). Patrick Kerley is Executive Vice President & Head of Insights & Planning at [Avocq](#).

HERNDON (VA) LOOKS FOR BRAND STRATEGY

Herndon, which is located in Virginia's Fairfax County and sits 23 miles west of DC, wants proposals for the development of a strategic brand and recommendations for conducting a sustainable marketing campaign.

The objective "is to identify a clear, strong brand identity that represents the varied attributes of the town," according to the RFP.

Herndon has a population of 25K people, of which 37 percent are Hispanic and 16 percent are of Asian descent.

Herndon is looking for a brand that reflects its diversity and corresponds to the town's tagline, "Out of Many Communities, One."

The selected firm will recommend a marketing strategy that identifies short- and longer-term strategies and tactics for maximizing the brand's value to the town.

Components of the strategy will include printed collateral, social media marketing, online/print advertising, website design, public relations, special events.

Proposals are due Feb. 14. Send them to: Town of Herndon; Purchasing Department; 777 Lynn Street; Herndon, VA 20170.

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



WAYNE STATE SEEKS PR FOR LEVIN CENTER

Wayne State University wants proposals to promote its Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy.



Named after the 36-year Democratic Senator from Michigan, the Center works with legislative bodies to ensure the effective operation of government. It also educates the public about the duty of public officials to conduct fact-based inquiries, and uphold the norms that are essential to maintaining the democratic system.

The Center is headquartered at Wayne State Law School in Detroit with offices in New York and Washington.

The selected PR firm will help the Center sharpen its messaging, while staying balanced and bipartisan; handle media outreach; stress its position as an established voice on legislative oversight and accountability; and devise a fund-raising campaign leading up to the Center's 10th anniversary in spring 2025.

Proposals are due Feb. 12 at [Wayne State's e-portal](#). [Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

FLEISHMAN TOUTS SAUDI AI SHOWCASE

FleishmanHillard is lined up to promote Saudi Arabia's Future Investment Initiative Institute in connection with its Priority Summit set for Miami Beach from February 23-24.

Headquartered in Riyadh, FII focuses on areas such as AI, robotics, education, healthcare and sustainability.



The Miami Beach summit is to serve as a platform for global leaders, investors, CEOs, entrepreneurs, scientists, cultural figures, media and FII Institute members.

Themed "On the Edge of a New Frontier," it has strategic partners such as PepsiCo, HSBC and NEOM (Saudi Arabia's city-of-the-future project).

FH is to develop and facilitate media opportunities for FII including potential contacts for its spokesperson and securing interviews, briefings and commentary platforms.

Its letter of agreement with the Saudis requires the PR firm to station two staffers on-site in Miami for five days and five more team members there for two days. The work began Jan. 19 and runs through March.

FH's nine-member team includes SVPs Amy Rosen, Matthew Rose and Colin Hart; and VPs Ivy Diederichs and Chelsie Kumar.

HEMSWORTH PROMOTES EGYPTIAN TOURISM

[Hemsworth](#) is named US PR agency of record for the Egyptian Tourism Authority. The agency will work alongside mc Group, an international integrated communications agency, to develop and execute a strategic plan to enhance media exposure for Egypt in the US market, sharing news with key media throughout 2024.



Hemsworth will also secure media participation in group press trips and work with influencers to coordinate trips and collaborations that leverage the power of social media to amplify the destination's appeal. "We are committed to helping inspire travel to Egypt, illuminating its rich history and vibrant culture, as well as several new attractions," said Hemsworth founder and president Samantha Jacobs.

HOW BAD WILL THE NEWS BE THIS YEAR?

This just in. The news is really bad today. It's even worse than yesterday.

Guess what the news will be tomorrow? That's right! It's going to be worse still. Guaranteed.

Unless it somehow gets better. Which we all know is never going to happen.

Just a little heads-up here for all you PR pros out there planning to get crazy opportunistic in your media relations activities.

Take the weather, for starters. The weather is getting really obnoxious. At this very moment, all 8.2 billion people on the planet are directly in the path of some weather threat. Minimum. Chances are, your house will get blown away just a few minutes from now.

Hard to believe, but true.

Look at that five-alarm fire yesterday. Whoever could have predicted a five-alarm fire? Just what are the odds that on any given day a downtown warehouse storing flammable liquids and abandoned 30 years ago and long scheduled for demolition would suddenly burst into flames?

No one saw that coming.

Naturally we could touch on politics, too – how it's even more out of control than the weather.

We could also highlight all the violence out there – how you're feeling endangered just going to the bathroom because some mugger could be lurking under your toilet brandishing an automatic weapon bought under the counter at a convenience store around the corner from your house.

This is what we in the TV news racket do. We triple-checked this concept of never-ending apocalyptic collapse in 2024 for factual accuracy. And it's objectively true. Again, this is our business. We signed up for this.

No wonder people so often say, "Hey, it could be worse." Day in and day out, our reporters demonstrate with scientific precision that this claim is empirically correct.

For further evidence, just scope out our program format. We get you going with our fanfare, trumpets blaring and kettledrums thundering. We dangle cliffhanger teasers asking a question and then saying how the answer may surprise you.

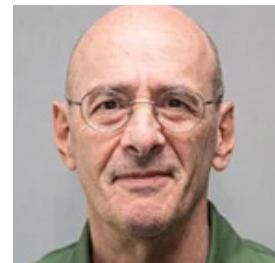
And just in case you, the viewer, are ever unpersuaded that we're doing a good job, our anchors make a point of praising our correspondents on-air for reports filed.

This much you can count on: As long as news keeps breaking, we'll bring you the drama and then the drama behind the drama. We'll deliver updates and then, at no extra charge – and in real time – we'll update those updates.

So welcome to the TV news, also known as what else has gone wrong in the world since you last looked. Your best bet? Just stay tuned.

We know what will happen next. You'll cover your eyes with your hands. But then your curiosity will kick in. No matter how bad it all gets out there, you'll wind up peeking between your fingers anyway.

Bob Brody, a consultant and essayist, is author of the memoir "Playing Catch with Strangers: A Family Guy (Reluctantly) Comes of Age." He is a former SVP of Rubenstein, Ogilvy and Weber Shandwick. His humor has appeared in The Atlantic, the New York Times and elsewhere.



Bob Brody

K&E'S FOGELBERG MOVES TO C STREET

Whitney Fogelberg, a partner in Kirkland & Ellis' restructuring group, has joined C Street Advisory Group's strategic communications unit as a managing director based in Chicago.



Whitney Fogelberg

“as a lawyer and witnessed her ability to connect with clients and navigate the most complex situations with confidence and clarity.”

Fogelberg will co-head C Street's new Chicago office with senior VP Lisa Kornblatt.

With almost 20 years of legal experience, Fogelberg has handled Chapter 11 proceedings, restructurings, liability management transactions, and special situations for clients such as Yellow Corp., Chesapeake Energy, STX Filmworks and PGX Holdings.

C Street founder/CEO Jon Henes said he's worked with Fogelberg

CENTRAL AR WATER TAKES PR QUALIFICATIONS

Central Arkansas Water, which is the largest H2O supplier in the state, is accepting qualifications from firms to collaborate on PR, marketing and public policy initiatives.



The Little Rock-based utility serves about 500K people, industries and businesses that market their goods and services in the US and around the world.

CAW intends to contract with more than one firm to provide various communications services. The partners will have demonstrated through past projects their ability to complete CAW's assigned tasks.

CAW doesn't plan to negotiate contracts on all projects, but will do so if the job requires an extensive amount of time and effort to complete the job.

Qualifications are due Feb 8 at: Central Arkansas Water; ATTN: Purchasing Section; 221 East Capitol Avenue; Little Rock, AR 72202

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

MCKEEBY TAKES PARKER INSTITUTE PR POST

Eric McKeeby, a 25-year cancer survivor and veteran healthcare and biotech communicator, has joined San Francisco's Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy as head of communications and marketing. He leads corporate and internal PR, brand management and audience engagement.



Eric McKeeby

Prior to PICI, McKeeby was communications director for insitro, AI-driven drug discovery company; head of marketing & communications for Regeneron Genetics Center; and VP-health at Edelman.

He began his career as a PA officer for the US Army. Deployed to the Horn of Africa, he established relationships with the Kenyan, Ethiopian and Djiboutian media.

PICI's goal is to turn all cancers into curable diseases by fostering collaboration between researchers, non-profits and pharmaceutical companies.

ON THE MOVE

The Lede Company names **Jackie Murphy** chief impact officer. Murphy joins the agency from Edelman, where she most recently served as managing director, brand purpose & impact, building and leading the brand impact team. As impact lead for Unilever at Edelman, she oversaw its purpose-driven work for the company, leading purpose and sustainability strategy across brands such as Dove, Hellmann's and Vaseline. At The Lede Company, she will oversee the impact division, which works with companies, brands, nonprofits and artists, to help them define, develop and deliver commitments to social and environmental issues.



Jackie Murphy

Edelman Smithfield promotes **Ira Gorsky** to managing director. Gorsky has been with the agency since 2019, most recently serving as an EVP. A senior leader in the New York office, he specializes in M&A, crisis and litigation matters. He was previously a managing member at Arch Research, developing analytical research on M&A, activist campaigns, financial restructurings and regulatory and policy shifts. Gorsky's experience also includes stints as an analyst at TIB Advisors, First Eagle Investment Management and CIBC.

Bespoke Partners, an executive search and leadership advisory service firm for software companies, brings on **Ryan Bonner** as a partner in its go-to-market practice, leading the company's recruiting of chief marketing officers for clients. Prior to Bespoke, he was a leadership consultant with Spencer Stuart. In his new position, Bonner will work with software and SaaS companies to find marketing leaders who can help them drive growth and execute on value creation plans.

RevHealth brings on former global president of Evoke Mind + Matter **Ben Beckley** as CEO. Before joining Evoke in 2019, Beckley was managing director at Ashfield, a unit of UDG Healthcare, leading the rare disease and communications agency through a global merger and expanding its capabilities in omnichannel, patient experience and data by launching the proprietary technology, Gravity.ai. He has also held leadership roles at Havas Health & You and PRECISIONeffect.



Ben Beckley

Redscout, a brand strategy and design consultancy that is part of Stagwell, hires **Ashley Shaffer** as CMO. Shaffer has previously held strategy and leadership roles at Netflix, IDEO, Preacher, and Outerknown. At Redscout, she will be charged with fostering Redscout's growth and brand consulting work through a focus on strategic innovation and IP.

STIHL, a manufacturer of chainsaws and outdoor power equipment, names **Eric Bjorling** VP of marketing. Bjorling comes to the company after spending more than 18 years with Trek Bicycle Corporation, most recently serving as director of brand marketing. In his new post, he will be responsible for leading the development of US brand and retail marketing communications strategies including national advertising programs, public relations, merchandising and national brand programs.

COMMENTARY

Will the MAGA cultists cheer for the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl to spite Biden-loving Taylor Swift and her COVID-19 vaccine and Bud Light shill boyfriend Travis Kelce? That's three strikes against the lovebirds.

But rooting for a team that represents that progressive, gay-loving, abortion supporting sinkhole on America's west coast is sure a big stretch for Team MAGA.

Will Nancy Pelosi invite MAGA world to back the boys in



red and gold? That won't happen.

And MAGA views the lame-stream media as part of the grand conspiracy to prop up Uncle Joe.

Their breathless tales concerning whether Taylor will make it to the Big Game after her concert in

Tokyo only reinforces MAGA's belief that the fix is in.

Taylor is bound to make a triumphant just-in-time entry to the Super Bowl, encouraging her fans to register to vote for the 2024 election. They aren't likely to vote for Donald Trump.

The best bet for MAGA wingnuts is to sit out this year's Super Bowl and hope that "America's Team" (e.g. Dallas Cowboys) can get its act together next season.

Quits over antisemitism... Barak Herscovitz, [TikTok's top lobbyist in Israel, quit](#) via a statement on X because he says it runs content that is antisemitic and anti-Israel.

The aide to former prime minister Naftali Bennett said he tried to influence TikTok from the inside but failed to do so.

He also rapped TikTok for banning videos from the families of Hamas hostages, while allowing pro-Palestinian groups to advertise.

Herscovitz wrote a memo that said American users are bombarded with ads that show the misery of children in Gaza, while ads about Israel's hostages are not allowed.

He had the vertical lead in the government and public sector title at TikTok, which is owned by China's ByteDance.

Cost efficiencies eyed at Burson. WPP Mark Read put the BCW and Hill & Knowlton merger in the "execute efficiently to drive strong financial returns" bucket during his Jan. 30 Capital Markets Day presentation.

Recast as Burson, the firm will be the world's No. 2 PR firm, according to Read. He had told O'Dwyer's that Burson will "hopefully" give [Edelman](#) a run for its money.

Read expects Burson will "deliver growth and structural cost savings," which is part of WPP's plan to save \$160M in costs in 2025. Forty to fifty percent of that savings is to be achieved in 2024.

WPP's Top Ten PR clients include Dell Technologies, Ford Motor, Coca-Cola, Google, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive, Nestle, BAT and Apple.

They will be looking very carefully at how WPP consolidates its BCW and H&K businesses.

Pharmaceutical giant GSK on Feb. 1 settled another suit, alleging that its heartburn medication, Zantac, causes cancer. The case was to go to trial Feb. 20 in California.

The British company offered the corporate boilerplate when it comes to settling court cases.

"The settlement reflects [our] desire to avoid the distraction related to protracted litigation in this case."

Ireland would welcome the same legal boilerplate from GSK.

[The Irish government is setting up an \\$1B fund to compensate the 34K survivors](#) of the country's scandalous Magdalene Laundries.

The Catholic Church ran those workhouses for unmarried women and their babies from the 18th century until the last one closed in Dublin in 1996.

Predecessor companies at GSK tested experimental vaccines for decades on children and infants at the laundries.

The Irish government has asked GSK to contribute to the compensation fund due to its "moral and ethical obligation."

GSK has refused, saying the tests were "bona fide" though there were failings in the trials "in the context of seeking and/or receiving appropriate consents."

The British company chalked up \$8.5B in 2023 operating profit, eight times the size of Ireland's fund for survivors of the homes. Revenues were \$38B.

If GSK isn't going to donate to the fund, an apology is the very least that it can do. It shares Ireland's shame.

Bryon Allen serves up some weak tea. The Allen Media Group is offering \$14B to buy Paramount Global in a bid to acquire its TV networks and stations.

The Allen Media Group though has a spotty record when it comes to clinching deals. The Paramount bid is AMG's second run at the media giant. Bryon Allen also made an offer to acquire Walt Disney's ABC TV network.

AMG's statement confirming its most recent offer for Paramount wasn't exactly a vote of confidence that it would triumph in its quest.

"We believe this \$30 billion offer, which includes debt and equity, is the best solution for all of the Paramount Global shareholders, and the bid should be taken seriously."

Paramount directors have a fiduciary obligation to take AMG's offer seriously, even if it's a half-hearted one.

Four more years... Biden's re-election is in the bag, according to an [extensive analysis produced by Moody's Analytics](#).

Assuming an average turnout, Biden is expected to win by a narrow margin.

The vote will be a replay of 2020. Biden won 306 electoral votes four years ago (270 are needed to notch a victory). Moody's projects 308 votes from the November election.

Biden will flip North Carolina due to its changing and more moderate demographics, but lose Arizona as its heavy Hispanic population drifts away from the Democrats.

Donald Trump triumphs if Republican turnout rises just two percent. That translates into wins in Nevada, NC and Pennsylvania and 271 votes for Trump.

That could very well be. MAGA World is jacked that its dear leader has a shot at redemption, while supporters of Sleepy Joe may take a snooze on Election Day. —Kevin McCauley