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## NYC'S GOVERNORS ISLAND SEEKS PR FIRM

The Trust for Governors Island, which oversees the 43-acre park in New York Harbor that attracts about 1M visitors annually, is looking for a PR firm to promote it as a 24/7 campus for learning, creativity and innovation.



The site is open from May 1-Oct. 31 for visitors. With redevelopment of the park on the island nearly done, the Trust wants a firm to help pitch it as a 24/7 all-season community for all.

The overall goal is "transforming Governors Island into a vibrant resource for New York City" and a "destination with extraordinary public open space, as well as educational, not-for-profit and commercial facility for all," according to the RFP.

The desired PR firm will also pitch Governors Island as "an exciting opportunity for new academic, cultural, non-profit and commercial facilities."

It will handle press releases, visual assets, talking points, publicity events and crisis management.

The two-year contract includes a one-year renewal option.

Sarah Krautheim, VP-PA, will take questions until Nov. 8 at [skrautheim@govisland.org](mailto:skrautheim@govisland.org). She'll accept email proposals until Nov. 22.

## TENEO'S SAYEGH TO REJOIN TEAM TRUMP

Tony Sayegh, spokesperson for Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin who joined Teneo in September as managing director, is expected to return to the Trump administration to handle communications surrounding impeachment.

He will run communications strategy and messaging, and recruit surrogates to support the president.



Tony Sayegh

A White House administration official told Politico that Sayegh's hiring is a "done deal." A possible hurdle to his return to DC: Trump's unwillingness to delegate impeachment communications duties

As assistant secretary of the Treasury, Sayegh handled communications in support of Trump's tax cut. He also worked closely with Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, on the childcare tax credit.

Prior to joining the Treasury, Sayegh was executive VP at Jamestown Assocs, which placed ads for the Trump election campaign.

He also was a Fox News contributor.

## IPG TEAM WINS COVERED CALIFORNIA

Interpublic shops Weber Shandwick, Golin and The Axis Agency have won PR AOR duties for Covered California, which is the Golden State's health insurance marketplace.

They will work in tandem with IW Group and Lagrant Communications on external communications.

The goal of the three-year contract worth \$7.5M is to raise Covered California's external visibility by boosting awareness of healthcare coverage options, promoting enrollment and coverage retention and highlighting the program's exchange model.



Peter Lee, executive director of Covered California, said he's eager to work "with our new experienced, multi-disciplinary team at IPG to build on a strong communications foundation and make sure we convey important information to the public in the years ahead."

Weber Shandwick, working with Golin and Axis teams, will lead the account from Los Angeles with support staffers in Sacramento, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Ogilvy is the incumbent on the Covered California business.

## PRSA PUTS SEARCH FOR CEO "ON HOLD"

Public Relations Society of America has put the search for the CEO "on hold" until early next year when more people are looking for jobs. Russell Reynolds was doing the search.

Joe Truncale stepped down as CEO on July 15, taking on the role of consultant. PRSA CFO Phil Bonaventura took over Truncale's CEO duties on an interim basis.



Joe Truncale

In announcing Truncale's transition to consultant, Debra Peterson, PRSA chair, said PRSA expected the search for a new CEO to be completed by the time of the international conference in San Diego, which wrapped up Oct. 22.

She did note that PRSA is "more intent on hiring the right person versus adhering to the prescribed timeline."

Garland Stansell, chair-elect, told the Assembly in San Diego that the search for Truncale's replacement was being pushed back into 2020 after the holiday season when more people are looking for new jobs.

## **FACEBOOK PAYS UK IN DATA PRIVACY CASE**

Facebook agreed to pay \$643K to Britain's information commissioner's office for its suspected failure to comply with UK data protection principles covering lawful processing of data and security.

The ICO in 2017 opened its investigation of FB allowing political data firm Cambridge Analytica to gain access to users' data.



Cambridge Analytica

In settling with the ICO, FB admitted no wrongdoing.

Harry Kinmouth, FB's associate general counsel, said the company will continue to cooperate with the ICO's wider and ongoing probe into the use of data analytics for political purposes.

James Dipple-Johnstone, ICO deputy commissioner, is pleased to hear that "FB has taken, and will continue to take, significant steps to comply with the fundamental principles of data protection."

FB faces 11 privacy probes in Ireland. Since FB's regional headquarters is in Dublin, Ireland's data protection commission is FB's lead regulator for the privacy laws of the European Union.

## **SORRELL, MOOCH DO 'DAVOS IN THE DESERT'**

Martin Sorrell and Anthony Scaramucci appeared at Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's so-called Davos in the Desert conference last week in Riyadh.

The session comes a little more than a year after a squad of Saudi hitmen tortured, murdered and dismembered *Washington Post* contributor Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul.

Sorrell, ex-WPP chief and now executive chairman of S4 Capital, and Scaramucci, SkyBridge Capital founder and 10-day White House communications director, shared a 20-minute panel on Oct. 30 that discussed the "winners" (companies, candidates, ideas, policies and trends) of 2020.

Prince Mohammed also lined up a group of "knowledge partners" for the event's Future Investment Initiative conference held at the Ritz-Carlton that included Oliver Wyman, PWC, strategy&, Deloitte and KPMG.

## **GOLIN HOPS ON CARLSBERG'S UK PUSH**

Golin has won Carlsberg's UK business following a competitive pitch as the Denmark-based brewer works to align its brand and corporate PR at a single shop.

The Interpublic unit will handle Carlsberg Danish Pilsner, Carlsberg Export, San Miguel and Mahou across sponsorships as well as its "Together Towards Zero" sustainability program.

Andrew Roache, head of corporate affairs, said Carlsberg was impressed with Golin's consumer and corporate communications credentials and its focus on measurement.

Golin, which begins work in January, will report to Roache and VP marketing Liam Newton.

Based in Copenhagen, Carlsberg calls its brew "probably the best beer in the world."



## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**Firecracker PR** has signed information technology equipment and services company **Fujitsu Technology & Business of America, Inc.** The Brea, CA, firm will work to promote FTBA's Solutions Lab as well as the company's artificial intelligence initiatives and its PRIMERGY servers. FTBA is a unit of Japan-based Fujitsu Ltd., the world's fourth-largest IT services provider.



**Method Communications** has been named agency for the **Software & Information Industry Association CODiE Awards 2020**. Method and the SIIA CODiE Awards will work together to extend the reach of the awards, encourage new entries and recognize the impact past winners have had. The awards recognize excellence and innovations from software, education, information and media companies. Award nominations are open on Nov. 4 and run through Jan. 17.

**Magrino** has won **The Fulham Group**, an outdoor grilling manufacturer and exclusive Cuisinart brand licensee for outdoor cooking products. Magrino will be providing The Fulham Group with communications strategy, including new product launch campaigns, content creation, social media promotion, and media and influencer relations, to support the brand's overall mission and educate consumers. The Fulham Group develops and markets products ranging from tools and a variety of seasonings to portable grills and deluxe-size grills.

**Rubenstein Public Relations** has been named agency of record for **Steward**, which bills itself as the world's first crowdfarming platform. The agency will work to elevate awareness of how Steward enables people to invest directly in sustainable farms. Steward offers a variety of investment options, including in a diversified portfolio of farm loans (Steward Farm Trust) and individual farm loans.

**Zapwater Communications** has been retained by **Vail Resorts** for seasonal support of three of the brand's Midwest resort locations: Afton Alps in Minnesota, Mt. Brighton in Michigan and Wilmot Mountain in Wisconsin. Zapwater will work to drive awareness and tell the story of the three individual resorts through media relations, influencer relations, partnerships and events. Vail Resorts' subsidiaries operate 37 mountain resorts and urban ski areas which include lift tickets, ski & snowboard school, lodging, dining and retail, and rental businesses.

**SourceCode Communications** has been named communications agency of record for **Handshake**, an online platform that connects college students with employers. The relationship will consist of thought leadership, media relations, and content development support in an effort to raise visibility amongst college students and recent graduates, university career advisors and human resource professionals. Handshake's community includes 17 million students and young alumni at over 850 universities—including more than 120 minority-serving institutions.



## **STANDING OUT IN THE AI MARKETPLACE**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most talked about topics in the media today. According to data from TechNews, since January an average of 4,000 articles per month have mentioned AI. From the role AI is playing in helping autonomous vehicles make decisions in milliseconds to how it is providing recommendations to healthcare providers about potentially lifesaving treatment options to all of the “boring” AI uses in between, we read about and engage with AI on a daily basis.

However, with all of the buzz that AI is creating, it is becoming more difficult for organizations to cut through the noise. While there is a fantastic group of journalists and influencers who cover AI, they are inundated with pitches, news, and other information from companies trying to stand out as a leading authority in the space.



**Joe Ferrary**

As you work to uncover unique AI storylines and highlight them through placements with relevant AI reporters, collaborations with industry influencers, or via creative campaigns on digital channels, it’s helpful to understand the key trends leading reporters are covering in this space daily.

### **Top AI Media Trends**

Knowing the major trends being discussed in the media related to AI can help organizations stand out. Just obtaining coverage among business, technology, vertical, and trade media is not the ultimate goal. Leveraging the right media relationships can lead to thought leadership opportunities that expand far beyond the standard press release. Here are the top AI trends being covered:

**Ethics:** There is a sense that in the rapid adoption of AI, ethical frameworks and regulations have been left behind. Media tend to err on the critical side, but praise organizations that are transparent about their AI strategies and practices. Because the foundation of AI is data, governance and compliance play a role in the media conversation around AI ethics. It is critical that a spokesperson who is discussing AI has a stance on the ethics debate.

**Explainability:** As AI becomes more advanced and complex, the media is focusing on Explainable AI (XAI), which leverages user experience (UX) elements to explicitly tell users how the AI technology arrives at its decisions or recommendations. Companies must communicate transparently with customers about how and why AI arrives at certain decisions and prioritize earning consumer trust in their methods for collecting consumer data.

**Vertical Use Cases:** Multiple vertical markets are implementing AI to drive real business results faster than others, and these use cases are being highlighted in the media. The most popular vertical markets are Financial Services, Retail Services, Transportation, Healthcare and Manufacturing. The media is highlighting how companies are using AI to enhance their products and offerings and ultimately, how AI is changing these industries.

### **What's Needed to Break Through**

In order to stand out in this crowded AI field, there are a few things that all companies should consider when telling their AI stories:

**New Products/Services:** Major product announcements still drive coverage, particularly with trade and vertical outlets. Being able to demonstrate to journalists how AI is embedded within a product and how that will impact business results for customers is critical.

For example, last year, Numerica Credit Union was one of the first financial institutions in the US to allow members to do their banking by voice, using Alexa. Since then, many financial institutions have followed suit, offering voice banking to customers using Alexa and Google Home. According to PwC, voice banking can improve revenue growth, reduce risk, and increase customer retention, benefitting consumers and financial institutions with efficiency and cost savings. They estimate it can decrease human error by 15 to 30 percent, improving customer satisfaction and Net Promoter Scores.

**Unique Use Cases:** Real life AI use cases make the difference for journalists. The key here is being able to show how AI is delivering actual results, and more importantly, the steps the AI took to solve that challenge. Craft a compelling and unique story to demonstrate why the use case is innovative and newsworthy.

For example, Walmart opened an AI-powered store in New York with AI-enabled cameras and interactive displays. Kroger tapped Microsoft to help it build two “connected experience” stores in which shoppers would, among other things, get personalized deals as they walk inside – either on their phones or on screens mounted on the shelves. Enel, an Italian multinational energy company, worked with C3.ai to create AI/machine learning algorithms that detect fraud with the goal of doubling the recovery of unbilled energy while improving productivity.

**A Kickass Thought Leader:** Everyone has an opinion about AI, but in order to position a spokesperson as a true industry thought leader, they must have a unique angle on a particular topic, and more importantly, the track record/experience to back it up. Consistently providing media with strong commentary strengthens relationships and increases the credibility of both the company and the executive.

For example, thought leaders who can speak to both the positive and negative impacts of AI on consumers is a continued point of interest. Breaking news can create timely opportunities for thought leaders to offer a rapid response that ties back to their overall messaging, but the most critical part about any rapid response opportunity is to have a unique point of view. Maintain frequent, proactive conversations with media to keep clients top-of-mind when news breaks.

### **Looking Forward**

Although AI has been in the works for decades, many experts say we are still at the beginning of its trajectory. Media and influencers will continue to be flooded with pitches by a crowded market. Organizations who offer a unique point of view and can demonstrate real business results they’ve achieved by using AI will be the ones who cut through the noise. The more inundated with AI material that the media and influencers become, the more they will depend on reliable sources of thoughtful, accurate, and distinctive stories.


*Joe Ferrary is vice president at Highwire PR.*



## INNOVATION 'HALO' BOLSTERS BRANDS

Being perceived as innovative gives brands a boost in today's marketplace—and tech plays a big role in creating that perception, according to a new report from Diffusion.

About one of five consumers surveyed for Diffusion's Everything Is Tech 2019 report (19 percent) said that they would be more likely to give their business to a brand that they thought of as innovative, rather than to a competing brand.

 A significant number of people were also interested in learning more about innovative brands, with 21 percent saying there was a greater chance that they would open an email from an innovative brand, and 29 percent saying they were more likely to seek out and read news articles about an innovative brand.

Some emerging technologies had a larger effect than others on making a brand appear innovative, the survey respondents said. More than a quarter of them (26 percent) thought that using augmented reality makes a company look more innovative, while artificial intelligence came in second (19 percent) and facial recognition technology (18 percent) was close behind. Chatbots (6 percent) and cryptocurrency (4 percent) lagged behind.

As regards what consumers expect advanced technologies to do for them, 44 percent said they want the technologies to facilitate shopping experiences, while 33 percent want to them implement to improve customer service and 30 percent wanted such technologies as drones and warehouse organization to be employed in an effort to make deliveries more convenient.

The online study of 1,236 adults conducted on April 18 and 19.

## EX-IKEA US PRESIDENT COUNSELS FOR APCO

Lars Petersson, a 36-year veteran of IKEA who most recently was US president after management posts in Sweden, Italy and Japan, has joined APCO Worldwide's international advisory council.



**Lars Petersson**

Assuming the US job in 2015, Petersson launched a series of diversity and inclusion programs and expanded parental benefits that earned CSR kudos for the world's largest furniture retailer.

He also unveiled an organization for growth (O4G) restructuring program in October 2017 that triggered sharp negative feedback from staffers.

Via an internal video in December 2017, Petersson apologized for the way that he implemented O4G and devised a plan to boost morale.

He stepped down as US president in March and left his consultant post in August.

Margery Kraus, APCO founder/executive chairman, expects clients to benefit from Petersson's track record of "entering and navigating new and challenging markets around the world, and steering through difficult business environments as well as complex bureaucracy."

## A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FROM THE DEVIL

**Background:** The Devil, a.k.a. Satan, the Prince of Darkness, Big Bad, The Notorious D, His Royal Badness, Boss of all Bosses. Occasionally goes incognito under the name Brad.

**Executive summary:** Opportunity to act as Agency of Record and literally serve as Devil's Advocate. Prospective client is a figure of seminal infamy, with a marquee value second only to God. Responsible for career successes of luminaries ranging from Ghengis Kahn to Vince McMahon. Favorite background sound is tortured souls howling in eternal agony. His influence over the U.S. Congress speaks for itself.

**Situational analysis:** Encountering serious image problems and losing market share to rivals, with name recognition down 27 percent since 2016. Confronting growing difficulty getting even the biggest sinners to sell Him their souls. His website, once the premier online destination for iniquity as measured in unique monthly visitors, now trails Walmart and Amazon.



**Bob Brody**

**Objectives:** To reign supreme and corner the market on evil, fending off competition from the Kardashians. To promote salvation by damnation and prevent evil from getting a bad name. To improve public perception of the Evil Empire product portfolio and stop the public from ever again settling for the lesser of two evils. To make inroads on the urban professional Baby Boomer demographic.

**Qualifications, capabilities:** Must be comfortable joining The Dark Side and representing a client intent on world domination through acts against humanity. Should be fluent in speaking with forked tongue. Ethical elasticity a must. Demonstrable experience in adhering to abysmally low moral standards. Lifetime loyalty required and non-negotiable. Track record handling iffy clients—Roger Goodell, Big Tobacco, Big Fat—a major plus.

**Scope of work:** Standard PR services—executive visibility, issues management, crisis control, manipulating reality, tweaking the truth, inventing alternative facts.

**Plan:** Mount exquisitely orchestrated, full-frontal, 360-degree rebranding initiative that stages a comeback for the ages. Proclaim wrong as the new right and vice the new virtue. Enlist minions as brand ambassadors, including winning back Keith Richards. Regain nonprofit tax status. Get credit often mistakenly given to God for "punishments" such as malaria, typhoons and Pat Robertson.

**Budget:** Write your own check (though all payments will be made in cash).

**Considerations:** Must have no misgivings about seeing your integrity forever shattered. Must accept severe consequences for failure to perform satisfactorily. Introduce yourselves at presentation with charming personal anecdote that reveals a heinous misdeed you once committed. Forgo PowerPoint slides ("Just talk to me like a Person," He recommends).

*Bob Brody, a public relations consultant and essayist in New York City, is author of the memoir "Playing Catch with Strangers: A Family Guy (Reluctantly) Comes Of Age."*

## **SOMERSET COUNTY PARKS NEED PR**

The Somerset County [New Jersey] Park Commission wants to hire a firm to handle its PR responsibilities throughout the upcoming year.

The firm will write press releases to cover the Commission's programs, special events, facilities and promote volunteer opportunities, according to its RFP.

It will handle outreach with daily/weekly/monthly newspapers, radio outlets, cable TV stations and tourism-related websites in Jersey and neighboring states.

The Commission's communications partner will pen a weekly column for a local newspaper and generate publicity for tournaments and fundraising initiatives.

Proposals, due Nov. 19, go to: Karen McGee; Purchasing Agent; Somerset County Administration Building; 20 Grove Street; Somerville, NJ 08876

The outside of the envelope must include "RFP for Public Relations Services—Contract # PC-XS-0003-20." Click [here](#) for the RFP.

## **SENATE TARGETS CHINA CENSORSHIP**

After China's move to pressure the NBA into muzzling its players and coaches about protests in Hong Kong, Sens. Cory Gardner (R-CO) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced legislation on Oct. 30 designed to monitor attempts by the Chinese government to intimidate US companies that exercise their rights to free speech.

The bill would create a federal task force known as the China Censorship Monitor and Action Group, staffed with representatives from the Depts. of State and Commerce, Federal Communications Commission and US Agency for Global Media.

The CCMAG would meet with federal officials, corporate executives and members of the media to gather information about "punitive actions taken by the People's Republic of China towards US companies that involve economic or diplomatic retaliation for the exercise of free speech by US companies."

## **HRC'S DALTON OPENS SHOP**

Olivia Adair Dalton, who was senior VP for communications & marketing at the Human Rights Campaign, has opened Dalton Strategies in DC.

In joining the LGBTQ civil rights group in 2015, Dalton handled communications in the fight for marriage equality and against "conversion therapy." She led the group's response to the shooting at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando. Dalton remains a senior advisor to HRC.

Earlier, she was at SKDKnickerbocker, where she launched a Supreme Court communications practice and the Barack Obama Foundation. She was spokesperson for Barack and Michelle Obama during both presidential campaigns, press secretary at the Dept. of Transportation and deputy press secretary for Sen. Joe Biden.

Dalton Strategies is focused on strategic communications, crisis management, issue campaigns and speech-writing/op-ed services.



**Olivia Adair Dalton**

## **SVB WORKS VIRGIN GALACTIC'S 'LIFT-OFF'**

Sard Verbinnen & Co. handled investor relations for today's New York Stock Exchange "lift-off" of Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic Holdings as it became the first publicly held space tourism company.

The stock opened at \$12.34.

The company says it has reservations for more than 600 people from 60 nations who have forked over deposits of \$80M and represent potential revenue topping \$120M.

Founded by Branson in 2004, VGH trades under the SPCE symbol.

FTI Consulting handles media for VGH.



## **NEWS OF FIRMS**

**Spectrum Science Communications** has unveiled new branding, which includes an updated logo, website and positioning. As part of the changes, the agency has launched what it calls the Spectrumtific Method, a proprietary methodology that the agency says is intended to help clients connect with audiences by identifying the "unique human truth" that drives behavior change. This becomes the foundation for delivering channel-agnostic, intermedia executions that move audiences in the desired direction. The new branding is meant "to reflect the company's evolution and current position in the marketplace," according to Spectrum owner and CEO Jonathan Wilson.

**Ditto PR** has opened its first overseas office in London. It will be led by Steven Melfi, who previously was managing director in Ditto's Brooklyn headquarters. The London office will oversee Ditto's pre-existing portfolio of international clients, serving as both a gateway for companies looking to penetrate U.S. markets and as a hub for those seeking more global awareness. The opening coincides with the launch of Ditto's advisory and consulting practice. Ditto was founded in 2012 by former AP reporter and Bush administration spokesman Trey Ditto.

**Hill+Knowlton Strategies Portugal** has opened a content studio, which will offer production capabilities in a wide variety of aspects and formats. The team, based in Lisbon, will be part of H+K's global content Studios network, a networked group of creative + design studios located across H+K with more than 100 consultants working from São Paulo, Oslo, Madrid, London, New York, Dubai and Shanghai. The Studio will be led by Ana Castro Rego, who comes to H+K from 9 Communications, where she was director of planning and strategy.



## COMMENTARY

**Twitter chief Jack Dorsey scored PR gold** with his Oct. 30 decision to ban political advertising on his platform.



**Jack Dorsey**

His genius move followed Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's testimony on Capitol Hill, where he made the nonsensical argument that his platform doesn't want to infringe on the right of politicians to run ads filled with lies and misinformation. Zuckerberg positioned Facebook as the First Amendment guardian of unethical politicians.

Virginia Senator Mark Warner found it necessary to school Zuckerberg on the different level of scrutiny received by political ads that run in traditional media and those on social platforms.

In his Oct. 29 letter to the FB chief, the Democrat noted that broadcast, cable and print ads are broadly accessible to the electorate, press, fact-checkers and political opponents through media monitoring services. He wrote:

“As a result, strong disincentives exist for a candidate to disseminate materially false, inflammatory or contradictory messages to the public.

“By contrast, social media platforms tout their ability to target portions of the electorate with direct ephemeral advertisements—often on the basis of private information the platform has on individual users, facilitating political advertisements that are contradictory, racially or socially inflammatory, or materially false without the same constraint as more traditional communications media, and without affording opposing candidates an equal opportunity to respond directly in front of the same targeted audience”

C'mon, Mark. You know this stuff? Why be so stubborn about sticking with political ads? Do you really need another headache with Washington?

Saint Jack Dorsey is smelling like a rose with a decision to forgo a tiny piece of revenues. Twitter gets less than \$3M of its \$3B revenues from political ads.

Zuckerberg needs to burst from his Silicon Valley bubble and hire a PR firm to advise him to drop political advertising ASAP.

The firm's fee will be the best money that Facebook has ever spent.

**Three cheers for Facebook employees for challenging Zuckerberg's decision** to run political ads bristling with lies and misinformation.

The controversy heated up anew as the Trump re-election ran an ad featuring bogus claims about Hunter Biden's dealings in Ukraine.

Millions of people viewed the Biden spot including micro-targeted low-information voters who are very

likely to accept the ad as truth since it ran on their trusted FB platform.

About 250 FB employees signed a letter to set the record straight for Zuckerberg: "Free speech and paid speech are not the same thing."

They wrote: "Misinformation affects us all. Our current policies on fact checking people in political office, or those running for office, are a threat to what FB stands for. We strongly object to this policy as it stands. It doesn't protect voices, but instead allows politicians to weaponize our platform by targeting people who believe that content posted by political figures is trustworthy."

The letter says phony ads have the potential to increase distrust in FB and signal that the platform is, "OK profiting from deliberate misinformation campaigns by those seeking positions of power."

They promised to keep the pressure on management: "We want to have this conversation in an open dialog because we want to see actual change," says the letter. .... "Over the coming months, we'll continue this conversation, and we look forward to working towards solutions together. This is still our company."

**PR people shouldn't fret too much over the reputational hit** suffered by iconic Peter Luger Steakhouse, which received a blistering zero-star October 29 review by *New York Times* restaurant critic Pete Wells.

Luger's PR is in good hands.

Wells knocked the Brooklyn eatery for feasting off past glories. He rapped it for being staffed by overworked and surly waiters who dish out run-of-the-mill, inconsistently prepared and overpriced food (e.g., \$229.80 porterhouse for four).

“And after I've paid, there is the unshakeable sense that I've been scammed,” wrote Wells, who wondered why anybody really needs to go to Luger.

Ouch!

Who does Luger call? How about New York City's iconic PR man, Howard Rubenstein, and his crackerjack team of publicists?

The 87-year-old Rubenstein still chairs Rubenstein Strategic Communications, which he launched in 1954.

During his legendary career, Rubenstein represented George Steinbrenner, Archdiocese of New York, Metropolitan Opera, Ron Perelman, Rupert Murdoch, Leona Helmsley and Donald Trump.

Pete Wells, no problem.

Rubenstein married Amy Forman, whose family owns Luger, in 1959. Their son Steven is president of RSC, and the other son Richard runs Rubenstein PR. There's always an open table at Luger's for Rubenstein's clients.

My hunch is that Luger's reputation will soon be on the PR mend.

Anybody hungry?

—Kevin McCauley