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# O'Dwyer's

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January 23, 2023 Vol. 56 No. 4

## EVINS TAKES OVER TEUWEN COMMUNICATIONS

Evins Communications has acquired New York-based Teuwen Communications, a nearly 30-year-old shop noted for its international wine, spirits and food clients.



Teuwen represents wine regions such as Wines of Alsace and Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance, as well as the Cognac Board and Chateau La Coste.

Mathew Evins said Teuwen's expertise will scale his firm's practice "by marrying their extensive food, wine and spirits knowledge with our decades of brand-building proficiency."

Stephanie Teuwen, said her firm and Evins Communications have a "similar approach to hospitality and long-term goals and relationships, and our shared resources will benefit the development of both agencies' clients."

## DENTONS NAMES CAPODANNO PARTNER

Dentons Global Advisors has hired [Real Chemistry's](#) John Capodanno, who was president of financial, corporate and capital market communications, as a partner in the firm, based in New York.

Before coming to Real Chemistry, Capodanno was Americas head of healthcare and life sciences for FTI Consulting. His experience includes providing counsel to members of the C-suite and boards of directors as they navigate a complex and highly regulated landscape.



**John Capodanno**

DGA has also added several other partners: Chris Kettmann (based in Chicago), who joins the firm from Lincoln Churchill Advisors; former head of economic affairs at the Embassy of Mexico in the US Antonio Ortiz-Mena (based in Washington, DC and Mexico City); and Emma Walsh (based in London), who most recently handled a range of corporate and financial communications activities at Apple.

"These new partners have backgrounds that as well as strengthening our expertise will also contribute to our entrepreneurial and diverse culture as we continue to grow," said DGA partner and head of the EMEA region Deborah Scott.

## NYC PUBLIC HEALTH NONPROFIT SEEKS PR

Public Health Solutions, which is the largest public health nonprofit serving New York City, is looking to build awareness of the critical work it does to improve the health and well-being of under-resourced communities across the five boroughs.



It supports more than 230 community-based organizations through long-standing partnerships and addresses issues such as food and nutrition, health insurance access, maternal & child health, reproductive health, tobacco control and HIV/AIDS prevention.

PHS has a strong focus on health equity to ensure NYC families have the basics for healthier lives.

A secondary goal of the outreach is to inspire public donations to PHS.

The RFP is available at the [Bonfire portal](#).

Interested parties must state their intention to bid by Jan. 26. Submissions are due Jan. 31.

## RUDER FINN HANDLES PR FOR FUTUREWEI

Ruder Finn has agreed to provide strategic communications support for Futurewei Technologies, a wholly owned subsidiary of China's Huawei Technologies.

The Trump administration slapped trade sanctions on Huawei in 2019, deeming it a risk to national security.

Ruder Finn's contract with Futurewei went into effect Jan. 5 and runs through March.

The pact calls for strategic counsel, media relations, influential stakeholder mapping, thought leadership, content strategy/development/management, and crisis/issues communications.

RF has a dozen staffers handling Futurewei, including CEO Kathy Bloomgarden and senior VPs Brianna Rabe and Antonia Caamano.

The New York-based shop also represents Huawei Technologies USA, which spent \$806K in fees at RF during the 12-month period ended June 30.



## **BUSINESS TOPS FOR TRUST: EDELMAN STUDY**

Business is now seen as more trustworthy than NGOs, government or the media, according to the newly released [2023 Edelman Trust Barometer](#).



Edelman's study, which surveyed more than 32,000 people in 28 countries, found that in an increasingly polarized world, business is far outperforming governments as regards trust levels. Across all the countries surveyed, business is deemed trustworthy

by 62 percent of respondents, vs. 51 percent for governments.

Business is also seen as less likely to be a source of "false or misleading information," with only 30 percent of respondents giving it low marks in that category, as opposed to the 46 percent who say the same about governments.

Economic optimism is on the decline across the board in the study. Out of the 28 countries surveyed, 24 recorded all-time lows in that category.

Greater political polarization is also affecting consumers. The responses from six countries (US, Spain, Sweden, South Africa, Argentina and Colombia) show them as "highly polarized," with another nine "in danger of severe polarization."

However, while survey participants who said that political divisions in their country are "entrenched" showed the lowest trust levels across all categories, their level of trust in business held up fairly well—sitting at 69 percent, vs. 49 percent for NGOs, 34 percent for media and 27 percent for government.

The Trust Barometer offers some suggestions for how businesses can make the most of the relatively high levels of trust that people have in them.

Almost seven out of ten respondents (69 percent) said "brands celebrating what brings us together and emphasizing our common interest would strengthen the social fabric."

There is also a general feeling that brands should take a stand against misinformation, with 71 percent of respondents saying that brands should "pull advertising money from platforms that spread misinformation."

"The increased perception of business as ethical brings with it higher than ever expectations of CEOs to be a leading voice on social issues," Edelman CEO Richard Edelman said. "But business must tread carefully—more than half (52 percent) of our respondents do not believe business can avoid being politicized when it addresses contentious societal issues."

## **FGS GLOBAL WORKS GENESIS CHAPTER 11**

[FGS Global](#) is handling the Chapter 11 filing of Genesis Global cryptocurrency lender, which is the latest casualty of the fallout from the implosion of Sam Bankman-Fried's FTX digital asset exchange, according to the *Financial Times*.



Genesis in November froze withdrawals due to the market turmoil triggered by the FTX collapse.

It claims the restructuring will optimize outcomes for its clients.

Derar Islim, interim CEO of Genesis, said the company deeply appreciates the ongoing patience and partnership of clients as it works towards an equitable solution.

Genesis has more than \$150M in cash on hand, which is expected to provide ample liquidity to support its ongoing business operation and facilitate the restructuring process.

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

[Coyne Public Relations](#) is providing public relations support for **The Play Date**, a single-day, invitation-only media event on March 8, hosted by The Toy Association, producers of Toy Fair, and Adventure Media & Events, publisher of The Toy Book and The Toy Insider. Coyne PR will work to secure media attendance by promoting the opportunities that the event offers, such as direct access to the toys being released throughout 2023. The campaign will focus



on a comprehensive media relations program targeting traditional media outlets, key industry experts and VIP influencers, including pre-show, on-site and post-show support.

[Marino](#) is selected to serve as agency of record for **Olive Tree Holdings**, a mission-driven private investment company with a focus on real estate. The company, which was formed in 2017 and has offices in New York City, Atlanta and Houston, specializes in acquisition, management and capital improvement efforts in multifamily communities within growing U.S. markets. Marino has been working with the firm's c-suite and executives since summer 2022 to formulate an in-depth communications program that targets Olive Tree's key stakeholders including clients, investors, the media and the community at large.

**Kafka Media Group** takes on AOR duties for **edgfactory**, a full-service media production partner for events, conferences and tradeshows. KMG will be responsible for handling the company's media relations, social media strategy and strengthening its brand recognition as a leader in the creative media, technology, and events space. "Kafka Media Group has greatly surpassed our expectations in the short time we've been working together," said edgfactory CEO Brian Cole.

**Hill+Knowlton Strategies** adds **Hill's Pet Nutrition**, a Colgate Palmolive brand, to its client roster. H+K will deliver PR, social media and influencer engagement across pet professional and pet owner audiences for Hill's. Their campaign "Be more animal" will employ a series of creative activations focused on driving engagement and advocacy for the brand.

[SWPR](#) is named public relations AOR for **Fetcherr**, an Israeli demand prediction and algorithm pricing company using AI-native high frequency pricing. The agency will manage media relations for Fetcherr to further build its presence within the technology and aviation spaces. "We chose them because of their well-known expertise and disruptive approach," said Fetcherr's co-founder Robby Nissan.



**The Brand Agency** signs on as agency of record for **Espanita Tequila**. The agency has been tasked with increasing the brand's visibility in the U.S. beverage market, leveraging traditional media relations, celebrity and influencer seeding, as well as events and cultural tentpole activations. Launched in 2017, Espanita's current footprint is spread across 22 states and Washington D.C. "We sought to connect with a like-minded firm that felt the same passion for their work," said Espanita Tequila chief operating officer Patrick Wilson.



## **TWITTER'S LESSONS FOR CRISIS COMMS**

There's never a dull news day for those who track Elon Musk's business activities and management of Twitter. Whatever your opinion on Musk, the media report on his every move for better or worse. There's no denying he moves boldly and publicly, and any of his recent controversies is packed with important learnings and reminders for communicators.

Here are seven lessons that can be applied to crisis communications situations—beyond “don't make your own problems”—and which can inform overall planning and management in challenging media environments:



**Alex Stanton**

**Follow the clicks**

In today's challenged economic environment for media platforms, there's a tug-of-war that guides newsroom judgment—the push-pull between reader traffic and journalistic mission. While journalists everywhere are interested in telling the best stories and reporting on hard news, often reader clicks have

a major influence on what gets covered, how thoroughly and for how long. What we've learned from the Twitter communications imbroglio is that when your actions or inactions create a persistent story, you shouldn't be surprised when it becomes your living reality. Those stories not only don't go away but are also often amplified as reporters and editors continue searching for ways to advance the story to compete with others on the same trail and fill their outlet's appetite for more clicks.

### **Pacing matters**

After your initial response to a controversy, it's smart to set and regularly revisit guideposts around pacing of response. Are you helped by responding immediately to each new development or line of media inquiry, or are you letting time be your friend? By pacing your responses, you can adjust your messaging according to what's known as opposed to what's speculated. This approach can allow an organization to present more thoughtful responses when it makes sense to do so—or to wait it out and let the story evolve away from their doorstep or fade away entirely.

### **Set the right tone when ownership changes**

It's reasonable to expect company ownership changes and the intentions of the new owners to be met with a certain amount of scrutiny and cynicism, even in smaller companies with less visible CEOs. How you address this reality at the time of announcement and in the first few weeks that follow will set the tone and provide a good compass reading for what to expect moving forward. Transparent communication—with-in reason—is helpful to establishing trust with employees. And filling the communications pipeline—even when there is nothing earth-shaking to share—helps tamp down the rumor mill and re-focus team members on their daily work.

### **Be ready to respond to the biggest reputation risks**

Most leaders of companies and organizations can list their most significant reputational risks, yet adequate preparation is often not done to respond to those risks when events place them in public view. It is essential to identify and have at hand draft responses to your five biggest reputational risks so that you avoid improvising while you're under the gun. Response time and credibility are enhanced during a crisis when you are working from pre-approved approaches.

### **Work the CEO's support network**

Communicators should connect with the CEO whisperers who can help define and moderate their company leader's natural instincts. These are the people—often outside the company—that the CEO will consult, or who will reach out to him or her, when times get tough. They can support sensible communications strategies, and discourage rogue behaviors.

### **A personal touch matters**

Adopting a personal and multi-constituent approach to communications outside of the town square can be very helpful in managing crisis situations. The tendency can be to turn inwards especially while firefighting on media inquiries and social channel chatter. But you can't lose sight of the positive impact that direct communication from company leaders can have on customers, business partners, employees and other key stakeholders. This is effective even when the decision-makers and influencers are reading persistent negative coverage in the media and social feeds.

### **Don't make assumptions about your allies**

Crisis preparation must include pre-recruiting third-party allies who can support your point of view and past actions around key issues. It's important to reach out to these independent influencers and make them feel informed and knowledgeable about the issues at hand as the situation evolves. Some may even be cultivated as advocates and supportive voices in the media. It's likewise a mistake to assume that employees will be your loyal friends when a controversy erupts—this has not been the case at Twitter. If they haven't been communicated with effectively and/or feel they aren't being listened to, current and former employees can be a potent source of bad news for the media and other stakeholders.

Examining or revisiting these lessons with a fresh eye should prove helpful as communicators manage through the crisis or media controversies they will inevitably face in 2023.

*Alex Stanton is CEO of [Stanton](#), a communications firm with offices in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area. He can be reached at [astanton@stantonprm.com](mailto:astanton@stantonprm.com).*

## **TENNESSEE TARGETS WHITEWATER RAFTERS**

Tennessee seeks a marketing communications partner to attract rafters to the world-class whitewater Ocoee River and visitors to the surrounding Polk County.

The River offers action-packed rapids throughout two five-mile stretches and is serviced by 23 permitted rafter outfitters that accommodate more than 150K guests annually. The site of the 1996 Olympics Whitewater Competition, it ranks as one of America's top five recreational rivers.

Polk County also is rich in history and culture, attracting non-rafting visitors regionally, nationally and internationally, according to the RFP.

Tennessee wants a partner to use as many PR, social media and advertising channels as needed to attract rafting enthusiasts and overnight stays in the region.

Responses are due Jan. 30. They go to: Shane Gibson, Sourcing Account Specialist; Central Procurement Office; Department of General Services; William R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower; 312 Rosa L. Parks Ave., 3rd Floor; Nashville, TN 37243.

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



## **BRUNSWICK HIRES ABU DHABI'S PR CHIEF**

Brunswick Group has recruited Rebecca Jarvest, who was director of communications and strategic partnerships for the Abu Dhabi Government Media Office, to bolster its footprint in the Gulf region.



**Rebecca Jarvest**

During her three-year stint, Jarvest launched Abu Dhabi's first global foreign direct investment push, handled the vaccination promotion push and advised government officials on participation in mega-events such as Davos and COP26.

Earlier, she handled PR for the 2019 Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi and directed communications for TRACCs, the PR network of firms in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Neal Wolin, Brunswick CEO, said Jarvest's extensive communications experience and understanding of critical issues will be valuable assets to the firm's growing client base in the Gulf area.

## **DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO SEEKS TOURISM PR**

The East Village Association, which represents businesses in part of San Diego's vibrant downtown scene, is looking for a firm to provide PR and social media management services to promote its initiatives, activities and events.



EVA's overall goal is to leverage earned media in target markets to promote East Village San Diego as a unique destination in the greater downtown neighborhood.

The selected firm will secure traditional media placements and handle crisis communications duties on behalf of the EVA and its stakeholders. It will work with the EVA in the areas of strategic planning, press releases, social media content, media tracking/analytics and email marketing.

EVA has allocated \$65K with an additional budget for social media advertising for the one-year campaign.

Proposals, due Jan 27, go to [info@eastvillagesandiego.com](mailto:info@eastvillagesandiego.com) with a confirmation call to Chris Gomez at 619-454-1596.

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

## **PARTY OVER FOR PARTY CITY**

[Kekst CNC](#) is handling the bankruptcy filing of Party City Holdco Inc., which has more than 800 celebrations stores in 45 states, as well as Halloween City seasonal pop-up outlets.

Brad Weston, CEO, cited the pandemic, the supply chain crisis and other macroeconomic challenges among reasons for the financial restructuring that will slash corporate debt.

Chapter 11 will strengthen Party City's balance sheet "and bolster our ability to further advance our strategic priorities and continue to innovate and elevate the customer experience," he said.

Weston said Party City is "as committed as ever to inspiring joy by making it easy for our customers to create unforgettable memories."

The financial overhaul of the Woodcliff Lake, NJ-based company is expected to be completed in the second quarter.

Kekst CNC's Sherri Toub and Wendi Kopsick represent Party City.



## **GETTING HARDER TO GET HITS**

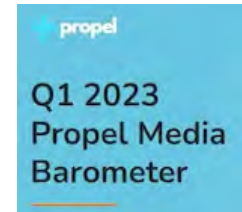
According to the new [Propel Media Barometer](#), it was harder than ever for PR pros to turn a pitch into a piece of earned media in Q4 2022.

While the study says that the open rate for PR pitches remained fairly steady (39.11 percent vs. 40 percent in Q3), the number of responses dropped to 2.66 percent in Q4 2022 from 3.35 percent in Q3.

The study dispenses a few tips on how PR pros can make their pitches rapid-fire attention-getters. The main takeaway: keep it short. The optimum subject length is 1-5 words, pitch leads should be limited to 51-80 words, and the body of pitch is best limited to 150 words.

And while outlets such as the BBC, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* are the most popular targets for pitches, the study reminds PR pros that "smaller outlets with a more specific reader base relevant to your target audience can actually provide much greater return on investment."

The Q1 2023 Propel Media Barometer examined approximately 500,000 pitches sent via the Propel platform during Q4 2022.



## **CNN'S BENNETT MOVES TO INVARIANT**

Kate Bennett, who was White House correspondent at CNN, has joined Invariant's strategic communications and PA team.

She covered social and political issues and the activities of First Lady Jill Biden.

Bennett frequently produced and wrote TV news pieces for CNN and headed its CoverLine, daily newsletter.

Prior to CNN, Bennett wrote for *Politico*, *Washingtonian Magazine* and authored a book about Melania Trump, "Free Melania: The Unauthorized Biography," published in 2019.

Heather Podesta, CEO of Invariant, called Bennett "a force in Washington and nationally" with a skillset that will help clients "craft their narrative and frame their story across integrated channels."



**Kate Bennett**

## **GATEWAY CHECKS OUT ACE HOTEL DEAL**

Gateway is handling Sortis Holding's \$85M deal to buy Ace Group International, which runs boutique Ace Hotels in locations such as Brooklyn, Manhattan, Los Angeles, Seattle, Toronto and Kyoto.

The Portland, OR-based hospitality management company promises to more than double the number of Ace Hotels to 30 units by 2025.

"Our acquisition of the storied Ace Hotel brand, long known for embodying and celebrating the unique culture of each of its destinations worldwide, provides us with an opportunity to advance this vision," said Paul Brenneke, executive chair of Sortis.

Kelly Sawdon, Sortis' hospitality partner, is a former partner of the Ace Hotel Group.

Gateway, which is based in Newport Beach, CA, has Zach Kadletz and Anna Rutter working the Ace transaction.





## THE LEVINSON GROUP ADDS MCDONOUGH

[The Levinson Group](#) has added Abbie McDonough, who was director of communications for then-DC attorney general Karl Racine, as senior managing director in its Washington office.



**Abbie McDonough**

For Racine, McDonough handled communications around litigation and policy platforms.

Earlier, she was VP at Breakwater Strategy doing issues management work and developing PR tactics for businesses, trade groups and nonprofits.

McDonough is a Capitol Hill veteran who was communications director for Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), national press secretary for Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) and communications director for Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D-PA).

Molly Levinson, TLG CEO, said McDonough has “experience shaping the communications strategies for some of the most consequential legal and legislative issues in recent years and will benefit our clients tremendously.”

## NORTH AUGUSTA WANTS DIGITAL PR PUSH

North Augusta is looking for a partner to create a digital PR campaign to generate awareness of the South Carolina town as a great destination for weekend trips, sports events, meetings and weddings.

The effort will target people living at least 50 miles from the city. North Augusta is located on the Savannah River across from Augusta, GA.



The town is minutes away from Fort Gordon, the home of the US Army’s cyber center of excellence.

North Augusta has budgeted \$30K for the campaign, which will be its first digital effort targeting tourism.

Proposals are due Jan. 26. They go to: Randy DuTeau; Tourism & Marketing Director; 100 Riverview Park Drive; North Augusta, SC 29841

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

## CORNERSTONE HIRES WARNOCK AIDE

Lawrence Bell, a top aide to Georgia Senator Raphael Warnock, will join Cornerstone Government Affairs on Feb. 15.

As Warnock’s chief of staff during his 2020 senatorial campaign, Bell helped chart his path to becoming the first Black US Senator from Georgia.

As deputy chief of staff to Senator Warnock, Bell led the transition team for setting up the new office and took on the role of policy and legislative advisor.

Bell is a former trustee and current member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Warnock is senior pastor.



**Lawrence Bell**

Prior to joining Warnock’s political team, Bell did a seven-year run at Troutman Sanders and exited as director of government and community affairs, and manager of external affairs, for the City of Atlanta.

Campbell Kaufman, Cornerstone managing director, said Bell’s relationships in Georgia and DC and understanding of both political landscapes will be invaluable to clients.

## NEWS OF FIRMS

[The Next Practices Group](#) and [The Bliss Group](#) introduce NPG Health, a life sciences marketing and communications collective. The collective will launch alongside its first firm, Bliss Bio Health. Gloria Vanderham, who was most recently region Europe head of communications at Novartis AG, will serve as CEO for NPG Health and Bliss Bio Health. The Bliss Group founder and managing partner Michael Roth will take on the role of chair for both units. NPG Health and Bliss Bio Health will focus on early science, R&D research, medical education and advertising, commercialization, health programs and reimbursement.

[Motion](#) has opened entries for its third annual Women of Impact Award. The award honors Chicago women who challenge the status quo in the marketing, advertising, public relations and communications fields. Award nominations, which include a 300-word entry outlining why the nominee deserves to be honored with the award, can be submitted via the [online nomination form](#) through Tuesday, Feb. 21. The 2023 Women of Impact Award winner will be announced Wednesday, March 8—International Women’s Day. Motion will make a donation on the winner’s behalf to a local charity supporting the empowerment of women.



[Mod Op](#), a strategic marketing, design and communications agency, acquires Toronto-based creative agency [Context Creative](#). Context Creative will become Mod Op’s second location outside the US (it also has an office in Panama) and serve as Mod Op’s Canadian headquarters. Context Creative founder Lionel Gadoury and agency principal Cate Jevons will join the Mod Op team as executive vp of strategy & creative and executive vp of client experience, respectively.

[Walker Sands](#) acquires [KoMarketing](#), a B2B demand generation firm headquartered in Boston. KoMarketing, which was founded in 2004, has nearly 30 team members supporting B2B clients in industries including cybersecurity, marketing technology, and healthcare and medical device technology. The acquisition, Walker Sands’ second to-date, is intended to deepen the firm’s existing capabilities in such top-of-funnel demand generation activities as paid digital advertising and SEO for B2B audiences.

[Edelman Global Advisory](#) launches its global health policy and PA offering. Led by EGA health chair Joseph M. Damond, the offering will focus on helping companies navigate the challenges of the health policy environment as well as anticipating and proactively addressing emerging developments and trends. Working with Edelman’s Global Health Sector, the new team will offer advisory services to help clients anticipate global regulatory and policy risk, strengthen ties with regulators and governments, and navigate opportunities in new markets.



[rEvolution](#), a sports marketing agency, picks up London-based PR and communications firm [Sine Qua Non](#), which specializes in tech-forward PR, communications and sponsorship in sport. Sine Qua Non will merge into the rEvolution brand and SQN CEO Claire Ritchie will become EVP and managing director. All SQN staff will join rEvolution. The acquisition of SQN joins adds a second UK location for the firm, joining rEvolution’s Chicago headquarters and offices in Detroit and Indianapolis as well as an existing London office.

# COMMENTARY



**Walt Disney Company has a blockbuster hit** coming up: the 2023 annual meeting.

The main feature of the double bill is the showdown with Triun Management's Nelson Peltz, who wants a seat on the board.

Disney CEO Bob Iger has told 80-year-old Peltz to take a hike. "Nelson Peltz does not understand Disney's

business and lacks the skills and experience to assist the board in delivering shareholder value in a rapidly shifting media ecosystem," says the company's presentation.

The second feature isn't too shabby, either. A shareholder resolution calls for an annual report on Disney's exposure in "Communist China, which is a serial human rights violator, a geopolitical threat and an adversary to the US."

Disney does business in and relies on raw materials, finished products, broadcasts, entertainment venues, theme parks and labor/services from entities in China.

Disney's extensive ties to China breed reputational risk. For instance, "Disney funds groups that promote the interests of homosexual and transgender people, while the Communist government persistently and vigorously cracks down on those forms of identity within its borders," according to the resolution.

Disney opposes the measure, saying disclosure of "the nature and extent to which its corporate operations involve or depend on one particular country would not provide additional value to the company's shareholders."

Note to Iger: China isn't an insignificant player in Disney's line-up. We are not talking about Peru or Nepal. We are talking about the world's No. 2 economy and the country that FBI director Christopher Wray has called "the biggest long-term threat to our economic and national security."

**If Marjorie Taylor Greene fell overboard**, would you toss her a lifeline? How about AOC?

After reading Edelman's latest Trust Barometer, I get the feeling that many people on that ill-fated cruise would skip the lifeline and just get back to the party.

Richard Edelman noted in his commentary about the Barometer that the combination of low trust in government, systemic unfairness and lack of common values caused the descent from an acceptable level of societal debate to a critical level of polarization.

"Overwhelming majorities, among those who feel strongly about an issue, refuse to live near or even lend a helping hand to people they disagree with," wrote Edelman.

Only 20 percent of Barometer respondents are willing to work with a person who strongly disagrees with their point of view.

**George Santos is the Congressman America deserves.** That's the headline of Lexington's Jan. 17 column in *The Economist*. The many lies of Santos do matter but not really for what they reveal about him.

Wrote Lexington: "He represents something true and awful, particularly about the Republican party but also about America, a nation lousy with misinformation, also known as deceit."

Social media has turned many Americans into deceptive brand ambassadors for themselves.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy had the opportunity to shame Santos into giving up his seat, but he caved to protect his fragile majority.

By assigning Santos to House committees, he showed that power means more to him than veracity. "The Speaker has blown a chance to restore some trust, in himself and Congress," wrote Lexington.

**Netanyahu's consultant joins McGuire Woods....** Josh Canter, who handled messaging and get-out-the-vote activities as a campaign consultant to Israel's now prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has joined McGuire Woods Consulting as VP of strategic digital communications based in Los Angeles.

For Netanyahu, Canter ran the program that got volunteers to conduct the outreach that generated about 30K voters in must-win areas of Israel.

Netanyahu heads a government that is the most far right and religiously conservative coalition in Israel's history, according to the *New York Times*.

About 130K Israelis have hit the streets to protest the government's effort to limit the powers of the Supreme Court.

**The *New York Times* is staffed by clueless left-wingers** who rarely venture beyond the confines of Manhattan, according to the paper's critics.

But Bret Stephens, one of the paper's two conservative columnists, proves that liberals don't have a lock on being out-of-touch with the rest of the country.

Stephens argued on Jan. 17 that Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen set the bar way too low, when she suggested the IRS won't audit households with under \$400K in annual income, if it gets the 87K new staffers promised by Joe Biden to go after tax cheats.

"If you think of a middle-aged professional couple living in, say, New York City or San Francisco, each making about \$200,000 a year, filing a joint tax return, already in a high bracket, paying through the nose for rent or maintenance or a mortgage, you're probably not going to describe their lifestyle as 'rich.'"

Gail Collins, who shares a column with Stephens, brought him back to Earth, noting that most Americans wouldn't regard households making \$400,000 a year as victims when it comes to having their tax returns scrutinized.

She added that the \$400K sum is more than quintuple what the IRS agent doing the scrutiny probably gets for a living.

She believes a middle-aged couple living in Toledo would find Stephens' take to be off-the-wall.

"As much as I adore Manhattan, I don't think its housing costs should be a template for national tax policy," wrote Collins.

It's time to take that long road trip, Bret. —Kevin McCauley