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O'Dwyer's Newsletter

The Inside News of
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ILLINOIS REVIEWS TOURISM PR

Illinois has kicked off a review of its tourism PR account covering domestic and international travel.

The Prairie State's Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism, released an RFP open through Jan. 19 for an agency to promote Illinois on a base contract through 2020.

FleishmanHillard won the business in 2012 after a long run by Edelman.

In addition to travel PR, the work includes special events management, media outreach, marketing and social media management.

The [RFP can be downloaded](#) from the state's on-line procurement portal, IllinoisBid.

The state claims more than 109M visitors annually, about 107M from within the US and ninth among US states. Economic impact of tourism is measured at around \$36.3B, including more than \$255M in lodging taxes. The industry supports more than 306,000 jobs.

Illinois' top four feeder states were Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and Missouri.



LT GOV JOINS BRUNSWICK

Arkansas lieutenant governor Tim Griffin has joined corporate advisory giant Brunswick Group, where he's been named a senior counselor.

Griffin, who was named AK's lieutenant governor in 2014, was elected to Congress in 2010 where he served as the 24th representative of The Natural State's Second Congressional District.

Griffin also served as deputy majority whip for the Republican caucus and was a member of the U.S. House Ways and Means committee.



Griffin

He previously held several posts in George W. Bush's cabinet, filling deputy director of political affairs and special assistant positions.

Griffin was formerly a U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas and is currently serving as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army JAG Corps.

Last year, Griffin took a senior advisor post at Washington-based public affairs advisory shop Purple Strategies.

At Brunswick, Tim will focus on public affairs, corporate reputation, and crisis as well as digital campaign strategies.

He'll continue to hold the lieutenant governor position and will be stationed in Brunswick's Washington, D.C. outpost.

MOWER BRAND ISSUES RFP

Lawn mower brand Hustler Turf Equipment is seeking an agency that can provide PR and media relations services for the launch of a new type of utility vehicle that is set to be unveiled this spring.

Hustler provides residential and commercial mowers that are carried by more than 1,300 dealers in the U.S., as well as more than 40 distributors worldwide. The brand is owned by Hesston, Kansas-based company Excel Industries and was founded in 1964.



PR services sought for the product launch include developing overall strategy and messaging, creating press materials, arranging press coverage and building the brand name through media outreach.

Proposals should include a recommended program approach, a detailed budget and timeline, agency qualifications and a list of applicable current or former clients.

Proposals are due by January 23, at 5:00 P.M. CST.

Contact is Molly Crum, account manager at advertising agency Redroc Austin, molly@redrocaustin.com.

Download the RFP at <http://bit.ly/2i6wkOK>.

BGR REPS UKRAINE

Washington, D.C.-based lobbying firm BGR Government Affairs has inked a pact with the government of Ukraine to provide strategic PR and government affairs counsel for the embattled Eastern European nation.

BGR has been hired to design and implement "a comprehensive government affairs and business development strategy" meant to strengthen U.S.-Ukrainian relations and increase U.S. business investment in that country, according to Foreign Agents Registration Act documents filed in January.

The work will include media outreach, as well as potential contact with U.S. government officials.

BGR's contact began in December and runs through the end of December 2017. The year-long campaign carries a \$50,000 per month retainer.

BGR Government Affairs is part of BGR Group, the firm founded by former Mississippi governor Haley Barbour, who was also chairman of the Republican National Committee.

TECH SHOPS MERGE TO FORM NEW AGENCY

Two boutique technology PR firms, Wake Forest, NC's Connect2 Communications and Oakland, CA's Engage PR, have merged to form a new bio-coastal tech shop. The name of the new outfit is Witz Communications.

Engage was founded in 2001 and is led by CEO Jeannette Bitz. The Silicon Valley firm counts 365 Data Centers, Calix, Riverbed, Sigma and Spotfire as clients. Connect2 was founded in 2003 by CEO Rich Williams. Clients include Metaswitch Networks, VOSS, bti, MRV, Adtran, and Minter.

Now operating under one umbrella, the new full-service B2B agency will focus on media and analyst relations, strategy, content development and social media marketing for clients working in the telecom, security, IoT, data center, cloud and related industries.

The former NC and CA offices of Connect2 and Engage have been rechristened as Witz Communications locations and all staff in both markets will remain onboard as part of the new company. Both former companies' senior leaders will also remain in their respective locations but will now split responsibilities at the new agency, with Williams serving as Witz chief strategy officer and Bitz serving as chief relationship officer.

Williams told O'Dwyer's that the merger brings together two agencies with similar strengths and approaches and also positions the company geographically, with offices in two major tech hubs — Research Triangle Park and Silicon Valley — that will deepen opportunities and better meet clients' need.

"This merger is about scale, range and reach for Witz and our tech clients," Williams told O'Dwyer's. "It brings together two teams that are focused on creating the stories that matter most, that align programs to our clients' business objectives. It will be able to deliver the media relationships, produce the content and leverage social to quickly move our clients' business forward. We are also hearing from clients and prospects alike about their desire for an agency with a presence on both coasts."

TECH TRENDS FOR '17

We'll be more focused on our smartphones than ever in 2017. As the Internet of Things (IoT) continues to evolve, the media will focus on how connected technology will be delivered right to our phones, helping them to seamlessly communicate with other devices, according to [Racpoint Global's latest InMedia report](#).

Security concerns surrounding wireless connections and cloud transactions will also dominate tech stories in the media.

While autonomous cars are still not quite a reality, there are an increasing number of semi-autonomous safety features trickling down from luxury brands into mainstream cars such as lane assist and adaptive cruise control. Expect there to be more discussion on how to bring full autonomous vehicles to the road.

Other findings from Racpoint's analysis of consumer tech and business publications include:

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MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS

TEGNA TUNES IN UBEROI AS COMMS. CHIEF

Tegna, the broadcast and digital media giant formed by the split of Gannett Company in 2015, has brought in Sunny Uberoi as VP and chief communications officer.

Uberoi has led global communications for S&P Capital IQ, the financial information unit of S&P Global, and handled its divestiture of J.D. Power in 2015. He previously handled stakeholder engagement for Deloitte, and helmed global communications for Pfizer Consumer Healthcare and biotechnology company Agenus.

McLean, Va.-based Tegna's portfolio includes 46 TV stations, including a large group of NBC and CBS affiliates, as well as digital properties like CareerBuilder, Cars.com and G/O Digital.

Uberoi reports to Tegna CEO Gracia Matore overseeing internal and external communications, as well as public affairs.

Third quarter 2016 revenues topped \$860M with net income of nearly \$119M.

FAIR BLASTS NYT'S HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting has found unfairness in healthcare act coverage by *The New York Times*.

FAIR said the Dec. 15 NYT story that had the words "universal," "health" and "plan" in the headline was "extremely misleading and irresponsible."

The Republicans who won the Presidency have no such plans in mind, says FAIR, noting that Donald Trump's seven-point proposal of March 16 did not have the word "universal."

Thirty million Americans currently lack medical coverage and that number will swell another 20 million if the Affordable Care Act is repealed, says FAIR.

The [NYT story failed to quote a single critic](#) of the vague GOP plans concerning healthcare, it adds. Instead, the article has "nonsensical and unchallenged arguments made by Republicans."

Also criticized for alleged lack of fairness are the *Washington Post*, which had an op-ed piece by Marilyn Tavenner, CEO of America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP), and *Politico*.

Tavenner argued that there is "no single bullet to ensure that people get covered" and the notion of universal healthcare is "virtually impossible," both of which are inaccurate, says FAIR. Just about every industrial nation has such a plan, the website says.

Politico is criticized because it relies on Ed Haismaier as its "go-to expert" on healthcare. He is a former Pfizer executive who became a Heritage Foundation health analyst and who has been cited or mentioned 22 times in *Politico* articles since the passage of the Affordable Healthcare Act, says FAIR.

Trump has named Haismaier to a post in the Dept. of Health and Human Services.

"Media published a great deal of hyperbole from liberals about the ACA which was a 'market solution' promoted by Heritage and *Forbes* as the furthest acceptable 'left' solution to the healthcare crisis," says FAIR. Dismissed were single-payer and even the public option, it adds.

NEWS OF PR FIRMS

EDELMAN INKS NIGERIA PARTNER

Edelman has signed on Chain Reactions Nigeria as its exclusive affiliate in that country after a one-year partnership.

This expands Edelman's operations in the African continent outside the existing office in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Chain Reactions Nigeria is a full-service PR and integrated communications consultancy offering corporate communications, consumer/brand PR, media relations, digital PR, public affairs, litigation PR, issues and crises communications, thought leadership and scorecard leveraging, CSR and sustainability as well as event management.

"Our decision to partner exclusively with Chain Reactions Nigeria was informed by the team's unique understanding of the Nigerian market, the richness of the strategic thinking and the creativity behind their work," said Robert Holdheim, CEO, Edelman South Asia, Middle East & Africa. "The addition of Chain Reactions Nigeria into Edelman's network of exclusive affiliates further enhances our ability to provide seamless, strategic communications marketing support across the African continent."

Israel Opayemi, MD/Chief Strategist of Chain Reactions Nigeria noted that becoming an affiliate of Edelman is an important milestone in the growth of his firm. "Edelman's global resources will propel us to do more of the creative work we have been known for in Nigeria," Opayemi said.

NEWS OF SERVICES

TECH TRENDS FOR '17 (Continued from pg. 2)

Shopping will become social and immersive: Look for stories that position the phone as your shopping buddy, even actively helping you shop while you're in the store.

Virtual and augmented reality will start to converge: Media outlets will delve into the issue of content and discuss user-generated VR/AR content.

Apps will be "lite" and integrated: New apps will give users the same functionality as conventional apps without having to install and maintain them. Also, look for apps to synch up with each other such as being able to use WeChat and Snapchat at the same time, through the same interface.

Memory will be an issue: Changes in workloads and new usage models will result in stories addressing the demands of networking and data center applications.

Smartphones will need more processing power: Augmented and mixed reality devices and 4K displays will put more demands on the core configurations of our phones.

Bluetooth low energy (BLE) will become the new standard: Major smartphone manufacturers will adopt wireless charging technology because of the growth of wearables and hearables markets.

5G will usher in the next wave of connectivity: Watch for stories around how 5G will increase the connectivity to smartphones, connected cars and home networking.

NEW ACCOUNTS

ICF PRESCRIBES CDC COMMUNICATIONS

ICF's health communications operation has locked up work for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention worth up to \$34.4 million.

The Fairfax, Va.-based consulting giant will work across nine different pacts on assignments covering campaign development, research, creative, digital advertising, traditional and social media, social marketing, and stakeholder engagement.

The account includes the CDC Office of Smoking and Health, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (sepsis, infection control and travel-related diseases), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Nat'l Diabetes Prevention Program).

ICF earlier last year picked up duties to promote the CDC's guidelines for prescribing opioids for chronic pain, a bid to combat prescription opioid abuse around the country.

Said senior VP Kris Tremaine: "We continue to bring marketing innovation and employ the latest tools, tactics, and technologies to ensure that CDC's campaigns reach the right audience, with the right message, through the right channel."

BRIEFS: Google has tapped government consulting firm Perry Bayliss Government Relations for Capitol Hill representation on lobbying issues related to artificial intelligence.

PEOPLE

Joined

Jacqueline Gedeon to Cleveland-based Roop & Co. as an assistant account executive. Gedeon started her communications career in Montana as a news reporter, anchor and producer for an NBC affiliate, where she handled writing, shooting, editing and presenting the news for 45 percent of all Montanans. Most recently she served as communications specialist for a U.S. Geological Survey project, developing content for the web, press releases, newsletters and fact sheets.

Shayna Englin and **Latia Curry** to Los Angeles-based issue advocacy firm Rally as principals. Englin joins the agency from petition website Change.org, where she was North America managing director. Prior to that she was managing director at Omnicom's public affairs and strategy shop Mercury. For seven years she ran her own public affairs outfit, Englin Consulting, which was acquired by Mercury in 2013. Curry has been stationed at Rally since 2014, where she has held the position of director. She was previously a senior director of partner engagement and special initiatives at the U.S. Fund for UNICEF. Prior to that, she was a special projects director in the communications office of former New York Governor David Paterson. Curry also held communications roles at The Coca-Cola Company, SS+K and PowerPact, and founded her own communications firm, Statement, which she led for nearly five years. Rally's clients include NARAL Pro-Choice America, NBC Universal and Reddit.

VML SIGNS \$20M PANAMA TOURISM PACT

WPP Group's international marketing unit VML has signed a two-year, \$20 million agreement with the Tourism Authority of Panama to develop a marketing and communications strategy and international campaign to attract U.S. and Canadian tourists to the Central American country.

The contract marks the first time since 2012 that the Republic of Panama has hired a foreign agency to promote the country's tourism efforts.

VML's services for Panama's DOT will include implementation of a marketing and communication strategy and promotional program, which will include online and traditional marketing and advertising as well as "limited public relations activities, targeted primarily toward tourists in the United States and Canada," according to Foreign Agents Registration Act documents filed in December. VML will also supervise market research efforts and will manage media planning and buying, as well as data analytics initiatives.

The agency will conduct its services outside of Panama but may engage a third party advertising agency within Panama to assist with the contract's on-site requirements.

Total cost of the contract will be \$20 million, which will be distributed in intervals until 2018.

Kansas City-based VML in October was named global marketing agency of record for the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau. The agency, which was founded in 1992, maintains more than two-dozen offices worldwide.

NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS NAMES GLOBAL VP

Global theater chain National Amusements, Inc. has appointed Mark Malinowski vice president of global marketing.

Malinowski joins the Norwood, MA-based entertainment giant from Next Fifteen's consumer and corporate unit M Booth & Associates, where he served as senior vice president and director of partner innovation. Prior to that he was VP and group director of PAN Communications' consumer PR practice, and also served as senior VP of brand communications and entertainment marketing at Cone Communications. He previously co-founded Ketchum's entertainment marketing practice and also led entertainment marketing for Levi Strauss & Co.

Malinowski will now oversee all of NAI's global brand initiatives and integrated marketing programs, including advertising, social media and digital marketing, loyalty programs and e-commerce, as well as strategic partnerships.

National Amusements operates nearly 1,000 movie screens across the U.S., U.K. and Latin America under its Multiplex, Cinema de Lux, Showcase and SuperLux brands. Billionaire media magnate Sumner Redstone, owner of CBS and Viacom, is majority owner and chairman of NAI's board. The company was founded by his father, Michael Redstone, in 1936.

PR OPINION

That "Russians hacked U.S. computers to hand the election to Trump," a story getting big media play, is a "hoax" that diverts attention from other news such as the U.S. abstention on U.N. criticism of the Israeli West Bank settlements.

"The entire herd of mainstream media is off chasing this wild goose," **wrote dailycoin.**

Even if the hacking stories are true, reporters did just what the "average news reporter" would do, wrote L. Neil Smith, on **The Unofficial Megyn Kelly.**

A reporter who gained information from inside the Democratic National Committee and released it would deserve a "Presidential Medal of Freedom" **and not prosecution, he writes.** The "hacks" were most probably "leaks" from someone on Clinton's team, he says.

Similar thoughts were expressed by Stephen Sniegowski on thedailycoin.org.

U.S. Hacks, Say Critics

"Is it a crime to steal proof from criminals that they have committed other felonies?" he asked. Russians have been hacking into U.S. computer systems since before the fall of the Soviet Union, he notes, adding that the U.S. is doing the same thing to them.

The Obama Administration, faced with almost universal media criticism of its failure to veto the U.N. Security Council's resolution on Israeli West Bank settlements, plus the Jan. 5 bipartisan 342-80 Congressional vote blasting the abstention, suddenly booted 35 Russian diplomats. This gave the media a new story.

More than 100 Democrats joined all but four Republicans in voting the House measure, sponsored by New York's Rep. Eliot Engel. Opposed were 76 Democrats.

Seattle Media Hit by Layoffs

The *Seattle Times* said that because of declining ad revenues, the newsroom staff will be reduced by 23 including five non-union staffers who have taken buyouts. Total staff is about 170.

Digital subscriber revenue is growing but it is not enough to offset the ad losses, said Alan Fisco, executive VP and CFO.

Breaking News, a Seattle-based six-year-old online news site funded by NBC, closed Dec. 31, resulting in the departure of **21 full-time and part-time staffers.**

Cory Bergman, co-founder and general manager, said, "This is breaking news we hoped we'd never have to report. Our parent company, NBC News, has decided to shut us down as of the end of the year."

Nick Ascheim, SVP of digital for NBC News, told the Breaking News staff in a letter about "the difficult decision" to close down the enterprise, which included apps, a web site and Twitter feed with 9.4 million followers.

"Unfortunately, despite its consumer appeal, Breaking News has not been able to generate enough revenue to sustain itself," Ascheim said. "We have therefore made the hard decision to close its operations so that we can re-invest that funding into NBC News' core digital products to help us achieve our ambitious goals for those businesses."

— Jack O'Dwyer