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O'Dwyer's Newsletter



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SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND SEEKS PR

Search for Common Ground, the DC-based non-profit committed to ending armed conflict throughout the world, is looking for a PR firm to help it “elevate awareness of the peacekeeping field” as well as to prepare the group and its leadership “for the responsible and appropriate handling of future hypothetical crisis scenarios,” according to its RFP.



Search for
Common Ground

SCG says it’s preparing for an “unanticipated event” that requires external communications. It wants a PR partner to train key executives, so they are able to deal with media fallout from a political, secu-

rity or legal crisis.

The organization, which has offices in 49 countries, also is eager to use PR to increase its visibility through internal channels and media outlets.

The RFP says the firm will 1) audit digital channels and strategize ways to improve reach, following and impact of content; 2) conduct competitor research; 3) analyze search for SCG’s media mentions and strategize ways to build relationships with media; pitch and gain more earned media coverage, and 4) identify value adds, such as brand ambassadors, that you or your firm alone can offer.

SCG wants firms or individuals to apply at its website, <https://bit.ly/2D2j0Jq>.

HOWARD SCHULTZ TAPS SCHMIDT FOR '20 RUN

Former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz has hired former Edelman vice chairman Steve Schmidt as he considers a 2020 presidential run.

Schmidt, who ran the late John McCain’s presidential campaign against Barack Obama, got to know Schmidt via the Starbucks account at Edelman, according to a report at CNBC.

He’s also co-host of the podcast, “Words Matter.”

Schultz is preparing for a media tour early next year to promote his book, “From the Ground Up: A Journey to Reimagine the Promise of America.”

He has hired Cheryl Cook, who was an Edelman executive VP, to promote the book.



Howard Schultz

ASI MOTORS TO STARTING GATE OF PR HUNT

The Ayrton Senna Institute, the non-profit educational organization based in Sao Paulo, Brazil, is looking for a PR firm to bolster fundraising in the US.

Named after the storied three-time Formula 1 racing champion who died in a crash, ASI works to improve the education of Brazilian children and young people.

Launched in 1994 by the family of Ayrton Senna, ASI has programs in elementary and high schools in more than 660 municipalities, which benefit more than 1.5M students per year.

The non-profit is funded by donations, licensing and partnerships with private sector companies eager to tap into the enduring global appeal of Senna.

A Young & Rubicam study in 2006 (a dozen years after Senna’s death) ranked the deceased race car driver as the No. 1 celebrity with licensing potential among the Brazilian public. Nippon TV called him the 22nd most idolized personality of all time among Japanese people.

ASI is working with Bain & Co.’s Sao Paulo office to find a PR firm that can help it develop a communications strategy geared at US foundations and corporations.



CISION STEMS RED INK TIDE

Cision posted an 87 percent decline to \$6M in Q3 losses from a year ago on an 11 percent boost in revenues to \$117.2M. CEO Kevin Akeroyd reports average pro-forma subscription customers moved ahead by 2.8 percent to 41,700, while revenue per subscriber inched up 1.2 percent to \$11,200. The number of customers buying services from Cision on a transactional basis fell 6.6 percent to 38,200. They spent \$1,400 per quarter, which was up 5.4 percent.

Akeroyd called the performance “another solid quarter of financial results” as Cision focuses on “delivering best-in-class products and services to our customers, executing our strategic and operational plans, and driving toward our long-term financial goals.”

He highlighted Cision’s 2.1 percent growth in organic revenues. Cision for the nine-month period lost \$12.9M (-85.4 percent from a year ago) and had \$544M in revenues (up 17.7 percent).

Cash/cash equivalents are \$84.2M vs. \$148.6M in 2017.



Kevin Akeroyd

M&A ACTIVITY SHOULD MAINTAIN FAST PACE

The pace of mergers and acquisitions in the public relations and integrated marketing communications sector shows little sign of slowing down, according to a survey just released by legal firm Davis & Gilbert.



Out of the 109 firms that responded to the survey, 92 percent indicated that they had been approached by a potential buyer in the last two years. More than half (54 percent) said they thought it was likely or very likely that they would sell their firm within the next three years.

The top three reasons cited for contemplating a sale were reaping a personal financial reward for the seller, executing a personal exit strategy or gaining the opportunity to take on greater challenges in a larger firm.

The most attractive buyers from a seller's point of view were large independent PR firms, with large publicly traded holding companies coming in second and small or mid-sized PR firms occupying third place. Consulting firms and private equity firms ranked much further down the scale than they did in last year's survey.

Those rankings are a pretty good reflection of the 67 M&A transactions that Davis & Gilbert identified over the 12-month period ending Oct. 1. Independent PR firms constituted 61 percent of the buyers in those transactions, with public holding companies accounting for 37 percent and private equity firms sitting at just two percent.

The most popular acquisition targets are firms that specialize in tech, which accounted for 39 percent of last year's M&A deals. Among the other specialties attractive to buyers were travel & tourism, financial services/investor relations, healthcare and sports/entertainment.

The survey also asked firms to identify the top three challenges they faced over the past 12 months. Attracting and keeping top talent was tops on the list, and most firms said they expected that challenge to remain strong over the next 12-month period.

HUDSON SWIMS TO FTI CONSULTING

Carolyn Hudson, who was executive VP in Weber Shandwick's employee engagement & change management practice, is now at FTI Consulting as a managing director in its strategic communications segment.

She leads the Americas people & change group, which works with HR, communications and other C-suite execs to drive transformational change.

Prior to Weber Shandwick, Hudson was at Accenture as part of its change management practice and internal marketing group. During her more than 25-year career, Hudson handled mergers & acquisitions, internal communications, social media, culture transformation and technology roll-outs.

At FTI, she reports to Brian Kennedy, head of the Americas strategic communications shop. Leslie Benson heads FTI's global people & change operation.

FTI's strategic comms group chalked up \$165M in revenues during the first nine months of this year.



Carolyn Hudson

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

H+K Strategies has named **Sam Lythgoe** global head of marketing and business development. Lythgoe has been with the firm for 20 years, serving most recently



Sam Lythgoe

as managing director/senior VP for new business and marketing in the UK and EMEA. She also started up the consumer tech practice in H+K's London office and has led the agency's work for clients including TomTom and BT. Lythgoe has also led such programs as H+K HER, which is geared toward supporting female employees as they develop throughout their careers. Her appointment comes as H+K centralizes its business development and marketing efforts.

Pearson has brought on former General Electric chief communications officer **Deirdre Latour** as its chief corporate affairs officer. Latour had been with GE for 14 years before stepping down last March. She is credited with helping to drive the evolution of GE's image from a legacy industrial manufacturing and financial services conglomerate to a focused digital company. Before joining GE, Latour was a VP at Edelman, with responsibility for a variety of corporate communications, brand, cause, consumer and entertainment marketing efforts. She will join Pearson on Jan. 1 and will lead the company's global corporate affairs team, covering such functions as government relations, media & investor relations, employee communications, and brand & social impact.

Clarity has brought on **Jay Kolbe** as executive VP, emerging technologies and **Michael Paffmann** as vice president, enterprise. The agency has also promoted **Sherry Smith** from account director to vice president in charge of media, mobile and marketing. Kolbe comes to the firm from Sparkpr, where he most recently served as executive vice president. Paffmann joins Clarity from 5W Public Relations, where he was a vice president. Smith has been at Clarity since 2016, and has also served as project consultant at Nadine Johnson Inc. All three will be based in the firm's New York office.

Baker Public Relations of Albany has added former Spectrum News reporter **Barry Wygel** to its team as media strategist and senior account executive. Wygel was with Spectrum for six years, earning an Emmy nomination for his reporting of the anniversary of Tropical Storm Irene as well as spearheading a weekly segment called "Wygel at Work" which looked at area professions and businesses.



Barry Wygel

Stratacomm has promoted five team members in its Washington, D.C. and Detroit offices. **Kristin Gregory** and **Brooke Ziomek** are now account directors; **Nicole Golvala** becomes senior account executive; and **Marcella Dudek** and **Amber Garnett** advance to the account executive position.

TECH BRANDS ARE MORE THAN JUST TECH

Technology companies are a dime a dozen these days. Brands that may once have categorized themselves simply as software, hardware or services organizations are now wedging themselves under the technology umbrella. Even companies that focus on specific markets like financial services, industrial manufacturing or healthcare are slinging the technology moniker — often because they invest in innovative digital capabilities, or they play in a complex technology-adjacent segment such as science, analytics or development.



Amy Fisher

The benefit of this approach is that “technology” is seen as the best way to solve any problem. The downside is that it’s hard to differentiate your brand compared to other technology companies.

Understanding your purpose

I’ve seen brands try this broad-based technology approach. They start by saying they’re a technology company, and then narrow the message down to try and explain “what kind of technology.” All the while getting more and more mired in features and functions.

Brands that attempt this approach are forgetting the main purpose of their message, their “why” (a shout-out to Simon Sinek here for his mastery of articulating its importance). The “why” helps brands define what they believe in and how it impacts others. It makes a brand “relatable.”

For example, a brand could state, “We believe that rural communities have the same right to high quality healthcare as urban communities. That’s why we created a way for patients to connect virtually with doctors around the country that match the care they require, all without leaving home.”

That’s a lot more compelling than saying “We’re a technology company. We make a telemedicine platform.”

Defining target audiences

Once an organization’s marketing team has figured out its “why,” the next step is to understand the stakeholders they want to reach. The majority of technology brands our agency works with are trying to connect with CIOs, CTOs and VPs of IT, among others. But that’s usually where they stop.

Smart brands go one step further to define the industry where their key stakeholders exist. While this is extremely important for technology brands that target multiple verticals, it also applies to those technology brands serving just one industry. Here’s why: individuals within different industries (even those with the exact same title) make technology buying decisions very differently.

A healthcare CIO buying an Internet of Things solution may be looking to improve the patient experience within the hospital, while a manufacturing CIO may be buying an IoT solution to track inventory across the supply chain. The tool they need is the same, but the outcome of that tool is unique.

Once you understand this, you realize that you can’t

treat all CIOs the same. You must create a story for each industry segment that aligns with their desired outcomes. This is what I call “purposeful” communication. It doesn’t matter if you’re selling ERP systems, eCommerce platforms, security systems, automation, mobility solutions, IoT, cloud solutions, enterprise software or any other type of technology. The key is to lead with the challenges that apply to your customer’s specific business, then articulate why your technology brand is qualified to meet the needs of that segment.

Applying path to purchase to comms.

Maintaining this mindset is of utmost importance when it comes to marketing, public relations and sales. One way to start down this path is to create personas for your different markets. Consider your buyer’s end goal, unique attributes and challenges of their industry, motivations for finding a solution and the barriers they encounter along the path to purchase.

Most technology brands that participate in this persona exercise go into the process thinking they know their buyers pretty well. But often, we come across unknowns. For example, is the barrier truly price, or is it a concern about job security if they automate more processes? Who are the influencers to purchase: the CEO, the CMO or a line of business manager? Where does your buyer get the most trusted information?

To overcome these unknowns and get to a more accurate persona, you may need to conduct research. While secondary research exists for some buyers, nothing can compare to primary qualitative research when it comes to understanding your buyer. Make sure you talk to a research team that understands your goal and can develop an insights-driven approach that allows you to uncover these path-to-purchase behaviors. This data will go a long way in helping you define the positive behaviors you want to reinforce through marketing, public relations and sales messaging.

Storytelling and messaging

Remember, as you build your purpose statement and messages, customize them to your buyer’s industry. By using your buyer’s language and showing that you understand their world, you can more easily differentiate yourself from other technology vendors vying for their attention.

This may mean that the language you use is less like that of a traditional technology brand. And that’s okay! Once you start to elevate your brand’s story above your product and service offerings, you start to change the buyer’s perception of you. You can reposition your brand into a space where you become a trusted business solutions partner — one that’s indispensable to the market because of your deep, and industry-specific, problem-solving abilities.

In our highly competitive, fast-paced business 4.0 world, it’s no longer enough to be just another technology brand. You must be a brand that can articulate its purpose and engage with stakeholders using customized and personalized industry vernacular.

Amy Fisher is a vice president in Padilla’s Technology Practice, with expertise in B2B communication in health care, manufacturing, technology and agriculture.

JOURNALISTS DISMISS BIAS

Only nine percent of business journalists think an unconscious bias has affected their profession's ability to report on the Trump administration.



The vast majority — 71 percent — believe journalists remain committed to seeking the truth and reporting it fully, according to a recent survey of North American business journalists released by financial reporters' association the Society for Advancing Business Editing & Writing and Miami-based PR firm rbb Communications.

The survey, which sought to gauge journalists' sentiments regarding the state of the media and how it's been impacted by the Trump administration, focused, in part, on the practice of unnamed sources, which has seen increased use among the press in recent years.

The majority of respondents — 36 percent — said while naming a source is always preferable, most readers and viewers today understand and accept why the use of unnamed sources is sometimes necessary. More than a quarter — 26 percent — said they don't currently feel compelled to use unnamed sources more than before. An additional 18 percent of journalists said the current political landscape has birthed a growing skepticism toward the use of unnamed sources, and they're concerned that stories will now be viewed as less credible as a result.

When asked to elaborate on today's journalism environment, the majority — 37 percent — said the most unpleasant part of the profession is its constant uncertainty and instability. Nearly a third — 32 percent — said they dislike today's emphasis on brevity and click-friendly content. An additional 11 percent cited the pressures of being expected to manage and navigate multiple platforms.

The rbb/SABEW survey polled journalists and media professionals who are current SABEW members, and drew responses from 80 respondents. The survey, which was administered by SABEW, was conducted in September.

IRAQ HANDS HOLLY DC WORK

The Embassy of Iraq is ironing out a written agreement with Holly Strategies Inc. for strategic counsel and outreach to US officials in Congress and the Trump Administration.

The pact is expected to be worth about \$7K per-month and cover a broad range of geopolitical matters that impact the US-Iraq bilateral relationship.

Josh Holly launched his firm in December 2017 following the implosion of The Podesta Group, where he did a six-year stint.

Prior to joining Tony Podesta's firm, Holly served as a communications director in Congress and deputy press secretary for Tennessee's former Republican Senator Lamar Alexander.



Josh Holly

BRAITHWAITE HANDLES NJ VIRUS OUTBREAK

Philadelphia's Braithwaite Communications is handling crisis PR chores for the Wanaque Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, where an outbreak of adenovirus beginning in September killed 10 and sickened at least 19 more severely disabled children.

A lawsuit filed Nov. 7 blames the facility for maintaining unsanitary conditions that allowed the virus to spread and alleged staffers were "reckless and careless."

It cites inspection reports from 2015 through October that allegedly show deficiencies at the center that spread adenovirus.

New Jersey health officials, however, dismissed the shortcomings as "low level," according to the *North Jersey Record*.

The suit was filed on behalf of a 15-year-old resident at Wanaque Center who was taken to Hackensack Medical Center Oct. 18 in a "critical and life-threatening condition."

The virus does not pose a threat to healthy people but is dangerous to those with severe disabilities and weakened immune systems.

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy held a press conference Oct. 24 at the Wanaque Center, which is not admitting any new patients until Dec. 3—if no new cases are confirmed.



ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

RWest has been named agency of record for **Spain's Rioja Wines**. The agency will work with the Consejo Regulador (Regulatory Wine Council) of DOCa Rioja, to bring the region's wines and lifestyle to a wider North American audience. RWest efforts for the Rioja brand are to include PR, social media, digital, paid media and a dedicated Rioja Trade Program. Rioja wines are protected by the oldest Designation of Origin in Spain, which administers highly sophisticated and stringent quality control in the winemaking process, from viticulture to bottling.

Brandware has been selected as public agency of record for **American Freedom Distillery**. Brandware will manage both regional and national media communications for the company, including local influencer campaigns as it launches in new markets. The St. Petersburg, Florida-based craft distillery produces American-made premium spirits, including the Rekker Rum and Horse Soldier Bourbon brands.

Matter Communications has added seven clients: **CureDuchenne**, which works to improve and extend the lives of boys and young men with Duchenne muscular dystrophy; Medical robotic company **Myomo**; payments, human resources and benefits outsourcing company **Paychex**; **Radius Bank**; web security firm **Sectigo**; **Theracyle**, a motorized exercise bike geared toward patients with such movement disorders as Parkinson's disease and MS; and the **Tree Care Industry Association**.

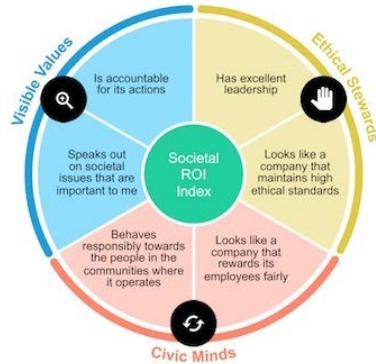


WEGMANS TOPS SOCIETAL ROI INDEX

Finn Partners has teamed up with The Harris Poll to create an index that measures a company's corporate reputation for social good. The 2018 Societal ROI Index combines elements of leadership, citizenship and real-world engagement to create assessments of 100 highly visible companies.

Wegmans topped the list, with a score of 85 out of a possible 100 points. Patagonia, UPS, ALDI and Microsoft were all close behind.

The Societal ROI Index records perceptions of a company across three categories: Visible Values, Civic Minds and Ethical Stewards.



Survey respondents said they would be far more likely to recommend companies with higher Societal ROI scores as good places to work. They also indicated that companies ranking high on the index would stand a much better chance of being welcomed into their communities.

Companies in the grocery and tech sectors tended to earn higher Societal ROI scores, while the energy and banking & investment sectors lagged behind.

At the top of the list of issues that respondents wanted to see companies address were privacy of data (69 percent), access to healthcare (61 percent) and supporting veterans (59 percent).

When it comes to how much impact companies are having on those issues, people didn't seem to be all that impressed. When asked if companies have made a "very positive impact" on job creation, 24 percent of respondents agreed, while 22 percent said the same as regards supporting veterans.

Finn Partners and The Harris Poll say they plan to conduct the SROI index annually. For more information, go to www.SocietalROI.com.

FOX ALUM MOODY JOINS PMK*BNC

Erin Moody, who worked in communications at 20th Century Fox's TV operation, has joined entertainment PR powerhouse PMK*BNC in Los Angeles. She's part of the Inter-public unit's entertainment strategies practice.

At Fox, Moody rose to executive director of communications and publicized TV shows, such as "The X-Files," "How I Met Your Mother," and "Family Guy." She spent a decade at Fox in two separate stints.

Most recently, she was VP-communications at Freeform (formerly ABC Family), the pay TV channel owned by Walt Disney Co. Earlier, Moody was marketing and promotions manager at the Los Angeles Philharmonic.



Erin Moody

ALGERIA IS KEEN ON NRA ALUM KEENE

David Keene, ex-National Rifle Assn. president and American Conservative Union chairman, is representing the DC lobbying interests of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria under a one-year pact worth \$360K.

Algeria is keen for Keene Consulting Services to interact on its behalf with members of the Trump Administration, Congress and non-government decision-makers. KCS was hired "to promote Algeria's role of peace and cooperation in world and regional affairs" and to attract business, trade and investment in the African nation.

Keene, a former special assistant to former vice president Spiro Agnew and New York Sen. Jim Buckley, advised the presidential campaigns of Ronald Reagan, Bush I, Bob Dole and Mitt Romney.

The ACU is the major organizer of the CPAC conference, "the Woodstock of conservatives," in Washington.

GWINAVERE JOHNSTON DIES AT 75

Gwinavere Johnston, who founded her Denver PR firm in 1975, died Nov. 1 by taking advantage of Colorado's medical-aid-in-dying law after struggling with her diagnosis of progressive supranuclear palsy, according to her family-written obituary.

The Wyoming native launched the Johnson Group, which evolved into JohnstonWells with blue-chip clients such as US West, Coors, Qwest and Wells Fargo.

She served as president of IPREX North America, president of PRSA Counselor's Academy, head of PRSA/Colorado and a long-time Silver Anvil judge.

The family asks for donations in Johnston's name should be sent to Mile High United Way at bit.ly/ForGwin or the University of Wyoming at <http://www.uwyo.edu/uwprepresents/>.



Gwinavere Johnston

GOPRO LOBBIES AGAINST CHINA TARIFFS

Digital camera juggernaut GoPro Inc. has hired Whitaker Strategies to lobby on Capitol Hill in light of President Trump's ongoing trade war with China.

San Mateo, CA-based GoPro, which makes action cameras as well as a line of drones, manufactures its products in China. Company founder and CEO Nick Woodman has said in recent months that GoPro might now move its U.S.-bound production out of China in light of the escalating trade war.

Trump, who's hit China with a series of tariffs since the beginning of the year, signed a memorandum in March imposing a 25 percent tariff on \$50 billion of Chinese goods. Three rounds of tariffs have since been imposed, the latest coming in September. Additional tariffs were threatened if China retaliates. Woodman has said that GoPro hasn't yet been impacted by the tariffs.

GoPro saw above-estimate revenue returns during 2018's second quarter after a rocky 2017.

The GoPro account will be handled by Whitaker Strategies principal Stephen Whitaker, who was previously a staffer to the House Ways and Means Committee.

COMMENTARY

The Election Day results are good news for environmental PR, a segment of the communications arena that was made largely irrelevant once Donald Trump took office.

Look for the Democratic-controlled House to restore the climate change committee that was disbanded by the Republican majority in 2011. Yippee!

Though a fortified Republican majority in the Senate will certainly block most House "green" measures from becoming law, the reborn climate panel will be a potent PR vehicle to keep global warming issues front and center in the public debate.

Panel members will be in the position to use the power of PR to increase public awareness and support for green initiatives to pressure recalcitrant Senators into action.

Presumptive Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is the person who originally launched the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. A reiteration of the select committee is sweet music for the San Francisco Congresswoman, whom president Trump (for the time being) views as somebody that he can deal with.

The reconstituted global warming panel doesn't come a moment too soon.

It arrives in the aftermath of the Oct. 8 release of a landmark United Nations report that painted a dire future for the planet due to damage on a scale that has "no documented historic precedent" unless actions are taken to reduce greenhouse gases.

From the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the report is based on more than 6,000 scientific studies and written by 91 scientists from 40 countries

And of course, the Tweeter-in-chief, the most unscientific president in US history, didn't read a word of the report though he acknowledged its receipt.

After all climate change, according to the president, is a "hoax" perpetrated by China to tangle the US manufacturing base in burdensome regulations.

In typical Trumpian fashion to cast seeds of doubt, Trump implied that he has a bunch of people on hand to dispute the findings of the UN report.

Let's go to the transcript of Oct. 9:

"It was given to me, and I want to look at who drew it. You know, which group drew it. Because I can give you reports that are fabulous, and I can give you reports that aren't so good. But I will be looking at it. Absolutely."

A month later, there's still no word on the president's view of the report.

There's more good election news for the environ-

ment. The new Congress also will be able to thwart future moves by Team Trump to roll back environmental safeguards.

Tieran Sittenfeld, senior VP-government affairs at the League of Conservation Voters, told the Pulitzer Prize-winning website, InsideClimateNews, that the election results are a rejection of "the most anti-environmental US House of Representatives in our nation's history."

Anti-green Republicans who put "corporate polluters ahead of people and their communities" went down in defeat, according to Sittenfeld.

That's indeed a breath of fresh air and a drink of cold clean water for all of us.

CNN stands tall in aftermath of Trump's takedown of its White House correspondent Jim Acosta for his dogged pursuit of the media's right to hold the executive branch accountable for its actions.

The White House yanked Acosta's press credentials for apparently not showing enough deference to the President. Trump

prefers taking a swing at the softball questions from Fox News, the official propaganda channel of the White House, then queries from a hard-nosed reporter like Acosta.

Trump's media consigliere, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, followed up Trump's CNN bashing, trotting out a doctored video of Acosta as proof of his transgressions. That's par for the course for Sanders, who is accustomed to lying and dealing in misinformation when dealing with the media.

CNN issued a strong statement following Trump's smackdown of Acosta, calling it "not only dangerous" but "disturbingly un-American." The network reminded the president that though he may not "respect a free press, he has a sworn obligation to protect it."

The AT&T unit, which is considering filing a lawsuit to regain Acosta's press credentials, is taking the high ground in the matter. The network has (so far) refused to lower itself into the mud with Trump in a noisy confrontation about "unfair" media coverage and phony "enemy of the people" tripe.

The best strategy is to keep covering Trump like a blanket. Forget the theatrics. For instance, the president did not exactly cover himself in glory during his trip to France to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day. He appeared out of his league among world leaders. Let the American people see the president in action. They will soon thank their lucky stars that the US still has a free press.

—Kevin McCauley

