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WPP MERGES BCW, H&K

WPP CEO Mark Read is merging PR flagships BCW and Hill & Knowlton to create Burson in his latest move to streamline the advertising giant.

He noted the PR units have “complementary strengths, shared ambitions and many shared clients.”



BCW chief Corey duBrowa, who was brought in from Google last year, will head Burson.

H&K chief AnnaMaria DeSalva will support duBrowa as global chairman.

The H&K brand will survive under the Burson umbrella “serving a select group of clients globally through strategic communications, advisory and public affairs services,” according to the announcement.

The partner firms claim the marriage will result in “immediate scale in sectors driving today’s most consequential innovation and economic growth, including healthcare and technology.”

The consolidation will become effective on July 1.

Burson will have more than 6,000 staffers in 43 countries. Its new brand will debut by yearend. The leadership team will be rolled out this year as the integration process moves forward.

Read in October merged Wunderman Thompson and VM-LY&R to form VML, the world’s largest creative shop.

LLYC POSTS 14% GROWTH IN ‘23

Madrid’s LLYC posted 14 percent growth to \$90M and a 15 percent rise in EBITDA to \$20M. Organic growth advanced eight percent.



Alejandro Romero

CEO Alejandro Romero called 2023 “a crucial year for the firm with a very positive outcome.”

He noted that LLYC bolstered its position in the US via the acquisition of an 80 percent stake in San Diego-based BAM for \$13.2M. It also strengthened its tech practice.

LLYC’s deep digital unit, which includes marketing, performance and paid media and AI solutions grew 21 percent during the past year and accounts for 34.5 percent

of operating income. The firm plans to invest about \$45M during the 2023 to 2015 periods with a focus on building up its marketing and corporate affairs practices.

NEW CANAAN EXPECTS PR TO UP VAX RATES

New Canaan is seeking a firm to create a “strategic, effective and impactful media campaign” to increase the number of people getting vaccinated in the Connecticut town.

It has experienced a significant drop in flu immunizations and COVID-19 booster shots during the past year.

The selected firm will develop a campaign that stresses the importance of vaccinations, dispels myths and misconceptions about shots, and encourages individuals and families to take proactive steps toward immunization.

The effort will reach diverse demographics within the New Canaan market and create a positive narrative around immunizations to address vaccine hesitancy.

The campaign will run across multiple online platforms, social media, print, TV, and radio. Experience in public health campaigns is preferred, thought not required.

Responses are due Feb. 1. They go to Jenn Eielson, director of health, at jenn.eielson@newcanaanct.gov.

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



PROSEK PARTNERS TAKES STAKE IN BECCA

[Prosek Partners](#) makes a minority investment in Becca, a marketing and creative communications agency with offices in New York and Los Angeles.

Becca represents brands in such sectors as food & beverage, travel, design, real estate, consumer products and entertainment, with a client roster including Tishman Speyer’s revitalized Rockefeller Center, Tequila Casa Dragones and the Fontainebleau Las Vegas.

“Our clients increasingly understand the importance of hospitality and experience marketing for both their own businesses and those they invest in,” said Prosek managing partner Jen Prosek. “In our view, Becca is the best in the space.”

The partnership, which will be Prosek’s fourth GP stakes investment, will expand Becca’s global footprint, starting with a new London office.



Becca Parrish, Jen Prosek

LONGACRE WORKS ARKHOUSE MACY'S BID

Longacre Square Partners handles Arkhouse Management's \$5.8B for Macy's, which the retailer rejected as lacking "compelling value" on Jan. 21.



Macy's board expressed doubts that Arkhouse and its partner Brigade Capital Management could finance their proposed transaction. CEO Jeff Gennette did say that his company is open to opportunities that are in the best interest of Macy's and its shareholders.

Arkhouse believes that Macy's investors support a privatization plan, and see the potential to up its \$21 per share offer if it gains access to the necessary due diligence materials.

Macy's reported a 60 percent drop in Q3 (ended Oct. 31) net to \$43M on a seven percent sales dip to \$4.9B.

Longacre's Scott Deveau and Joe Germani represent Arkhouse. Macy's has Chris Grams, senior director of corporate & financial communications, working the media, while Pam Quintiliano, IR head, handles Wall Street on the takeover bid.

BRUNSWICK GETS \$7M FROM UAE CENTER

The Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism paid Brunswick Group \$6.9M during the six-month-ended-November period for corporate communications and digital advisory work for the Abrahamic Family House.

The AFH, which opened in February 2023, includes the Imam El-Tayeb Mosque, which is named after the Grand Imam of the Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo; Moses Ben Maimon (e.g., Maimonides) Synagogue; and St. Francis Church.



Its mission is to build on the "[Document of Human Fraternity](#)" to promote world peace and inter-

faith dialogue that was signed by Pope Francis and Ahmed El-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi in 2019.

Brunswick's AFH team includes Julia Ghiheen, Errol Cockfield, Noam Safler and Chanel Caraway.

It extended an invite to Kelly Osgood of the *New York Times* to cover the AFH, and responded to a request from CNBC's Michael Sutton to film at the facility.

CURRENT GLOBAL'S DEVLIN STEPS DOWN

Current Global CEO Virginia Devlin is stepping down in March after having helmed the agency for the past 18 years.

Devlin previously spent nine years at IPG agency Weber Shandwick, and has worked at Selz Seabolt and EvansGroup Public Relations (both now part of the Publicis Dialog network).



Virginia Devlin

Among Devlin's signature achievements at Current Global has been the launch of Accessible by Design, a commitment to ensure that all communication meets the highest accessibility standards including people with sight, hearing, and cognitive disabilities.

"I am continually impressed by what she's built at Current Global," said The Weber Shandwick Collective president Susan Howe.

NEWS OF FIRMS

Purposeful Communications, the strategic communications firm founded by former NASDAQ global head of communications Frank De Maria, rebrands as **Purposeful Advisors**. Elie Jacobs, who joined Purposeful Communications as a partner in May 2021, will be a founding partner of Purposeful Advisors. The new name is a response to a "shift in the role of the communications professional from technician to coach and advisor," said De Maria. "This is especially true for start-up, scale-up and mid-sized companies that require advisors with real world experience who understand the challenges young companies face."

PURPOSEFUL
advisors

Haven Tower Group, which works with clients in the wealth management industry, launches **Haven Mark Partners**, an integrated marketing solutions platform created for wealth management enterprises and related businesses. Haven Mark combines Haven Tower's messaging and storytelling prowess with marketing and brand strategies that are purpose-built for the wealth management industry while incorporating elements of technology, consumer and broader financial services campaigns. Haven Tower partner and head of digital marketing strategies Katherine Paulson will serve as managing partner of the new platform.

Milldam Public Relations launches its Data Center Community Relations Service, which will exclusively serve the digital infrastructure sector. The new practice offers services that include establishing partnerships with third-party organizations, communicating the benefits of data centers in the community, developing and providing key talking points and implementing grassroots campaigns and community outreach. The agency says the service is being launched in response to the recent widespread backlash to data center development and the lack of tools to combat this within the data center industry. The new service offering will be overseen by agency partner Adam Waitkunas.

Dukas Linden Public Relations is playing a central role in the SEC's long-awaited approval for spot Bitcoin ETFs. DLPR represented two firms that were greenlighted to begin trading in Bitcoin ETFs as well as two other clients that have fund applications pending with the SEC. "The approvals usher in a pivotal moment in the cryptocurrency landscape, opening avenues for wide-based adoption and investment," said DLPR CEO Richard Dukas. "The media and investors are closely watching developments in the space, which will likely pave the way for a new era in the rapidly-evolving digital assets space."



Sharon Merrill Advisors, a strategic communications and investor relations firm, launches Investor Day Concierge, a service offering that gives investor relations officers and other C-suite execs planning investor day events access to expertise and support in strategic planning, perception audits, event management, messaging & presentation development, and speaker training. "We offer Investor Day Concierge as a one-stop solution so that IROs and the C-suite can take the guesswork out of their preparation of these important events," said Sharon Merrill Advisors CEO Maureen Wolff.

HOW TO HANDLE A MISINFORMATION HIT

The spread of false and misleading claims has long challenged corporations of all sizes and industries. Whether it's whisper campaigns amongst competitors with malicious intent, or rampant negative product reviews on TikTok from a misinformed customer, misinformation and disinformation can have a material impact on a business. Despite some efforts to help curb the spread of these claims, the issue shows no signs of slowing down.

As generative artificial intelligence becomes further integrated into everyday life, the problem of distorted narratives is becoming more sophisticated and even more widespread. We see it in the form of political parties leveraging AI to



Kendall Fitter, Deirdre Walsh

create “warning videos” of what the world would look like if an opposing party secured re-election and sophisticated users generating convincing propagation of their claims in the form of news reporting, reviews and whistleblowing. In general, it has become more and more challeng-

ing for everyday users to decipher what's real—and can be verified—and what's fabricated.

As these tools become more powerful, even with increased safeguards and legislation, it's important that companies prepare themselves to identify, mitigate and respond to false claims. The proactive management of these issues can prevent a small issue from escalating to a crisis with long-term reputational impact.

As companies impose their own safeguards, they should consider the following tactics:

Implement a tracking system and determine levers for escalation. Equip your communications and/or social teams with the right tools to track mentions of your company, as well as your competitors and industry, so you can be aware of and prepare for the potential impacts of an industry-wide issue. With monitoring tools in place, ensure your team also has the right [data inflection points](#) to help them determine when they might escalate an issue of concern to leadership. Advanced tracking tools and an escalation plan are fundamental for a communications team, particularly given the growing sophistication of AI tools.

Establish a publicly available resource hub for key stakeholders. A dedicated hub of questions and answers on company-owned channels can save your team time and energy when managing both customer and media inquiries. It also will demonstrate that this information was created proactively and not just in reaction to an emerging issue. The resource hub will allow you to quickly counter any claims by pointing inquirers to the hub and ensure that your answers are consistent and discoverable.

Verify leadership social accounts. Executives—especially CEOs without verified and optimized digital profiles—are reputationally vulnerable. With threats of online impersonation and the spread of misinformation rising, particularly with AI, optimized digital profiles become especially important when facing critical issues. Social media is a key information driver, making it more important than ever for [executives to have verifiable, owned and updated online profiles](#).

Determine key spokespeople and conduct media training and preparation. When we work with our clients, the goal is to manage an issue before it escalates to the point of requiring a company spokesperson to get involved. That said, it's important to identify spokespeople and train them to represent the company should the need arise. On-camera practice with key company messaging and questions and answers, as well as recommendations on how to engage with the media and other key stakeholders, is an effective way to arm your spokespeople with the tools to confidently speak to the media and key stakeholders amidst critical moments.

Identify third-party advocates to bolster your narrative. While it's important for a company to tell its own story, it can be incredibly additive to leverage third-party voices to amplify your narrative. Whether that support comes from industry experts, employees, partners or other key stakeholders, it's critical that a company continually cultivates those advocates. This includes having third-party testimonials in place on owned channels or ready and available to disseminate at the right moment.

In today's environment, it's a matter of “when” not “if” you or your company will be faced with false claims and misrepresentation of the facts. Implementing the tactics above, in addition to developing a communications plan that considers the most prominent risks your company faces, will better prepare you to navigate and counter the spread of inaccurate information so that your stakeholders know where the truth lies.

Whether your company seeks to prepare against the proliferation of misinformation or is facing false claims amidst the [increasingly unstable macroeconomic and social environment](#), H/Advisors Abernathy can support you in protecting your business and mitigating reputational damage while returning your organization to normal.

[Kendell Fitter](#) is Managing Director and Head of the Crisis practice at [H/Advisors Abernathy](#). [Deirdre Walsh](#) is Vice President at [H/Advisors Abernathy](#).

VT'S DEERFIELD VALLEY NEEDS MARKETING

Southern Vermont's Deerfield Valley region is looking for an agency that can implement the creation and execution of a digital marketing campaign for summer and fall of 2024.

The Southern Vermont region, which sits in the valley of the Green Mountains, includes the towns of Dover, Halifax, Jacksonville, Marlboro, Readsboro, Searsburg, Wardsboro, Whitingham and Wilmington.

The Southern Vermont Deerfield Valley Chamber of Commerce, the non-profit that promotes tourism and supports business growth in the community, is looking for an agency that can provide design and media buying services.



Scope of the work includes: Developing a new campaign tagline; developing ad templates utilizing the new tagline and design elements from the Southern Vermont Deerfield Valley brand for paid media campaigns; creating assets for a social media campaign; coordinating and executing media buys; providing KPIs to help measure the campaigns' success; and providing bi-weekly analytic reports.

Proposals are due by 5 p.m. (ET) on Friday, February 9, and should be emailed to Tim Dolan via email at marketing@visitvermont.com.

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

BROWNSTEIN DRIVES GEELY'S US PUSH

Brownstein Hyatt Farer Schreck has lined up Zhejiang Geely Holding Group as a client as the Chinese automaker slates a US push for its electric vehicles.



The *Detroit News* has reported that Geely has big plans for its Polestar Swedish premium electric brand. It expects to start production of the Polestar 3 SUV this summer at a Volvo Car facility near Charleston to sidestep US tariffs.

Geely owns a 50.5 percent stake in Polestar, while Sweden's Volvo has a 49.5 position. It controls a 6.8 percent stake in Volvo.

Brownstein shareholder Alfred Mottur, a top Democratic fundraiser and former tech/technology advisor to the Senate Commerce Committee, spearheads the Geely effort.

Senior policy advisor Greg Sunstrum, deputy chief of staff to Michigan Congresswoman Debbie Dingell and her late husband, John; also works on the Chinese business.

C STREET WORKS CAREISMATIC CHAPTER 11

C Street Advisory Group serves as strategic communications counselor to Careismatic Brands, which filed for Chapter 11 on Jan. 22.

Careismatic, the world's largest provider of medical apparel and footwear, took a hit with the big drop off in demand following the end of COVID-19 pandemic.



The Santa Monica-based company chalked up \$687M in 2021 revenues, which was up 38 percent from the pre-pandemic \$498M level in 2019.

Revenues came in at \$559M last year.

The restructuring will eliminate \$833M in Careismatic debt, reduce its interest expense burden and let it push its transformation plan.

CEO Sid Lakhani said the Chapter 11 move "will enable us to continue to execute key strategic initiatives and achieve long-term profitable growth."

C Street's Careismatic team includes Jon Henes, Jackie Rubin, Luke Wolf, Ashley Roth, Isabel Baer and Samantha Weitz.

INVARIANT SNAGS TOP DEFENSE REPORTER

Marcus Weisgerber, a veteran defense and national security reporter, has joined Invariant's strategic communications & PA unit. He will counsel defense, technology, AI and business clients in areas such as media strategy, storytelling and reputation management.

Weisgerber joins the DC shop after a ten-year stint at Defense One, where as business editor he also wrote the Defense Business Brief.



Marcus Weisgerber

Earlier, Weisgerber was senior Pentagon correspondent at Defense News and an editor at Inside Defense.

Matt Gallagher, who heads Invariant's stratcom & PA practice, said Weisgerber understands "how to engage nationally and knows what resonates not only with the Administration and Congress, but also for investors and the business community."

HAWAII SEEKS PR TO TOUT AGRIBUSINESS

Hawaii's Agribusiness Development Corp. is looking for a firm to develop a communications campaign to educate stakeholders and the public about its projects and initiatives.

Formed in 1994, ADC was tasked with broadening Hawaii's agricultural base from sugar and pineapple to include a diversity of crops. It also is charged with positioning agriculture as a dynamic growth industry in the Aloha State.

The selected firm will be responsible for core messaging, relationship building, digital content, newsletter production, media relations and issues/crisis management.

It will have at least 10 years of experience in PR/community outreach, and an understanding of the agriculture and agribusiness sectors.

ADC plans to issue a one-year contract. Responses are due Feb. 8. Interested parties need to register with [Hawaii's e-portal](#).

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



MEDIA MANEUVERS

The *Los Angeles Times* gives pink slips to close to a quarter of the people working in its newsroom. The Media Guild of the West, which represents the Times' unionized journalists, says that the cuts included reporters, editors and columnists. A union statement also said that the layoffs fell disproportionately on Black, Latino and Asian employees. The layoffs follow the resignation of executive editor Kevin Merida and other senior newsroom managers. LA Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong said the paper has been losing \$30 million to \$40 million a year and needs to make more progress toward increasing revenue and readership. "Slashing a quarter of the newsroom is devastating by any measure," the Guild said.



TIME is also laying off about 30 employees, which accounts for approximately 15 percent of its editorial staff. According to a TIME spokesperson, the cuts hit departments including editorial, technology, sales and the company's studios division. At TIME for Kids, the platform's publication for school-age children, a majority of the staff was let go. "We have worked to manage expenses in other areas of our business aggressively to minimize the impact of this decision on our employees," TIME chief executive Jessica Sibley wrote in a memo to staffers that was obtained by CNN. Sibley called the job cuts part of "a series of decisions to structure our company for long-term sustainability and growth."

The *Baltimore Banner*, the nonprofit platform that faces off against the *Baltimore Sun* says that it added 500 subscribers per day in the three days following the sale of the paper to Sinclair Broadcast Group chairman David D. Smith by Alden Global Capital, according to NiemanLab. Banner editor in chief Kimi Yoshino also says that traffic to the Banner website has doubled since the sale and donations are up. The Banner now claims 89,000 paid subscribers, versus 70,000 seven months ago. Banner founder Stewart Bainum made an unsuccessful bid to purchase the Sun in 2022.

PR PROS CALL AI CONTENT TOP TREND

A strained economy resulted in notoriously tight PR and marketing budgets in 2023, but according to [a new survey published by PR software platform Prowly](#), communication professionals appear ready for a fresh start and a shift in strategy in 2024.

The survey, which asked hundreds of PR pros what strategies they're focusing on and what their budget priorities will look like for the coming year, revealed that artificial intelligence, which took the communications world by storm last year, featured prominently as a topic of enthusiasm.

More than a third (36 percent) of PR pros surveyed think AI-content generation will be 2024's top PR trend. Data-driven PR took a distant second place (17.5 percent), followed by the use of AI for conducting research (12.9 percent), social responsibility (9.8 percent) and digital PR and link building (5.9 percent).



AI was also listed among the top three areas where PR pros think their budgets should be allocated to get the best ROI results in 2024. Among those surveyed, 19 percent said they believed investing in AI-powered tools to improve daily workflow and efficiencies should be a priority in 2024. That percentage was even higher among solo PR practitioners surveyed (25 percent) as well as agencies (20 percent), though it was somewhat lower among in-house teams (16 percent).

Nurturing strategic partnerships topped the list as PR pros' preferred area of investment this year, as more than a third (37 percent) of respondents cited allocating funds to build these collaborative relationships as their number-one priority for 2024. Coming in at number three—behind investing in AI-powered tools—was conducting market research. Among PR pros surveyed, 14 percent of respondents cited using data to unlock new possibilities as a top priority.

However, even though AI was predicted to be the biggest PR trend for 2024 and AI tools were routinely cited as a preferred source for PR dollars, respondents also listed AI-generated content as a trend that needs to go. The survey discovered that 13 percent of PR pros put AI-generated content on their "out" list for 2024. Brands were especially critical of the practice, with 17 percent of in-house PR teams citing dissatisfaction with AI-generated content, while agencies seemed more accepting (with only 11 percent citing disapproval).

The biggest trend on the "out" list this year was the use of X (Twitter). Nearly a third (31 percent) of respondents said the social media site was no longer essential. Other trends that were deemed as being "out" this year included sending mass emails to journalists (disapproved by 14 percent), paid media coverage (disapproved by 11 percent), and favoring global reach over local (disapproved by 10 percent).

Finally, the report noted that while "social responsibility" had been listed as the top PR trend last year, its inclusion dipped from 31 percent in 2023 to only 9.8 percent this year. However, the survey's authors noted that this decrease shouldn't suggest that DEI, CSR and ESG are on their way out, but instead that they are "no longer just a trending topic but has become a mainstream and standard part of brand strategies."

Prowly's "PR Trends and Predictions for 2024" report surveyed 300 communications professionals worldwide stationed at PR agencies, non-profits and in-house teams. The survey was conducted in November and December.

ON THE MOVE

The Weber Shandwick Collective names DXTRA Health chief healthcare officer **Laura Schoen** to oversee the global healthcare network across all TWSC agencies. In addition to now serving as TWSC's chief healthcare officer, Schoen will continue in her responsibilities at DXTRA Health and in her role as chair, Latin America on behalf of Weber Shandwick. Schoen's new role is part of a series of changes to the network's global healthcare leadership team. **Pam Jenkins**, TWSC's chief public affairs officer, will be taking on expanded duties as chief public health officer for the entire collective and dna Communications GM **Mike Rosich** has been appointed as dna's global president.



Laura Schoen

Manifest appoints **Helen Kenny** as its first chief operating officer. Kenny joined the firm in 2013, serving as a partner since 2020 and holding the position of group special operations director since 2022. As COO, she will oversee the development of the agency's proprietary technologies and innovations, including its omni-channel reporting platform, The Loop, and its creator collaboration system, ROGER.

Banner Public Affairs hires **Maranda Saling** as VP of government relations. Saling comes to Banner from the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, where she served as government affairs and policy manager. She previously worked for Cory Booker's 2020 senatorial campaign and was subsequently a staffer in his Senate office. Before that, she founded and ran her own firm, Belleflower Communications. Saling will assist clients from Banner's Washington, D.C. headquarters.

Huge, Interpublic Group's creative consultancy, promotes **Lisa De Bonis** to CEO. De Bonis has been with the agency since 2021, most recently serving as global chief product and growth officer. She previously served as managing director at Accenture Interactive and a partner at Havas London. DeBonis succeeds Mat Baxter, who had served in the role since 2021.

Amblin Partners, the film production company founded by Steven Spielberg and film producers Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall in 1980, taps former DreamWorks president of marketing and CBS Films president **Terry Press**

to serve in the newly created role of president of strategy and communications. In her new role, Press will oversee the strategy and execution of all elements of marketing, publicity, consumer products and communication strategy for the film and television divisions of Amblin Partners and Spielberg. She is not filling the job vacated recently by Dan Berger.

S&P Global has promoted **Christina Twomey** to global head of communications after having held various leadership roles across the company in her 13 years there. She has most recently been head of communications for S&P Global Ratings. In her new post, Twomey will serve as a critical advisor to president and CEO Doug Peterson and the board on all matters pertaining to communications. The role was previously held by Ola Fadahunsi.



Lisa De Bonis

COMMENTARY

What would Harold Burson think about WPP engineering a merger of BCW with Hill & Knowlton, his one-time arch-competitor?

Burson, who died in January 2020 at the age of 98, could never have dreamed that back in its heyday Burson-Marsteller could hook up with H+K.

The two bitter rivals represented the upper-crust of corporate PR but they competed like cats and dogs. B-M and H+K



Harold Burson

ranked No. 1 and No. 2, respectively in *O'Dwyer's* 1991 rankings. B-M retained the top notch in 1992 and 1993 as H+K fell to No. 3 as Shandwick moved up into the second spot in both years.

But times changed. Driven by technology, the shattering of the old-boys' network, growing professionalism, globalization, and the insatiable demand for public relations,

a new generation of firms challenged the dominance of B-M and H+K, which lost the relative clout they once enjoyed.

WPP made that crystal clear in 2018 when it retired the Burson-Marsteller brand via a merger with Cohn & Wolfe to form BCW. To make matters worse (from a B-M standpoint) C&W CEO Donna Imperato was named chief of the combined company.

B-M royalty, which counseled CEOs and governments that ran afoul of US opinion, dismissed C&W as a little sister agency focused on consumer products and sports PR. The creation of BCW put the bottom rung on top.

A WPP executive told me that Harold would have approved the BCW-H+K marriage because it restores his name to the PR field. He also would smile over the fact that H+K will be reduced to being a brand dealing with selected clients in the re-named Burson firm once the company springs to life on July 1.

What would John Hill and Donald Knowlton think about that?

Seat at the table... That old cliché has been bandied about the PR business for years, but sometimes it turns out to be true as evidenced by the preliminary proxy statement released Jan. 24 by US Steel for its proposed merger with Nippon Steel.

It shows that representatives of USS financial communications advisor Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher attended virtual special meetings held by the board of directors and senior managers to discuss the Nippon offer and competing bids from Cleveland-Cliffs and others for the steelmaker.

JFWBK attended at least three meetings from Aug. 11 through Dec. 16 concerning the merger.

Goldman Sachs and Barclays; global advisory Evercore; and lawyers Millbank, Ropes & Gray, and Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz joined JFWBK at the table. That's pretty heady company for a PR firm.

The press release announcing the \$14.9B merger of USS and Nippon Steel was issued Dec. 18.

JFWBK partners Kelly Sullivan and Ed Trissel handled that announcement. Both executives are M&A veterans.

Sullivan represented US Airways on its acquisition by American Airlines, and Grupo Modelo on the InBev/Anheuser-Busch transaction.

Trissel handled Gannett during its acquisition by New Media, and Mastercard on its deal for Finicity.

Future PR meetings and seminars about "getting a seat at the table" would be wise to feature JFWBK's work for USS.

What is it afraid of?... ExxonMobil is the first major US oil company to file a lawsuit to stop a shareholder resolution on climate change from going to a vote at its upcoming annual meeting.

The resolution from Arjuna Capital and Follow This, an Amsterdam-based activist investor group, simply asks ExxonMobil to step up its effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

It calls for the energy giant to "go beyond current plans" and set new targets and timetables. A similar proposal was voted down by shareholders in 2022 and 2023.

ExxonMobil's suit claims the Arjuna and Follow This proposal violates SEC rules that prohibit repeat resolutions in the event that earlier proposals didn't gain increased shareholder support.

The energy giant's over-the-top move to censor shareholders is a sweet PR victory for Arjuna and Follow This.

Mark van Baal of Follow This said that ExxonMobil clearly wants to prevent shareholders from using their rights. "Apparently, the board fears shareholders will vote in favor of emissions reductions targets," he said in a statement.

The *Financial Times*, BBC, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *The Guardian* were among the major news outlets to cover ExxonMobil's power move.

That coverage has a David vs. Goliath aspect to it. Had ExxonMobil followed the golden rule, the Arjuna and Follow This resolution would have gone quietly into the May 29 night of the annual meeting.

"I'll see you on the radio." Charles Osgood, legendary journalist and "CBS Sunday Morning" anchor for 22 years, died on Jan. 23. He was 91 and had suffered from dementia.

Known as CBS News' poet-in-residence, Osgood was a talented story teller, who also played the piano, organ, banjo and violin during the program.

Jane Pauley, who succeeded Osgood in 2016, said: "Watching him at work was a masterclass in communicating. I think to myself, 'How would Charlie do it.'"

Osgood also presided over "The Osgood File," which was one of the longest features in radio history. He wrote and hosted the Osgood File for about 46 years, and signed off each spot with, "I'll see you on the radio."

Born in New York City as Charles Osgood Wood, he got the media bug while chief announcer and then talk show host at Fordham University's WFUV radio station.

Osgood credited his success to his mantra of using short words, short sentences and short paragraphs, saying "there's nothing that can't be improved by making it shorter and better."

That's advice that PR people should take to heart.

—Kevin McCauley