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O'Dwyer's Newsletter

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LEVICK REVAMPS QATAR BUSINESS

Levick, which has represented the Embassy of Qatar, is now working for the nation's communications office under a revamped six-month agreement pegged in the \$375K range.

According to its contract, Richard Levick's Washington-based firm will conduct ongoing risk-sensing and analysis with a focus on US-Qatar relations, create "forward-looking and actionable recommendations," develop a stakeholder map of policy influencer, key media and third-parties, monitor and analyze information from think tanks, and publications and consultant with Qatari officials to ensure clarity of communications.



Qatar, which is home of Al-Jazeera satellite TV network and America's largest military base in the Middle East, has been in the news due to its squabble with its Gulf neighbors led by Saudi Arabia.

Government-owned Qatar Airways today said it would buy a 10 percent stake in arch-rival American Airlines for more than \$800M.

Doug Parker, CEO of AA, said he is "not happy" with that investment and called the open market stock purchase approach "puzzling and strange."

LEXIS TEAMS UP WITH TEXT100

London-based consumer agency Lexis has been integrated into global communications agency Text100.

The merger, which primarily affects the Next Fifteen unit's UK office, became effective June 22.

Lexis specializes in consumer PR, corporate communications, social media and digital marketing, as well as live event management. Clients include global consumer brands such as Pizza-Hut, Pernod Ricard and Harley-Davidson, among others. The agency, which was founded in 1992 and staffs 30, was acquired in 2008 by Text100 parent Next Fifteen.



All of Lexis' staff members have moved into Text100's London office, now making it the agency's largest outpost, with 100 employees (the agency relocated its London offices to the city's Holborn neighborhood in 2015 following Next Fifteen's acquisition of content marketing agency Republic Publishing and UK-based digital marketing firm IncrediBull World).

Text100 UK managing director Tara O'Donnell will assume overall responsibility for the combined agency, and former Lexis deputy MD Ruth Kieran now becomes

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STATE DEPT. BANKROLLS \$2M 'NET FREEDOM BID

The State Dept. has issued a "notice of funding opportunity" (DRLA-DRLAQM-18-005) for a \$2M campaign to "promote an open, interoperable, secure and reliable global Internet."

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, which is behind the effort, wants to further its goal to push for "fundamental freedoms, human rights, and the free flow of information online by supporting civil society to advocate for rights-respecting policies and practices with governments, commercial enterprises and technical bodies."



The Bureau said sectors of the global information and communication technology business face governmental pressure to curtail human rights via online censorship, network shutdowns and data localization requirements.

It wants proposals to empower local Internet freedom, business and human rights advocates to promote reforms geared to the United Nations' guiding principles on business and human rights.

Proposals are due Sept. 25. User/password can be obtained at www.grantsolutions.gov.

5W SUPPORTS TEAM TRUMP

5W Public Relations is providing media support for the the foundation of the son of President Trump, Eric.

The Eric Trump Foundation has recently undergone a management overhaul.

Forbes reported June 22:

"The president's son Eric is no longer on the board of the organization that he cofounded with two close friends in 2007, nor is his wife Lara or six virtually full-time employees of the Trump Organization."



The nonprofit's revamp included a name change to Curetivity.

5W also represents the interest of another member of Team Trump, Jay Sekulow. The PR firm has worked for American Center for Law and Justice for more than 10 years.

During the early 1990s, Sekulow, a respected constitutional lawyer, joined forces with televangelist Pat Robertson to establish the ACLJ.

5W CEO Ronn Torossian would not comment to *O'Dwyer's* for this article.

LEXIS TEAMS UP WITH TEXT100

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deputy MD to O'Donnell.

Lexis MD Dominic Shales has decided to move on in light of the merger. Shales joined Lexis in 2012 after that agency acquired his former brand/digital shop, Paratus Communications.

The Lexis brand will be phased out later this year.

O'Donnell told *O'Dwyer's* that integrating Lexis into the Text100 fold will broaden Text100's consumer brand portfolio while providing Lexis clients an armory of design, film, web development, content marketing and social media capabilities, as well as global reach.

"This is a really big deal for all of us. Lexis brings a formidable track record of truly understanding consumer behavior as well as serving consumer clients something that so many Text100 clients will benefit from. And Text100 brings marketing communications expertise and extensive skills including branding, web development and content marketing across a range of clients from technology to consumer brands. And, Lexis will benefit from Text100's global network," O'Donnell said.

"By uniting we will become a more formidable powerhouse in the UK. And by uniting you can expect to see our work with consumer brands expand in the UK and other offices across the world where our consumer credentials are already growing," O'Donnell told *O'Dwyer's*.

Text100, which was founded in the UK in 1981, is headquartered in New York and maintains nearly two dozen offices worldwide.

AETNA APPOINTS BLISS

Aetna, one of the largest managed healthcare companies in the U.S., has retained **Bliss Integrated Communication** to lend support to the health insurer's Medicare Advantage communications and PR program.



The account win follows a multi-stage RFP process wherein the New York-based independent shop beat out competing global agencies.

The engagement, which launches this month, will involve local market programing as well as a regional and national media relations program in a bid to reach out to Medicare eligible consumers.

Bliss' healthcare group, which was formed less than five years ago, also counts Pfizer, Gore Medical, Samsung Bioepis and Evolent Health as clients. The marketing communication firm, which was founded in 1975, regained its independence in 2014 after a core management team bought the firm from PA-based healthcare marketing and advertising agency Dudnyk Exchange.

Bliss last year accounted for nearly \$9.3 million in net fees and is **one of the top 50 firms in the U.S.**, according to *O'Dwyer's*.

TRADEMARKS, FREE SPEECH AND PR

By Ronn Torossian, **CEO of 5WPR**



A court case that has wound its way through the American justice system for the past couple of years will have a major impact on the public relations concerns of many different brands and public personalities competing in the marketplace of ideas. A recent Supreme Court ruling struck down part of a law that bans offensive trademarks.

The case was originally brought by the rock group The Slants, after the group's founder, Simon Tam, attempted to trademark the name and was refused by the US Patent and Trademark Office. In its response to denying the trademark, the PTO stated the denial was on the basis that the name disparages Asians.

Of that unanimous decision, Justice Samuel Alito said, "It offends a bedrock First Amendment principle: Speech may not be banned on the ground that it expresses ideas that offend ..."

Tam, who along with every member of The Slants, is Asian, and understood the controversial nature of the name, which is why he chose it. The band was hoping to take back the offensive nature of the word by defiantly embracing the term. And a federal appeals court ruled the law barring offensive trademarks is unconstitutional. Later, the Supreme Court agreed with this assessment. The Slants can trademark their name.

In a broader context though, this ruling has far-reaching implications. One of the biggest legal weapons of groups who oppose sports teams using names they consider offensive — e.g., the Washington Redskins — is that those trademarks were illegal. Now, though, these groups will have to go back to the drawing board if they hope to force the issue.

That puts their strategy squarely back in the court of public opinion. Opponents of teams like the Redskins will have to win their case by winning over the hearts and minds of enough people in order to increase the social or financial pressure on the team to make the change. There's no doubt this will be an uphill battle. There's near unanimous fan support to keep the team name, so any change will have to come from outside pressure. Many native groups are on record saying they're not offended by the name, so even the group protesters are trying to protect don't necessarily feel they need this kind of help. In fact, recent polls have shown up to 90 percent of Native Americans are not offended by the team's name.

But that remaining ten percent is very passionate about setting things right, as they see it. This group says the name is a racial slur and should not be tolerated, and they're working hard to bring about a change, and they know they have a long way to go.

Given time and the right narrative, they may be able to get it done ... though it would be difficult. If fans are happy and many of the people supposedly offended are only offended in the extreme minority, those carrying the "offended" message will have to work that much harder to get traction trying to build public support for a name change.

Just don't go looking to team owner Dan Snyder for support on this issue. When he heard about the Slants ruling, Snyder had this to say: "I am thrilled. Hail to the Redskins."

COMMS. INDUSTRY FACING CREATIVE SHORTAGE

Nearly half of hiring managers working at advertising and marketing agencies — 45 percent — expressed difficulty recruiting professionals to fill vacancies across various creative positions, according to a **recent employment outlook study** by staffing and recruiting agency The Creative Group.

To overcome these challenges, 45 percent said they're now more willing than they were three years ago to expand their search geographically, looking outside their city — or even their state — in order to acquire the talent their agency needs.

Jobs in media services, customer experience and account services are among the most challenging roles to fill, according to the Creative Group survey.

Advertising agencies staffing 100 or more employees appear especially beleaguered by this dearth of talent, with 67 percent of hiring managers stationed at these companies reporting difficulty finding the right person for the job.

A relative lull in hiring also appears to have hit the ad and marketing industries.

Only nine percent said they plan to add creative talent to their existing teams throughout the rest of the year, compared to 12 percent last year. About two-thirds — 64 percent — said they plan to maintain the same staffing roster they currently have and fill only vacated positions, a year-over-year decline of three percent. Finally, 21 percent said they've now enacted a hiring freeze and are not filling any vacated positions or creating new ones, an uptick of one percent from the year prior.

For the companies that are hiring, executives surveyed said the industry jobs in the highest demand include positions in account services (at 24 percent), followed by mobile design/development and marketing research jobs, both at 21 percent. Public relations roles were highlighted by 20 percent, as were jobs involving social media. Tasks in the least demand among advertising and marketing executives include media services, copywriting, content marketing and creative/art direction.

The Creative Group study, which was conducted by research firm SSRS, polled more than 400 executives nationally, including approximately 200 marketing executives from companies with 100 or more employees and 200 advertising executives from agencies with 20 or more employees.

The Creative Group is a division of professional staffing service Robert Half.

Top Areas for Hiring*	
Account services	24%
Mobile design/development	21%
Marketing research	21%
Public relations	20%
Social media	19%
Customer experience	18%
Web design/production	18%
Digital marketing	18%
Print design/production	18%
Brand/product management	17%
Interactive media	17%
Copywriting	16%
Media services	16%
Content marketing	15%
Creative/art direction	14%

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Trevelino/Keller has entered a partnership with **AirDog**, a company that produces all-terrain, autonomous camera drones. The Atlanta-based shop will assist AirDog in promoting its AirDog ADII, which is being launched this summer. The campaign will focus on the outdoor and adventure sports markets, employing mainstream, industry and sports performance media.



Howard Hospitality Group, hotel investor/developer (HHG) has booked Fort Lauderdale-based **Hemsworth Communications** to represent HHG's new global steakhouse concept, YARA. Hemsworth also will provide corporate communications counsel to HHG.

Coyne Public Relations has added tech hardware startup **littleBits**. The New York-based brainchild of TED Senior Fellow and cofounder of the Open Hardware Summit Ayah Bdeir makes "electronic building blocks" that encourage boys and girls to develop their skills as inventors. Coyne will lead efforts to drive awareness around littleBits by emphasizing ease of use and promoting it as fun and creative. Coyne's client roster includes The Walt Disney Company, Hard Rock International and Shell Oil.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Hunter Mandel has joined **Taylor** in New York as director, digital sports.

He's responsible for driving strategy and content creation for clients like P&G, Capital One, Allstate, IBM and Mercedes-Benz. Mandel joins from Bleacher Report, where he led a team that launched its sponsored content offering. Meanwhile Taylor upped **Samantha Baier** to director, **Bo Wulf** to senior content manager, and **Mike Macias** to social media manager.



Hunter Mandel

Weber Shandwick expanded the roles of five senior leaders. **Luca Penati**, formerly GM of the San Francisco/Silicon Valley office, was named president of Weber Shandwick West, overseeing California and Seattle. **Rana Komar** moved from Chicago GM to the presidency of WS Central to spark growth across the firm's Midwest offices. **Greg Power**, CEO of Weber Shandwick Canada, added the title of president, Weber Shandwick North, expanding his remit to include Detroit. **Joy Farber-Kolo**, New York GM, is now president of the eastern region, while **Pam Jenkins**, global PA head, becomes president of Weber Shandwick South.

ReviveHealth of Nashville recruited a foursome. **Josh Schoonover** joins as VP, content strategy. Schoonover comes to ReviveHealth from ECG Management Consultants, where he served as associate director of content strategy. **Rachael Crocker** and **Peggy Parks** have been brought on as directors of client services as strategic advisors on key client projects, with responsibility for cultivating client relationships. **Steve Turney**, business development director, will generate leads, manage business vetting and spearhead proposal development.

Charges are flying in France that government safety tests on cellphone radiation failed to check where phones are mostly carried—in pants and shirt pockets.

Nine of ten phones exceed safe levels in those places.

The French National Frequency Agency released the results this month as the result of a court order obtained by health advocates.

Dr. Marc Arazi, a medical doctor and radiation health activist, said “I am deeply concerned about what this means for our health and especially the health of our children. People have a right to know that when cellphones are tested in ways people commonly use them—such as in direct contact with the body—the radiation values exceed regulatory limits. This is a first victory for transparency in this industry scandal.”

Apple, Motorola, Samsung and Nokia were among the brands tested. When held close to the body, some phones emitted radiation three hundred percent as high as the manufacturers’ reported levels.

Arazi, Devra Davis, Ph.D., founder of the **Environmental Health Trust**, and other health advocates have coined the phrase “PhoneGate” and are comparing it to diesel emission tests that were conducted in laboratories rather than on the road.

Volkswagen cars passed in the laboratory but “emitted far more fumes” when tested on the road, said Davis.

“This is an enormous international scandal,” she continued. “This is not only about France and Europe but to all persons who use cellphones in every country. If phones were tested in the ways we use them, they would be illegal.”

Similar findings were obtained by a U.S. Federal Communications Commission certified laboratory as part of an **investigation by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.**, she said.

Children at Risk—Davis

Theodora Scarato, program director, Environmental Health Trust, said the American Academy of Pediatrics has “repeatedly called on the U.S. government to update cellphone testing to reflect current use patterns.”

“I see children cradling cellphones in their laps as their mothers do grocery shopping,” said Scarato. “Teenagers are sleeping with cellphones on their chests or directly beside their heads all night long. Pregnant women put phones on wireless devices on their abdomens.”

She notes that France’s National Agency of Health Security of Food, Environment and Labour, in a July 2016 report “**Radiofrequency Exposure and the Health of Children**” conceded that the public is largely unaware of instructions to keep a distance between cell phones and anyone’s head and body.



The Secret Inside Your Cellphone

ANSES stated that it was “unlikely that people, especially children, are aware of the conditions of use close to the body, as defined by manufacturers.”

The **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) independent survey** of more than 11,000 Canadians found that more than 80 percent were unaware of manufacturers’ recommended separation distance and 67 percent admitted they carry their phones against their bodies.

The newly released French data is also corroborated in the 2017 independently commissioned investigation by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that tested popular cell phones in a US government certified testing laboratory and finding Specific Absorption Rate values surpassed the US and Canadian allowable safety limits when the phones were tested in body contact positions. In response to the CBC report, **manufacturers stated they were fully compliant.**

Flynn Sees Corporate Control

AT&T (\$3.3B in ads), Comcast (\$3B), and Verizon (\$2.5B) are blocking press coverage of the dangers of Wi-Fi and other forms of radiation, says Jerry Flynn, retired Canadian Army officer. The three are among the top five advertisers. The only company with a bigger ad budget is Procter & Gamble at \$4.6B. Ford also spends \$2.5B in ads.

Flynn, who was involved in Electronic Warfare and Signals Intelligence, made his charge June 9 in an email to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

“North America’s mainstream news media is now controlled by just a handful of multinational corporations who control what we see on TV, what we hear on the radio and what we read in newspapers,” said Flynn.

“Consequently, few people know the corruption that has taken place over the past 50 years – and is ongoing – which now literally threatens life on earth as we know it!” he said.

“Like all North Americans, Canadians are unaware that the wireless and telecommunications, and electric power industries control virtually all levels of government in North America! Only the Internet reveals that cancer clusters are not uncommon in jurisdictions around the world that have allowed cell phone towers!”

Major Players Back Wi-Fi

Sponsors of Wi-Fi and other wireless devices say that there is no evidence their use is harmful to users including adults, children and senior citizens. **wi-fi.org** says the safe use of radio waves has been studied for more than 60 years by independent scientists and “no adverse health effects have been found at or below recommended limits.”

“Wi-Fi uses the same radio waves that are a common part of our everyday lives,” says wi-fi.org. “They provide TV, radio and an increasing array of mobile communications services.”

The **Mobile & Wireless Forum** says the safety standards that it supports are based on “the best available scientific data.”

Members are Apple, Cisco, Ericsson, Hawel, LG, Intel, Motorola, Samsung, Microsoft, Sony and Tet Mobile.

– Jack O’Dwyer