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RHODE ISLAND SEEKS BIZ INVESTMENT PR

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation wants to hire a PR firm and/or ad agency to bolster its effort to attract business investment to the state.



The Ocean State is in the midst of a push to reimagine its brand with an eye on projecting a more favorable image to the world, according to the RFP.

Under the leadership of “jobs-focused” Governor Dan McKee, the former lieutenant governor who took office after Gina Raimondo resigned to become Joe Biden’s secretary of commerce, Rhode Island is determined to be known as an “attractive place in the Northeast to live, grow a business, and visit as a tourist or business traveler.”

Rhode Island’s push targets biomedical innovation; IT/software, cyber-physical systems & data analytics; “blue economy” (defense, shipbuilding, maritime and offshore wind); design, food and custom manufacturing; arts, education, hospitality & tourism; and transportation, distribution & logistics.

The selected firm will have experience in running economic development campaigns and solid relationships with beat reporters in appropriate sector-based publications.

Rhode Island plans to issue a one-year contract with options for another three years.

Proposals are due Jan. 21. Send an electronic (PDF) version on thumb drive or disk and eight hard copies to: Rhode Island Commerce Corporation; Attention: Business Attraction Public Relations & Advertising Agency RFP; 315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101; Providence, RI 02908

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

TENEO RECRUITS TECH PRO RIBOT

Teneo has named technology heavyweight Sue Ribot senior managing director in its Washington office.

She joins the “global CEO advisory firm” from Korn Ferry, where she was senior partner in the technology practice.



Sue Ribot

At the executive search firm, Ribot focused on placing talent in the cloud, security, mobile and outsourcing spaces.

Earlier, Ribot was executive sales leader for North America communications, media & cloud computing at Redhat; VP sales at Exodus Communications and director of Internet services at Verizon, where she did an almost ten-year run.

FINN HIRES HP VET TO HEAD TECH UNIT

Sabrina Guttman, who has more than 25 years of technology experience, has joined [Finn Partners](#) to head its global tech practice. Most recently, Guttman handled marketing communications at Next47 venture capital firm in Palo Alto.



Sabrina Guttman

She also was VP-strategic communications at Hewlett Packard Enterprises in charge of a 100-plus member staff.

[Finn Partners acquired Barokas Communications](#), tech shop with offices in Seattle and Denver, in July 2021. That deal put the number of Finn Partners’ tech staff over the 200 mark.

NYT PICKS UP THE ATHLETIC

The New York Times is acquiring sports media platform The Athletic in an all-cash deal that values the company at \$500 million.

Launched in 2016 by Alex Mather and Adam Hansmann (who will be staying on after the deal), the subscription-based platform says that it has more than 1 million subscribers.

Adding those subscribers is a plus for the Times as it works toward the goal of 10 million paid digital-only subscribers by 2025. According to Axios, The Athletic was being pressed to sell due to the amount the cash it has lost in the last two years.

PARKS RETURNS TO SKDK

D’Seantè Parks, who has more than a decade of PA and advocacy experience in the public, private and nonprofit sectors, has joined SKDK in New York as senior VP.

For the past four years, she has been running her own firm in New Orleans, handling clients such as New Orleans Regional Transit Authority, Business Council of New Orleans, Fight for \$15 and #Vote-ProChoice.



D’Seantè Parks

Parks has been long active in Pelican State politics, serving as PA director of the Louisiana Democratic Party, political director for Kander for US Senate and deputy research director for Sen. Mary Landrieu’s reelection campaign.

CONNECTING WITH FOOD CUSTOMERS IN '22

To connect with consumers in 2022, food brands need to emphasize immunity, affordability and comfort, according to a new study from [Pollock Communications](#) and *Today's*



Dietitian.

The main attribute consumers are seeking out when making a food purchase is “convenience,” followed by “healthy” and “taste.” Other big draws include “lower cost” and “natural.”

Perhaps related to that desire for convenience, as well as for pandemic-era safety, is the increasing popularity of online food shopping. Nine out of 10 of those surveyed said that online food shopping is the biggest trend from the pandemic that they expect to continue after the pandemic.

But an increasingly digital food-shopping environment is not without its drawbacks. Survey respondents noted the growth in false nutrition news. They also encourage consumers to be careful when it comes to the nutrition information handed out by influencers.

Another major trend the study uncovered: We’re snacking more. Almost all (95 percent) of those surveyed said that snacking had gone up during the pandemic, and that consumers are more likely to be seeking out comfort foods.

With the interest in immunity and health also running high, the study also looks at what respondents named the top 10 superfoods. At the top of the list were such fermented foods such as yogurt and kimchi. Blueberries, seeds, exotic fruit, avocados and green tea were also cited as popular choices for health-conscious consumers.

However, despite all the changes that the study notes, one of the biggest and longest-lasting trends is one that you were likely taught by your grandmother—eat your vegetables and avoid fast foods.

MILKEN INSTITUTE EXEC DIRECTOR TO PROSEK

Katie O’Reilly, who was executive director of the Milken Institute, has joined [Prosek Partners](#) to lead its convening and networking offering.

The Santa Monica-based economic think tank runs conferences throughout the world to further its mission of helping “people build meaningful lives in which they can experience health & well-being, and pursue effective education and gainful employment.”



Katie O’Reilly

Greater Los Angeles.

At Prosek Partners, she will be charged with developing programming to engage C-suite executives and other thought leaders.

It was founded in 1991 by Drexel Burnham Lambert junk bond king Mike Milken, who was convicted of securities fraud in 1989, fined \$600M and sentenced to prison. Donald Trump pardoned Milken in 2020.

Prior to joining Milken Institute in 2007, O’Reilly was senior development officer at the United Way of

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

[The Berman Group](#) signs on [Savanna](#), real estate investment firm, for content and corporate positioning duties. The agency’s remit also includes ESG messaging and strategy for the company. New York-based Savanna is primarily focused on strategic property investments throughout the city’s five boroughs, having invested over \$5 billion in total capital across approximately 17 million square feet of real estate since 2006. The Berman Group has also worked with clients including We-Work, Silverstein Properties and Brookfield Properties.



[Beach House](#) adds [Anihana](#) and [SKINN](#) to its client roster. For Anihana, a New Zealand-based sustainable beauty brand delivering natural, handcrafted hair and body products, the agency will handle public relations and influencer marketing efforts. Anihana’s line of bath products includes bath bombs, shower steamers and soaps. Beach House will also spearhead public relations efforts for SKINN, a Los Angeles-based skincare and cosmetics company that prioritizes natural ingredients.

[MZ Group](#) picks up strategic investor relations and financial communications work for [SurgePays](#), a fintech company providing financial services and prepaid products to the underbanked population. MZ North America managing director Brian Prenoveau will assist SurgePays in all facets of corporate and financial communications, including the coordination of investment conferences across key cities and building brand awareness with financial media outlets.

NEWS OF FIRMS

[Slowey McManus Communications](#) acquires [Emerging BioCommunications](#), a firm specializing in life sciences companies and organizations. The acquisition adds several early and clinical-stage life science firms to SMC’s roster of clients. Emerging BioCommunications founder Jeff Krasner will join SMC as a senior vice president and serve as head of its Life Sciences Communications Group. “Bringing Jeff and Emerging BioCommunications into our firm will continue to propel the extraordinary growth we’ve experienced over the past several years,” said SMC co-founder and principal founder Dominic Slowey.

[Stagwell](#) picks up [Goodstuff](#), a media planning and buying agency based in London. This is the first full acquisition since the combination of Stagwell and MDC partners in August 2021. The company will maintain operations under the Goodstuff brand and continue to be led by co-founders Andrew Stephens and Ben Hayes. Its employees will join the Stagwell Media Network. “What attracted us to the agency were their world-class leadership and unwavering focus on people, culture, and the work,” said James Townsend, Global CEO of Stagwell Media Network and the network’s flagship media agency, Assembly.



[Symphony Technology Group](#) completes its acquisition of Kantar’s Reputation Intelligence business. STG has also purchased UK-based media relations and workflow management platform PRgloo as well as AI technology and data science company Onclusive. The three units will be merged into one media monitoring firm that will operate under the Onclusive name.

HOW 'SUCCESSION' GETS CRISIS COMMS RIGHT

The award-winning series focusing on the uber-dysfunctional Roy family and its empire of cable news channels, theme parks and—of course—cruise ships, has been as captivating as anything on television through three tumultuous seasons. Viewers keep coming back for its over-the-top portrayal of the rich and infamous, complete with exotic locations, dark humor and Machiavellian infighting.



T. J. Winick

Among the show's rabid fanbase are some PR pros and crisis communicators, including yours truly who—dare I say—may see a little

bit of themselves in the characters Karolina Novotney, head of PR for Waystar Royco, and Hugo Baker, Senior Vice President of Communications in the parks and cruises division.

While the made-for-TV drama is just that, there are many facets of crisis communications accurately portrayed on the show. Here are my top five:

Senior communicators as part of the inner circle

The best crisis managers are valued by the CEO as indispensable counselors. Their recommendations on strategy and language are informed by institutional knowledge of the business, a keen understanding of what constitutes a strong reputation, how the media works and how the public consumes information.

No matter the locale in "Succession," PR is there: at the office, at Connor's New Mexico ranch and at Shiv's wedding in England. Karolina is even at the hospital to set up a communications war room after Logan suffers a stroke.

Crisis meetings aren't always orderly

In pop culture, crisis meetings tend to be portrayed as one heroic team member standing up and making an impassioned plea that sways the entire room. In real life, that almost never happens.

The tone of a crisis meeting is set, more often than not, by how the CEO likes to make decisions. Most of the time, like in "Succession," it's multiple advisors offering input or answering questions from the CEO who, as the ultimate decision-maker, takes or leaves that counsel.

Threatening the media rarely works

In season two, with the Roys on the brink of a major acquisition, Hugo informs them that *New York* magazine plans to publish a damaging exposé on a past cruise line issue and has reached out for comment. After Kendall asks if they can "kill" the piece and Shiv suggests a strategy to delay the story, Logan settles on unleashing a team of lawyers to intimidate the magazine, including issuing a cease and desist letter.

When leaders view media coverage as a personal attack, as Logan does, they'll let emotion cloud their judgment and be tempted to slap back. As in "Succession," it rarely has the desired effect. In fact, it signals to reporters and editors that they've struck a nerve. Like responding with "no comment," it suggests you have something to hide.

The best defense is a good offense

While crisis and issues management is primarily a defensive discipline, there'll be times when playing offense is the right move. Instead of waiting for negative media coverage, consider what opportunities exist to drive the storyline. It's

not conventional thinking to consider a genuine branding opportunity in the middle of a crisis. However, if the circumstances are right, there may just be opportunities that could result in a fresh round of positive news coverage.

Kendall, in particular, subscribes to this theory. After turning the tables in the season two finale, he grants an exclusive sit-down interview with a newspaper reporter. Continuing to push his agenda, he even intends to go on a news-parody TV program that's been particularly harsh in its criticism of him, all in a bold attempt to change the narrative.

Never go dark

While there are plenty of high-stakes PR moments on "Succession," such as interviews and press conferences, the reality is that most crisis responses begin with a written statement.

After Logan suffers a stroke, for instance, Karolina acquiesces to the family's unwillingness to release an update on her condition, though her instincts are correctly focused on their fiduciary responsibility to shareholders. Gerri, then General Counsel, also wants to get ahead of the next morning's opening bell and media coverage that could significantly impact WayStar Royco's stock price.

A written statement offers the ability to have complete control over the message without having to answer any questions. It's the most efficient method of getting out your position and one that entails the least amount of risk.

T.J. Winick is a Senior Vice President at [Solomon McCown & Cence](#), a strategic communications, public affairs and digital firm headquartered in Boston.

APPLE'S 'CENSORSHIP' IN CHINA IS SLAMMED

Apple CEO Tim Cook will face a proposal at the May 4 annual meeting sponsored by shareholders who worry that the company kowtows before China's government by removing apps upon its demand.

The New York Times reported that "Apple has constructed a bureaucracy that has become a powerful tool in China's vast censorship operation. It proactively censors its Chinese App Store, relying on software and employees to flag and block apps that Apple managers worry could run afoul of Chinese officials."

In its transparency report for the first-half of 2020, Apple said it complied with all 46 requests from China's government to remove 152 apps from the Apple Store. The report did not explain why the apps were removed.

Shareholders, according to the Resolution, "are deeply concerned about a material failure in Apple's transparency reporting that seemingly highlights a contradiction between Apple's human rights policy and its actions regarding China and its occupied territories, which represent almost a third of Apple's customer base. This poses significant legal, reputational and financial risk to Apple and its shareholders."

The shareholders want Apple's board to revise corporate transparency reporting to provide clear explanations of the number and categories of app removals from the app store, in response to or in anticipation of government requests.

Apple opposes the Resolution.



Tim Cook

COVID IS HERE TO STAY

Three out of 10 Americans say that the impact of COVID on day-to-day life will be permanent, according [to a new survey conducted by insurtech company HealthCareInsider](#).



When asked when they thought that life would return to normal, 39 percent said they thought it would happen by the end of 2022, 28 percent thought it would take until 2023 or later and 30 percent don't see it ever happening.

The level of pessimism has grown since the last edition of the company's COVID-19 attitudes study at the end of 2020. In that survey, 61 percent of respondents said they thought that things would get back to normal at some point during 2021.

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) said they have increased their health precautions due to the Omicron variant, limiting such activities as holiday travel and family gatherings.

However, there is a growing belief that vaccines will play a major role in ending the pandemic. While 51 percent of respondents in last year's survey said that a COVID-19 vaccine will help end the pandemic, that number rose to 61 percent in the new survey.

Comfort levels vary considerably when it comes to resuming various activities. More than half of respondents say that they're already comfortable shopping indoors (61 percent) or dining and drinking indoors (52 percent), while far fewer are comfortable working out in a gym (33 percent), not wearing a mask in public (32 percent) or attending a concert or sporting event (29 percent).

The desire to travel has also been hit hard, with only 34 percent saying they feel ready to travel now. But the long-term view is far more positive, with only five percent saying they don't think they'll ever be comfortable with traveling again.

Travel also tops the list of what respondents said they were most looking forward to after the pandemic is over, with 25 percent choosing it. Other popular choices were not wearing a mask (22 percent) and family gatherings (15 percent).

HealthCareInsider's study was conducted via a SurveyMonkey Audience on Dec. 13, among a national sample of 1,183 U.S. adults aged 18+.

BRUNSWICK'S GLOVER JOINS TEAM YOUNGKIN

Brunswick Group's Rebecca Glover will take the communications director and deputy chief of staff slot for incoming Virginia Republican governor Glenn Youngkin.

He will succeed Ralph Northam on Jan. 15.

Glover was director of PA at the Commerce Dept. during the Trump administration.



Rebecca Glover

She handled communications for the Department's Census Bureau, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, International Trade Administration and Patent and Trademark Office.

Glover has Capitol Hill experience gained as communications director for Senate Intelligence Committee chair Richard Burr, and press secretary for House Oversight and Government Reform chairman Darryl Issa.

Prior to her government service, Glover was media strategist for the conservative Daily Caller, account director at 3 Dog Agency and IT consultant at Booz Allen Hamilton.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

New York Times media columnist Ben Smith is exiting the paper to serve as editor-in-chief for a news organization being started by Justin Smith, who is leaving his position as chief executive of Bloomberg Media. In a tweet, Justin Smith said that the proposed platform would be "a new kind of global news media company that serves unbiased journalism to a truly global audience." Before coming to the Times in 2020, Ben Smith was editor-in-chief at Buzzfeed News and he previously wrote for Politico. Justin Smith joined Bloomberg in 2013 after serving as president of Atlantic Consumer Media. According to a report in the Wall Street Journal, the venture, with the working title "Project Coda," is expected to feature platforms including digital publishing, email newsletters, podcasts and digital video.



Ben Smith

NBC Universal launches NBCUnified, a first-party identity platform that it says will let advertisers track and monitor consumer relationships without cookies or device IDs. The platform will combine data from streaming viewership, newsletter subscriptions, theme park visits and ecommerce purchases to create person-level IDs and household IDs. That information can then be matched up with first-party data from marketers and third-party data from licensed providers.

New England Public Media hires Matt Abramovitz as president, effective Feb. 1. Abramovitz is currently vice president of programming for New York classical music station WQXR, a part of New York Public Radio. He helped launch WQXR as a public station in 2009 and has served as its program director and interim general manager. Previously, he worked at WNYC, Blue Note Records and Sirius XM Radio. At NEPM, Abramovitz will be responsible for leading its efforts across radio, television, and digital media platforms.

WarnerMedia and **ViacomCBS** are putting the **CW Network** up for sale. Nexstar Media Group which is the largest owner of WB affiliate stations following its 2019 acquisition of Tribune Media, is said to be the main candidate to pick up the network. However, Deadline reports that several other suitors are in the mix. In a memo to staff, CW chairman and CEO Mark Pedowitz said that The CW has never been profitable on its own, but there is considerable value in the shows it produces for its studio parents, which are also distributed internationally and on streaming platforms.

The BBC hires former president of NBC News International Deborah Turness as CEO of BBC News and Current Affairs. Turness joins the BBC from Independent Television News, where she has served as CEO since April. At NBC, she was the first woman in the US to serve as president of a network news division. Turness succeeds 40-year BBC veteran Fran Unsworth, who has led the network's news division since January 2018, and is retiring at the end of this month. BBC chief executive Tim Davie called Turness "a



Deborah Turness

passionate advocate for the power of impartial journalism and a great believer in the BBC and the role we play, in the UK and globally."

JOB TRAINING NONPROFIT NEEDS PR BOOST

The Workforce Professionals Training Institute, the NYC nonprofit that since 2004 has put more than 500K job seekers on career pathways out of poverty, is looking for a firm to bolster its profile.

It wants a partner to significantly raise its brand message and name recognition both locally and nationally among funders, potential donors and stakeholders across the workforce development space.



The firm will establish an “actionable roadmap of marketing and communications activities” over the course of 2022, including strategic placement of promotional advertisements, online digital content, e-news briefs to spread

the word about WPTI’s programs, impact and innovations, according to its RFP.

The assignment will begin in February and run through March.

Proposals are due Jan. 14 and go to Andrea Vaghy at recruitment@wpti.org.
[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

VAN AUCKER GROUP TALKS FOR TURKEY

Van Aucker Group has inked a one-year contract to provide lobbying and government relations services to Turkey.



Serving as a subcontractor for LB International Solutions, Van Aucker is pushing for legislation to further the interests of Turkey, as well as promoting a positive image of Turks and the US-Turkey relationship.

Van Aucker also is charged with preserving and enlarging the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and Turkish Americans, which has 105 members.

The firm will receive a \$120K fee for its effort.

Robert Lewis, founder/CEO of Van Aucker, served as VP-financial services at the American Council of Life Insurers and VP-legislative & political affairs at the Financial Services Institute prior to setting up his shop.

PARSONS TO AMERICAN CLEAN POWER ASSN.

Bill Parsons, who was COO at the American Council on Renewable Energy, has moved to the American Clean Power Assn. as VP-federal and state affairs.



Bill Parsons

He is to advance ACPA’s agenda and policy issues at the federal and state government level and facilitate engagement with the public and the group’s stakeholders.

Prior to ACRE, Parsons was chief of staff and legislative director for Maryland’s then Congressman Chris Van Hollen in charge of climate, energy, tax and environmental matters.

ACPA’s membership includes BP, Google, Duke Energy, Orsted, Berkshire Hathaway Energy, Avangrid, Southern Power, Vestas, Pattern Energy and GE Renewable Energy.

ON THE MOVE

Goodman Media International promotes **Maryellen Mooney** to senior VP. Mooney has been with the agency since 2013, serving in positions including vice president, managing director and executive director. Prior to joining GMI, she was director of communications for NBCUniversal’s iVillage, director of media relations for NBCUniversal’s digital media group and public relations manager at CNBC. Mooney previously worked in public relations as a director at RFBinder Partners. In her new role, she will continue to develop and implement media relations and thought leadership strategies for a range of GMI’s clients.



Maryellen Mooney

Brunswick Group hires **Heidi Crowe** as global alumni lead, effective Jan. 10. Based in New York, Crowe will be responsible for coordinating the firm’s global alumni program. Most recently, she was managing director and head of research and information services at Abernathy MacGregor. Before that, Crowe was head of intelligence, research and analysis at Kekst CNC and she was at Brunswick from 2008 to 2015 as director of the firm’s US analysis and research center.

Caris Life Sciences brings on **Rob Clark** as senior vice president and chief communications officer. Clark most recently served as head of global communications at Exxon-Mobil, leading the company’s efforts across public and media relations, advertising, digital and social media, and employee and executive communications. He was previously CCO at medical technology company Medtronic. At Caris, Clark will oversee communications, corporate marketing and government relations efforts.

Upwork, a platform that connects businesses with freelancers, independent talent and agencies, hires **Melissa Waters** as chief marketing officer. Waters was most recently global vice president of marketing at Instagram. She left the company in December. Waters previously served as CMO at hims & hers and vice president, marketing at Lyft.

Hill+Knowlton Strategies hires **Becky Rawlings** as director, financial + professional services in London, reporting to managing director Nick Clark. Rawlings was previously a director at integrated comms agency Smarts, where she developed strategic and creative campaigns to drive consumer awareness and behavior change. Her background spans earned media, digital, content and publishing and influencer marketing.



Becky Rawlings

J Strategies brings on **Carly Andersen**, **Tess Morrissey** and **Gabriel Torres** to assume vice president posts. Andersen, who will be vice president, brand & media communications, has worked with domestic and international food, beverage, CPG and lifestyle clients. Morrissey will be vice president, policy & strategic affairs. She joins J Strategies from the University at Buffalo, where she was director of community relations and deputy director of state relations. Torres, who will be vice president, community outreach, most recently worked in the office of Congressmember Yvette D. Clarke (D-NY) as director of special projects and policy.

COMMENTARY

Americans aren't buying the canard pushed by the GOP that equates the Jan. 6 Capitol Hill rampage with the social protests of last summer.

The berserk Trump cultists and the protestors who hit the streets following the murder of George Floyd were both expressing their First Amendment rights, claim Republicans.

Only 22 percent of Americans believe the insurrectionists of Jan. 6 exercised their legitimate First Amendment rights, according to the Knight Foundation's "Free Expression in America Post-2020" report released Jan. 6. Only a third of Republicans called the riot legitimate, compared to 23 percent of Independents and 12 percent of Democrats.

The tepid support for the Capitol Hill rioters contrasts with the overwhelming support for the racial justice protests.

Almost three in four (73 percent) believe people taking part in the racial justice marches were legitimately expressing their First Amendment rights.

A majority of Republicans (56 percent) agree, along with 75 percent of Independents and 85 percent of Democrats.

Congresswoman Liz Cheney, one of the few Republicans to stand up to the Trump gang, said on the anniversary of the insurrection: "All of my colleagues, anyone who attempts to minimize what happened, anyone who denies the truth of what happened, they ought to be ashamed of themselves."

That day of reckoning may begin on Nov. 8, the date of the midterm elections.

Big Business trashes the Constitution... Boeing (\$346K), Koch Industries (\$308K), American Crystal Sugar (\$285K), General Dynamics (\$234K) and Valero Energy (\$207K) head the dishonor roll of corporations which contributed to the members of the Sedition Congress who voted to overturn America's democracy, according to a report from Citizens for Responsibility & Ethics in Washington.

Since the Capitol Hill insurrection, CREW found that 717 companies and industry groups forked over \$18M to 143 of the 147 members of Congress who voted against certifying the results of the 2020 presidential election.

Other companies on the dishonor roll include General Electric, Raytheon, Johnson & Johnson, FedEx, CVS Health, Humana, Marathon Petroleum, Dow Chemical, Booz Allen Hamilton, Rocket Mortgage and Pfizer.

CREW found that companies that pledged to either stop or pause giving to the Sedition Caucus kicked in \$4.8M to insurrectionist political groups or directly to their political campaigns.

Aflac, Ford Motor and Valero are among those that pledged to re-evaluate their contributions to supporters of the Big Lie but then soon returned to business-as-usual.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy is the top fundraiser of the Sedition Caucus. He hauled in \$688K from 105 companies and trade group donors. Chevron, Ford, UPS, Anheuser-

Busch, Merck and Valero gave money to McCarthy.

CREW did find companies that suspended donations to the Sedition Caucus.

It found that 134 of the 248 companies who vowed not to contribute to the Sedition Caucus have so far kept their word.

That corporate honor roll includes Hewlett Packard, Hallmark Cards, Toyota, Facebook/Meta, Citibank, McDonald's, Hilton Worldwide, BP America, Clorox, Coca-Cola, Charles Schwab, ViacomCBS, Deloitte, Blackrock, General Mills, Salesforce, Amazon and Smithfield Foods.

Americans are "worn out" with mask-wearing and vaccine mandates put into place to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a Monmouth University poll.

They are fed up with shifting guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ignoring the fact that the health agency must adapt to evolving science. What worked yesterday may not work today.

Many Americans also want to "move on" from the Jan. 6 insurrection, recasting that horrible day as a protest from patriots expressing their First Amendment rights. Get real.

A global pandemic does not bow to the widespread desire to return to the good old pre-COVID-19 days.

It's time for America to put on its Big Boy/Girl pants and deal with the world as it is, not as we want it to be.

Tesla takes a spin in Xinjiang... Now that Tesla has gained scale, CEO Elon Musk needs to rethink his lame-brained idea that the electric car company doesn't need a PR department.

The automotive iconoclast took his "stick it to PR act" way too far with news last week that Tesla has opened a Tesla showroom in Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang region of China, site of a genocidal campaign against ethnic Muslim Uyghurs carried out by China's authoritarian ruler Xi Jinping.

What was Elon thinking? Americans may think twice about buying a car from a guy whose company posts "Tesla (heart) Xinjiang" on the Chinese Weibo social media platform.

The U.S Senate on Dec. 16 passed a bill barring imports from the Xinjiang region due to the Chinese abuse and mistreatment of religious minorities. President Biden signed the bill into law on Dec. 23.

Human Rights Watch says China's "cultural persecution and arbitrary detention of a million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims since 2017 constitute crimes against humanity."

Musk has toadied up enough to China's leadership. Tesla's Shanghai factory produced half of the company's 2021 output, according to a research report from Credit Suisse.

Elon upped the ante in October with the opening of an R&D and data center in Shanghai, Tesla's first outside of the US. That facility will store data locally to comply with China's 2017 cybersecurity law.

Does Musk plan to open a news bureau in Hong Kong as a sign of approval for Beijing's crackdown on the city's once freewheeling media and its crushing of dissent?

The car company's dance with China's ruthless leadership is bound to bite Tesla some day.

—Kevin McCauley

