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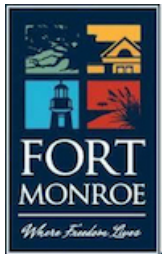


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FORT MONROE, VA SEEKS PR

The Fort Monroe Authority is looking for a PR firm to provide communications and marketing services for the “Gibraltar of the Chesapeake,” located on the spot that marked the beginning and ending of slavery in America.



The 561-acre site is now transitioning to a destination that features the Casement Museum, walking paths, biking, kayaking, three miles of beaches, a marina, dozens of businesses and more than 170 homes.

The Authority wants a partner to drive messaging around such initiatives as the African Landing Memorial Project, National Center for Freedom, planning for the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026, and re-development of real estate projects.

The firm will handle public affairs, media relations, tracking, social meetings, educational outreach, sponsorships and special events. The Authority plans to issue a contract that begins July 1 and runs through June 2023. There will be an option to renew for three additional one-year periods.

Proposals are due June 4. They go to: Fort Monroe Authority; 20 Ingalls Road; Fort Monroe, VA 23651; Attn: Procurement Manager

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

EXXONMOBIL SUFFERS MASSIVE PR BLOWOUT

ExxonMobil suffered a massive PR hit as shareholders at its May 26 annual meeting elected at least two activist investors to the oil giant’s board following one of the most expensive proxy fights in US corporate history.

Engine No. 1, a San Francisco hedge fund, opened the contest in December, urging Exxon to “implement a strategic plan for sustainable value creation.” It attributed Exxon’s poor financial performance to its reliance on fossil fuels and a lack of investment in the alternate energy sector.

Gasthalter & Co.’s Jonathan Gasthalter and Amanda Klein represent Engine No. 1.

The *Wall Street Journal* called the shareholder vote “an enormous blow” to CEO Darren Woods, who held onto his board seat. The Coalition United for a Responsible Exxon, which supported the Engine No. 1 bid, said the vote was “a strong signal to Exxon and other oil majors that business as usual is not an option.”

Gagnier Communications’ Dan Gagnier and Jeffrey Mathews handle CURE.



MARK PENN TAKES ON ‘CRAFTY HEDGE FUNDS’

Mark Penn warns MDC stockholders not to “be misled by crafty hedge funds” that oppose the merger of their company with Stagwell Media.

“Stagwell and MDC Partners are better together,” said Penn in a letter that he posted on BusinessWire and on LinkedIn on May 27.

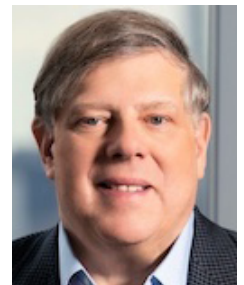
Indaba Capital Management, which is the largest independent shareholder of MDC, calls the merger an unfair deal that benefits Penn, who helms both MDC and Stagwell.

In its May 26 letter to MDC’s special committee of the board, ICM said it sees no justification for the committee “to essentially rubber-stamp the unfair terms desired by Stagwell and Mr. Penn.”

It also knocked MDC for the 2020 sale of “attractive asset,” Sloane & Co., to Stagwell’s SKDKnickerbocker unit.

The San Francisco-based hedge fund, which says it owns about 15 percent of MDC shares, will vote against the merger at the June 22 special meeting of shareholders.

Penn responded that Stagwell “brings some unique, high-value contributions to this partnership.”



Mark Penn

RUBENSTEIN REPS GATES’S INVESTMENT FIRM

Rubenstein is providing crisis support for Cascade Investment, which manages the fortune of Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, and its leader Michael Larson after a May 26 *New York Times* story about a “culture of fear” at the company.

The Times reported that Cascade made payments to at least seven people who witnessed or knew about Larson’s behavior, in exchange for agreeing not to speak about their time at the firm.

“Rubenstein has worked with the firm for years, and we are supporting them on this as well,” a spokesperson at the firm told O’Dwyer’s.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which is closely tied to Cascade, is a long-time Rubenstein client.

Chris Giglio, head of Rubenstein’s crisis group, told the Times “BMGI takes all complaints seriously.”

Larson told the Times, “Calling BMGI a toxic work environment is unfair to the 160 professionals who make up our team and our culture.”



Bill Gates

OMAHA DMO SEEKS MARKETING SERVICES

Omaha, Nebraska is requesting proposals from agencies that can provide marketing advertising services for the Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau, the official tourism authority for the Cornhusker State's largest city.



Scope of the work includes developing a campaign and messaging strategy, media planning and placement, search engine marketing and SEO, social media work, media relations functions and research.

Terms of the contract are slated to run for four years, with the possibility to extend for an additional two one-year terms. Budget allocated for the work is \$3 million annually.

Proposals are due by 11 a.m. (CST) on June 9, and should be mailed or delivered to: Office of the Omaha City Clerk; 1819 Farnam St. LC 1; Omaha, Nebraska 68183

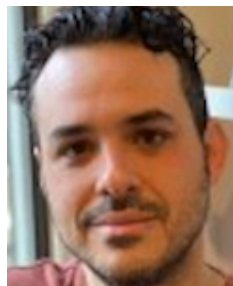
Bidding agencies should submit one original and two copies of their proposals, plus two electronic copies on flash drives. All envelopes should be labeled "Marketing Advertising Services for Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau."

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

SOSENKO JOINS OVERTIME'S TEAM

Ben Sosenko has joined Overtime as its first head of communications and public affairs as the Brooklyn-based sports platform for Gen-Z fans rolls out its Overtime Elite pro-basketball league for high school basketball players.

The company raised \$80M to fund the league from investors including Morgan Stanley, Blackstone, Drake, Jeff Bezos and more than 25 NBA stars.



Ben Sosenko

Each Overtime Elite player will be paid a salary of \$100K and be housed in a facility in Atlanta, where they will take courses for a degree.

Sosenko joins Overtime after almost three years as head of communications & PA at Relevent Sports Group/LaLiga North America, where he promoted international soccer in the US.

He plans to build out a full in-house communications and public affairs team in New York and in Atlanta.

TripleShot Communications has handled PR for Overtime since early 2018.

PROSEK, ICR DELIVER FLYWIRE'S TIMELY IPO

[Prosek Partners](#) and [ICR Inc.](#) handle Flywire as the Boston-based global payments company raises \$250M in its IPO.

Flywire CEO Mike Massaro plans to use the IPO proceeds for technology and solutions development and for possible acquisitions to complement his company's offerings.

The company supports more than 2,250 clients with payments in more than 130 currencies in 240 countries.

The IPO comes just ahead of the summer travel season, in which seven in ten frequent travelers expect to spend more this year than they have in the past five years, according to a Flywire survey report released May 12.

Colin Smyth, travel GM at Flywire, said people planning to explore the post-pandemic world want travel companies that offer "seamless, transparent and secure payment options."

Prosek handles media for Flywire; ICR deals with investors.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Omnicom Group scoops up global integrated creative, media and communications agency partner for health tech company **Royal Philips**. FleishmanHillard and Ketchum (who have had a 10-year relations with Philips) will head up the communications function, alongside Interbrand, Critical Mass and Omnicom Precision Marketing Group. "Omnicom will be an important part of our world-class marketing capabilities, helping us to deliver personalized, differentiating customer experiences," said Philips chief marketing and e-commerce officer Lorraine Barber-Miller at Philips.

French/West/Vaughan adds **W.R.**

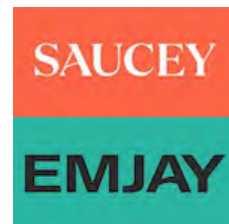
Case & Sons Cutlery Company, a family-run manufacturer of pocket knives. FWV will manage the brand's public relations and influencer marketing efforts in partnership with CGPR, its Greater Boston office. The effort will focus on maximizing awareness of Case and its products as the brand looks to expand into new customer bases and drive consumer sales. FWV has already kicked off its work for /Case, focusing on PR asset development, media relations and influencer marketing.



Racepoint Global adds the **Commission on the Future of Mobility** and **Mythic**, among other clients, to its roster. The agency is working on executive visibility, content, earned media, and social support for the CFM, which launched in February. A coalition of visionary leaders working to establish policies enabling a new global transportation ecosystem, the CFM's sponsors include such companies as FedEx, Ford and the National Academy of Sciences. Mythic, an AI company, has engaged Racepoint to provide support with earned media, content and executive visibility.

Guru Media Solutions, which has offices in Sausalito, CA, and Burlington, VT, has formed a two-year agency of record partnership with **Nalgene Outdoor**, which produces reusable water bottles. Guru will work to elevate the Nalgene brand as it transitions to manufacturing its bottles out of BPA-free Tritan Renew, a resin made from 50 percent recycled material. This is the first major signing by Guru's East Coast office since opening late last year. Nalgene Outdoor is a brand of Thermo Fisher Scientific.

5W Public Relations is named PR agency of record for **Saucey**, a nationwide alcohol delivery service, and **Emjay**, a California-based leader in same-day delivery for cannabis products. The two clients are sister companies. 5W PR will work to elevate the executives of the companies as thought leaders in the liquor and cannabis industries. The team will also be responsible for developing creative stunts and garnering viral attention on behalf of the companies to drive business growth.



Grant PR signs on **Commercial Tenant Services, Inc.**, **Joshua Stein PLCC**; and **Century Management Services**. Commercial Tenant Services audits commercial leases. Joshua Stein PLCC, a returning client, is a law firm specializing in commercial real estate. Century Management Services provides property management, project management and financial management for New York buildings containing thousands of condo and coop owners and renters.

THE FUTURE OF CELL & GENE THERAPY COMMS

“The cell therapy space today is at the leading edge of medicine, so it is similar to where the biotech industry was 25-30 years ago.”

When Kerry Beth Daly, head of communications, Atara Biotherapeutics, made that comparison while on a panel I moderated at the Fierce Pharma and PR Communications Summit, it inspired ideas about how Health PR pros can navigate the issues of communicating complex science.

New Science Met with a Mix of Awe and Fear

Biotechnology in the early aughts was booming, and the public viewed it with a mix of excitement and anxiety, as they wondered about the long-term impacts. Payers went from being concerned with paying for things used by broad populations to concerns about the totality of spending on “specialty drugs.” Today, we see the same questions about how to pay for cell and gene therapy and how these innovations will impact people who take them into the future. Communicators need to listen to concerns and help companies/clients develop policies and messages about them.



Kristie Kuhl

Importance of Partnership

Roughly 25 years ago, biotech and academic medical institutions were working together, litigating about royalty rates, and posturing about independence. Today, cell and gene therapy companies work in close partnership with academic medical institutions from early research through development. Communicators on both sides of the partnership can work together to elevate the importance of the data messages while seeking inclusivity of those who participate.

Value versus Price

No one likes paying for medications—but communicating the life-changing (and often, lifesaving) nature of cell and gene therapies through the development process will convey their value. Bringing the human impact, incorporating personal stories, can translate scientific data into powerful stories of daily life with disease.

Twenty-five years ago, some companies decided not to do business in countries that didn’t meet the prices they set for their biotechnology therapies. When Bluebird Bio recently pulled its gene therapy Zyntelgo, for beta-thalassemia, out of Germany when that country offered about half of the Bluebird Bio price, analysts called the withdrawal a “smart move,” noting that very few people in Germany have beta-thalassemia.

However, for the German families of infants with this fatal disease, company valuation doesn’t matter. They won’t care that there aren’t many patients in Germany. They want the solution that Bluebird Bio developed, and communicators must engage in honest, empathetic discussions with companies and clients about people impacted by business decisions.

To quantify the value and benefit that scientific innovations provide to patient communities in need, we have to learn from the past, reminding our clients and companies about the need to balance long-term R&D investment goals with patients’ and payers’ concerns.

Cell and gene therapies can change lives. Communicators are on the front lines of the effort to ensure that the benefits of all this scientific innovation are understood and that they drive decision-making on behalf of patients first.

Kristie Kuhl is managing partner at Finn Partners.

BATTLE CREEK NEEDS PR TO GET LEAD OUT

Battle Creek, MI, the breakfast capital of the world, wants to hire a PR firm to generate awareness of the danger posed by lead poisoning and to promote testing of children up to six years old.

The Dept. of Housing and Urban Development awarded the city a \$3.4M grant over 42 months (beginning Jan. 4, 2021) to create a lead hazard remediation and control program.

The RFP is for developing a lead awareness marketing push to support the outcomes of the program. The PR effort will feature messages in direct mailing, public service announcements, advertising and social media marketing.

The communications goal is to create public understanding of the risks of lead for children under age six living in older homes, especially when the family is doing home renovations.

The public awareness campaign will encourage more families to seek blood testing for their children and be more willing to receive a home visit from a nurse practitioner if a child tests positive for lead blood poisoning.

Submit proposals by June 4 to Battle Creek’s [portal](#).

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



LDPR PUTTIN’ RITZ ON ROSTER

LDPR has picked up the Ritz Paris, home to the Salon Proust and Bar Hemingway, as France prepares to reopen to US travelers. Laura Davidson’s shop will manage media relations and press engagements for the hotel.

The recently restored hotel, founded in 1898, has 71 rooms and 71 suites, and includes its own art gallery and cooking school. Its guest list has included F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

French president Emmanuel Macron has said that starting June 9, visitors from outside Europe will once again be allowed entry into France, provided that they carry a health pass and that the public health situation in their country of origin meets certain standards.

LDPR is also taking on media relations duties for Querido, a collection of family-owned hotels throughout Europe.

Launched in 2012 by Carlos Quereda, the chain includes 18 hotels and two yachts in five European countries.

GAGNIER GETS BEHIND GROWTHCURVE

Gagnier Communications handled the high-profile launch of GrowthCurve Capital by Sumit Rajpal, former co-head of Goldman Sachs merchant banking division.

GrowthCurve debuts with a team of 20 investors and executives, many of whom had worked with Rajpal during his 20-year stint at Goldman.

The private equity firm says its mission is “to differentiate itself by harnessing the power of technology and AI, enabled with human capital, to drive sustainable growth and long-term value creation in portfolio companies.”

After stepping down from Goldman in early 2020, Rajpal signed on as senior policy advisor to SEC chairman Jay Clayton on issues regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the financial markets.

Gagnier Communications’ Dan Gagnier and Jeffrey Mathews handle GrowthCurve.



Sumit Rajpal

COMMUNICATIONS AND CORPORATE ACTIVISM

Corporate social responsibility is a given for any business wishing to be recognized as committed to political or environmental causes. But it's no longer enough for business leaders to espouse policies with respect to sustainability, diversity and gun control. Now, corporate boards and executives are expected to adopt vocal, prominent positions on an ever-expanding

array of issues recognizing that customers, employees and investors expect action—not only words.

Companies have long taken positions on issues of social importance. The difference now is in the frequency of corporate pronouncements on events, policies and legislation, as well as the expectation that companies be directly engaged on social issues even when those issues aren't directly linked to the company's business or capacity to effect



Peter V. Stanton

change. There's pressure to say more and do more.

For communicators, the challenge becomes counseling corporate leadership on when to engage, how to engage and the manner in which to communicate about that engagement.

Consumer brands generally want as many customers as possible, without regard for their political leanings. Thus, taking a stridently and highly-visible liberal or conservative position may risk alienating a segment of their marketplace that can be vitally important to revenue and profitability goals. Conversely, there's a desire and obligation to speak out on issues such as racial injustice—as was especially the case in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd—that reflect a widely-shared sense of commitment to equality.

Culture and principles are key

There's a growing willingness among corporations to weigh in and express their values. While it can be necessary and important to express a position on matters of concern, the company's culture and principles provide the boundaries for when and when not to do so.

Those of us who counsel senior leadership on issue communication must frame our advice with reference to corporate culture and principles. If we can't draw a bright-line connection, we risk exhausting the credibility capital that gives the organization's statements weight and value.

Stakeholder sensitivity

CEOs speak for the corporation, but not necessarily for every investor, employee or customer. When the corporation clearly defines its culture and values, it gives stakeholders an opportunity to assess if their personal perspectives align with those of the organization.

At times, the CEO's personal views may not represent all of company stakeholders. This possibility needs to be considered when preparing statements. This sensitivity also may guide decisions about where and how to deliver statements of importance. If the views are primarily those of senior leadership, their personal LinkedIn or Facebook pages may be more appropriate than the landing page of the corporate website.

Being CEO doesn't automatically entitle one to the full followership of all constituents. This is especially the case within multi-national corporations where differences in culture, language and social mores influence how a statement is received. As communicators, we must help senior leadership maintain this awareness and sensitivity so they can speak thoughtfully and deliver their message in the optimal forum.

Your own public square

When the decision is made to express a perspective on a social issue, the accompanying decision is where and how to deliver it. There are times when only the front page will do, such as at the time of the George Floyd murder.

An additional option for corporations to consider is a platform specifically created for the purpose of delivering messages of social importance.

Openness to dialogue

Issues of social importance almost always are controversial. There's rarely a single perspective with which all can agree. When a company or CEO expresses a perspective, it will, almost certainly, precipitate a reaction.

When a statement is simply posted to the corporate web site, there may be no mechanism for differing viewpoints to be expressed. Creating an opportunity for stakeholders to weigh in is an appropriate and meaningful demonstration of openness to dialogue.

In the emerging age of corporate activism, the rules will continue to evolve. For now, we at least can accept that silence isn't golden, that expression isn't necessarily engagement, but most important, actions speak louder than words.

Peter V. Stanton is Founder and CEO of Stanton Communications, Inc.

SAN DIEGO WANTS PR FOR CLEAN AIR EFFORT

The San Diego County Air Pollution Control District is looking for a partner to manage the public education, awareness, branding and engagement work associated with its program to increase community participation in the bid to improve air quality.

The firm will work to increase engagement and broaden the involvement of the diverse San Diego community and stakeholders. It will describe strategies, goals and actions to ensure transparency and encourage public involvement.

The District wants special outreach to environmental justice communities that have been disproportionately exposed to and impacted by air pollution.

Responses to the Request for Quotation are due June 4. The RFQ form and BuyNet response go to Rene.Lelevier@sdcountry.ca.gov or: County of San Diego; Department of Purchasing; 5560 Overland Avenue, Ste. 270; San Diego, CA 92123-1204.

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

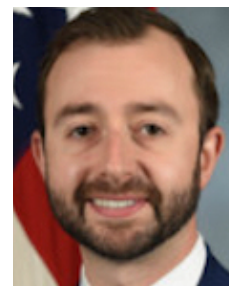
DOD ALUM MIKULA JOINS INVARIANT

Nick Mikula, who was special assistant to the under secretary of defense for intelligence in the Trump administration, has joined Invariant government relations/PR shop. He will counsel clients on defense, intelligence and national security matters.

At the DOD, Mikula handled inter-agency coordination and support to the intelligence committee and managed more than \$20 million in research and development innovation.

Earlier, he was deputy communications director for the House Armed Services Committee.

Heather Podesta, founder/CEO of Invariant, said Mikula has a "deep understanding of current and future intelligence programs and the political acumen to guide Invariant's clients."



Nick Mikula

RBB MERGES WITH O'DONNELL AGENCY

Independent agency [rbb Communications](#) has announced it had entered into an agreement to merge its operations with West Palm Beach-based O'Donnell Agency.

The merger becomes effective today. Financial terms of the deal weren't publicly disclosed.



Carey O'Donnell

O'Donnell, which specializes in PR, advertising and design services, was founded in 1995 by Carey O'Donnell, who serves as president and creative director. The agency maintains additional offices in Sarasota and New York.

In light of the merger, O'Donnell now serves as lead counsel with rbb in the Palm Beach market.

Miami-based rbb, which specializes in consumer, health, food/beverage, travel, entertainment and professional services PR, was founded in 1975. It accounted for more than \$14 million in net fees in 2020, according to [O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms](#).

COTA WANTS TO GIVE PR FIRM A RIDE

The Central Ohio Transit Authority, which serves metropolitan Columbus, is looking for a PR firm to provide ongoing counsel on message development and delivery to target audiences including customers, potential users, government officials, business partners, civic groups, union leaders and members of the media, according to its RFP.

The firm will "stock" talking points for COTA management/ leadership around strategic plans and community initiatives.

It will draft press releases, op-eds and develop news hooks to allow COTA to share its ongoing commitment to innovation in mobility and assist it in identifying and submitting applications for various industry and community awards.

COTA plans to issue a one-year contract, beginning August 1. There will be an option to renew for an additional year.

Proposals are due June 7 at <https://cota.dbesystem.com>.

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

FINN CHECKS IN AT TUSCAN FARMHOUSE

Finn Partners has picked up North America PR duties for Agriturismo Casetta, a 270-year-old luxury farmhouse, located in Italy's Tuscany region as borders begin to reopen from the COVID-19 shutdown.

The firm's New York team will handle a branding program, media relations, social media programming and partnerships.

"Casetta and its surroundings reflect the special appeal of Tuscany and Finn has the right skills and sensibilities to bring new appreciation to the property," Xenia Lemos, owner of the property, said in a statement.



Virginia Sheridan, head of Finn's North America travel & lifestyle practice, said her team was "enchanted from the start with Casetta." She added that Italy, Florence and Tuscany make up "the American dream vacation, especially as we emerge from pandemic-imposed isolation."

Finn's travel group includes Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dubai Tourism, I Love NY, Turkish Airlines and Allianz Travel.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

If you've ever yearned for the opportunity to watch **Fox News Channel's** prime-time lineup 24 hours a day, you're about to get your chance. FOX Nation, the network's streaming platform, is set to make episodes of *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, *Hannity* and *The Ingraham Angle* available for on-demand viewing, effective June 2. "Fox News Primetime All the Time" will let viewers stream those programs the morning after their initial airing on FNC. "Making television's most highly rated shows with the most passionate audiences available on FOX Nation will add incredible value for subscribers," said FOX Nation president Jason Klarman.



Amazon is buying **MGM Holdings**, parent company of MGM, for \$8.5 billion. MGM was put up for sale earlier this year. The deal gives Amazon access to MGM's catalog of 4,000 films and 17,000 TV shows, as well as a 50 percent stake in the James Bond franchise. It is seen as a bid to bolster Amazon Studios, the company's film and TV division.

The **Associated Press** is reviewing its social media policy following the firing of a 22-year-old news associate for violating it. More than 150 AP staffers protested the termination of Emily Wilder, who was let go just three weeks after she had been hired. Wilder had previously posted tweets about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict that she says were attacked by "political conservatives like Senator Tom Cotton, Ben Shapiro and Robert Spencer." An open letter signed by AP journalists noted "the lack of clarity on the violations of the social media policy."

Alden Global Capital's bid to acquire **Tribune Publishing** has been successful. Tribune shareholders approved the deal, which is valued at \$630 million, on May 21. Patrick Soon-Shiong, who, in addition to owning the *Los Angeles Times* and *San Diego Union Tribune* controls 24 percent of Tribune's stock, abstained from voting on the transaction. Alden, which already owned one-third of Tribune, is known for aggressive cost-cutting measures at its papers.

New York Public Radio fires Bob Garfield, who has co-hosted its "On The Media" program for 20 years, over what NYPR calls a "pattern of behavior that violated New York Public Radio's anti-bullying policy." According to a statement from NYPR, Garfield had been investigated over similar charges in 2020. After having found that he violated the anti-bullying policy, the company says it issued him "a warning about the potential consequences if the behavior continued, and a meaningful opportunity to correct it." On his Twitter feed, Garfield said, "I was not fired for 'bullying' per se, but for yelling in five meetings over 20 years."

Allen Media Group has filed a \$10 billion racial discrimination suit against McDonald's, charging that the fast-food chain "intentionally discriminated against Entertainment Studios and Weather Group [both of which are part of AMG] through a pattern of racial stereotyping and refusals to contract." A press release from AMG claims that out of a \$1.6 billion annual television advertising budget, McDonald's spends just \$5 million on African American-owned media.



Byron Allen

COMMENTARY



Chris Foster

Congratulations to supremely talented Chris Foster for landing the CEO job at the Omnicom Public Relations Group.

As OPRG interim chairman John Doolittle noted in the press release, “Chris comes to us with significant, hands-on agency leadership experience.”

Left unsaid is the name of the agency: BCW and its predecessor Burson-Marsteller, which is owned by WPP.

It’s remarkable that Omnicom CEO John Wren had to reach out to an outsider to run the PR operation.

Of course, Wren may have felt the need for an outsider’s perspective to restore some zip to the PR unit, which suffered a 4.9 percent drop in Q1 revenues to \$317M. That performance followed a 1.9 percent dip in Q4 revenues to \$351M.

Wren also took his sweet time filling the OPRG CEO spot, which was not exactly a ringing endorsement of PR.

Former OPRG CEO Karen van Bergen left in January 2020 for the dean job of Omnicom University. She was a homegrown talent, serving as CEO of Porter Novelli and executive VP at FleishmanHillard.

Perhaps Wren was right to raid the ranks of BCW.

“Perception hacking” is an emerging problem in social media, according to Facebook’s “Threat Report: The State of Influence Operations,” released May 26.

Mark Zuckerberg’s firm describes perception hacking as “fostering the perception that they are everywhere, playing on people’s fear of widespread deception itself.”

Facebook found that in the waning hours of the 2018 mid-term elections, the Russian Internet Research Agency claimed they were running thousands of fake accounts to sway the vote across the US. It was a Big Lie.

Facebook conducted an investigation in conjunction with other tech companies and law enforcement authorities and found only a handful of accounts set up by the IRA.

The Report also tackled the “weaponization of uncertainty” in which influencer operations elevate conflicting voices and “drive division throughout the world around crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, critical elections, and civic protests.”

The good news, Facebook says: “Authentic voices typically outweigh inauthentic attempts to manipulate public debate.”

The bad news: authentic voices are harder to find, and any individual willing to speak out against the party line is shunned and branded as a traitor.

Hello, Liz Cheney.

Good luck in your re-election campaign.

“Greenwashing” is on the rise as a growing number of companies use PR to burnish dubious green credentials.

Wall Street has joined the fun as asset management firms roll out funds that put their money into companies committed to environmental, social and governance issues.

Since ESG is a subjective matter, it’s all a crapshoot.

The Securities and Exchange Commission rolled out guidance to public companies regarding existing disclosure requirements as they applied to climate change matters in 2010.

Much has changed over the past decade.

The SEC staff is updating that guidance and is engaging with public companies on these issues, and absorbing critical lessons on how the market is currently managing climate-related risks, according to its website.

The Economist surveyed 20 top ESG funds and found some of their lofty claims were just hot air. It suggests that investors should dodge ESG claims, since only 30 percent of companies generate the world’s greenhouse gas emissions.

And five percent of that group (oil companies, cement and mining companies) generate 80 percent of emissions.

Environmental investors should focus on pure-play renewable energy companies or firms with promising earth-saving technologies and avoid all the green PR hype.

Florida’s showboating governor Ron DeSantis is one reason why trust in America’s political system is on the rocks.

DeSantis signed legislation into law on May 24 that would fine companies such as Twitter and Facebook if they decide to permanently ban political candidates (e.g., Donald Trump) from their platforms.

Since when did a US government entity gain the right to control speech on private websites?

The lame-brained law is a gross violation of the First Amendment rights of social media companies to decide how to run their own businesses.

What’s next for DeSantis?

Will he impose fines on the *Miami Herald*, *Sun-Sentinel*, *Palm Beach Post*, *Tallahassee Democrat* or *Mar-a-Lago Bugle* if they fail to cover his pet issues or preferred candidates?

How is Ron going to get around Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which grants liability protection for web platforms?

The hypocrisy of DeSantis’ move is evident as his law exempts companies from the fines if they own Walt Disney World or Universal Studios Florida, a property of Comcast.

The courts will strike down DeSantis’ power grab, but he did curry favor among the MAGA crowd.

And that’s what it really is all about.

Vladimir Putin isn’t going to be inducted into the PR Hall of Fame any time soon.

His latest PR shenanigans involved destroying the reputation of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, apparently to boost the prospects of Russia’s Sputnik V shot.

The Guardian reports that a shady London-based PR firm with management from Moscow allegedly offered cash to bloggers and influencers to trash the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

Fazze, which had called itself an “influencer marketer platform,” claimed it was based on Percy Street though it was not registered there.

After reports surfaced about Fazze’s skullduggery, it closed its website on May 24 and made its Instagram private.

On to the next PR hit job?

—Kevin McCauley