



Kevin McCauley
Editor-in-Chief

O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of PR & Marketing Communications



271 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016
212/679-2471. Fax: 212/683-2750
www.odwyerpr.com; jobs.odwyerpr.com

November 1, 2021 Vol. 54 No. 42

WPP RECORDS 15.7% Q3 GROWTH

WPP CEO Mark Read recorded a 15.7 percent growth in Q3 revenues (less pass-through costs) to \$3.6B as clients across-the-board hiked investments in marketing, especially digital media and ecommerce services.



Mark Read

He noted that WPP posted 6.9 percent over the comparable 2019 pre-pandemic period and is well-positioned for growth due to the restructuring actions that were put into place over the past three years.

Germany, which was up 34.5 percent, ranked as the No. 1 growth market during the period. Greater China (18 percent), UK (16.9 percent), US (12.4 percent) and Australia (2.4 percent) were next.

WPP's PR group registered 16 percent growth during the quarter to \$319M. It was up 10.3 percent to \$911M for the nine-month period.

"We are very pleased with the performance of both [BCW](#) and H&K as well as Finsbury Glover Hering, which have all had an outstanding year," Read told O'Dwyers.

In October, WPP announced the merger of FGH with [Sard Verbinnen & Co](#) to create a \$330M government affairs, corporate reputation, crisis management and financial communications juggernaut.

EDELMAN CRISIS PRO JOINS CRYPTO FIRM

Patrick Hillmann has left [Edelman](#), where he was global head of innovation for the crisis and risk practice, to assume the chief communications officer position at blockchain ecosystem and cryptocurrency exchange company Binance.



Patrick Hillmann

Before joining Edelman, Hillmann was vice president of public affairs and advocacy at the National Association of Manufacturers, and director of public advocacy, government affairs and policy at GE. He has also held executive positions at LEVICK and Ketchum.

At Binance, Hillmann will oversee the organization's corporate communications, public affairs, media relations and stakeholder engagement efforts. He will also work alongside Binance's compliance and security leaders as the organization coordinates with global regulators.

UT NEEDS PR TO MARK CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY

The University of Texas (Austin) is looking for a firm to develop a strategic communications and engagement plan to commemorate the landmark 1950 Supreme Court decision that desegregated its law school, and monuments to honor UTA's first Black undergrads.



The Sweatt vs. Painter Interior Gallery and Entry commemorates Heman Sweatt, a Black mail carrier who was refused admission to the law school because of the Jim Crow-era "separate but equal" doctrine.

The Sweatt gallery is to open in May 2023, while the Precursors—We Are East Texas Mall commemorative spaces are set for 2026.

UT is looking for a firm to convey relevant messages to key audiences across multiple platforms and engagement activities that involve and inform key stakeholders about its work, according to its RFP.

The university UT plans to award a one-year contract with four additional one-year renewal options.

Proposals are due Nov. 12 at <https://purchasing.utexas.edu/resources/formal-bid-opportunities>
[Read the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

D'AMATO'S FIRM POWERS HYDRO-QUEBEC

Former New York Senator Al D'Amato's Park Strategies has signed on to represent Hydro-Quebec.

The New York City-based firm is to build support for the Champlain Hudson Power Express project, which involves construction of a 340-mile underground and underwater transmission line to carry hydropower from the US-Canada border to NYC. It works for the Government of Quebec-owned power company as a subcontractor to Forbes Tate Partners.



Alphonse D'Amato

The job is to secure grassroots/grasstops support for CHPE via earned and social media messaging.

D'Amato's firm will pen op-eds, brief reporters, organize virtual editorial board meetings and press roundtables and amplify research supporting H-Q on social media.

The contract began October 13 and runs through January. Park Strategies received a \$10K retainer for October and is in line for a \$17,500 retainer from November through January.

PUTTING COVID'S LESSONS TO WORK IN '22

The challenges marketers have faced over the past year offer up some lessons on how they can chart a successful course through 2022, according to [“Turning Interest Into Impact.”](#) a report from IPG DXTRA, Interpublic’s collective of 27 marketing services brands.

Perhaps not surprisingly, purpose plays a central role in several of them. On the DE&I front, United Minds executive vice president Tai Wingfield says that by centering inclusion and equity when managing the logistics of hybrid workforces, employers can move closer to the aim of making work fair “regardless of work style and location.”



Current Global CEO Virginia Devlin broadens the definition of DE&I by stressing the need for disability inclusion. “Although 90 percent of companies claim to prioritize diversity,” she says, “only four percent of businesses are making offerings inclusive of disability.” She adds that by working to change this situation marketers can earn the loyalty of a billion-strong audience of disabled people.

The importance of making a company’s purpose a matter of public record also comes up for discussion. Weber Shandwick executive vice president of geopolitical strategy & risk Michelle Giuda notes that her agency’s research indicates 87 percent of executives “believe their companies should be prepared to take a more public position on geopolitical issues over the next five years,” and says such preparation can make them more able to anticipate and handle any issues that arise.

ITB global growth and development director Crystal Malachias points out the need to “take advantage of all the tiles offered by the entire influencer system,” while Kinesso SVP, global client solutions Liam Copeland says the increase of concerns around data privacy should spur communicators “to use data in the service of humans, not just in service of our KPIs.”

Successfully communicating in the midst of all these factors, according to FutureBrand chief strategy officer John Tipple, requires figuring out how a brand can make itself “fundamental to human life.” Creating a brand that people can rely on, he says, “is likely to be the new standard by which people will judge the company with whom they decide to spend time and money.”

SPITZER/PATERSON PRESS SEC. TO BRUNSWICK

Errol Cockfield, who was press secretary to former New York governor Eliot Spitzer and his successor David Paterson, has joined Brunswick Group as a partner in its Big Apple office.



Errol Cockfield

Most recently, Cockfield was senior VP-communications at MSNBC, where he handled overall media strategy, and senior VP in Edelman’s corporate & PA affairs shop. He began his career as a journalist (*Los Angeles Times*, *Hartford Courant* and *Newsday*) and will advise Brunswick clients on in the technology, media and telecommunications sectors.

The firm also has brought on Andrew Williams, who was managing director of corporate communications at Goldman Sachs, as a partner in New York. He led PR for Goldman’s digital consumer bank, Marcus.

CANADA SEEKS COVID COMMS TO INDIGENOUS

Indigenous Services Canada seeks a PR partner to communicate urgent/time-sensitive information, particularly COVID-19-related information, to First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders, communities, and organizations, including media.



The firm will inform Indigenous Peoples about available COVID-19 support and financial benefits via direct outreach, media relations and public service announcements.

The objective is to encourage Indigenous Peoples to get vaccinated to protect their health and that of others.

Bidders must have at least five years of experience in handling outreach to First Nations and Intuit peoples.

ISC plans to award a contract through March 31, 2022 with two additional one-year options.

The Outreach will be conducted in either English or French, or both languages. The PR work will be done at the selected firm’s home base.

Proposals are due Nov. 12 at soumissionbid@sac-isc.gc.ca. [Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

APCO PITCHES ABU DHABI AS TECH HUB

[APCO Worldwide](#) has signed on to provide strategic communications services for the Technology Innovation Institute of Abu Dhabi.

The Oct. 20 agreement with the Institute calls for the independent DC-based firm to promote its technological and scientific innovations and to highlight Abu Dhabi and the wider United Arab Emirates as a key player in advanced technology.

The Institute is part of Abu Dhabi’s advanced technology research council, which is pitched as a “disruptor in science.”

APCO will receive a fee of \$55K plus expenses to represent the Institute through the end of the year.

Its three-person TII team includes Melissa Rincon, Alexander Gibson and Thalia Baeza Milan.

APCO, on Sept. 30, bid adieu to the Economic Development Board of Bahrain, which it promoted as a great place for business investment or expansion.

ALEC’S MEIERLING MOVES TO IFA

Bill Meierling, who was CMO and EVP-external relationships & strategic partnerships at the American Legislative Exchange Council since 2013, has joined the International Franchise Association.

As VP-strategic communications & marketing, Meierling will support IFA’s mission to protect, promote and enhance franchising that supports 7.6M jobs and contributes \$675B to the US economy.

Prior to ALEC, Meierling had strategic communications and policy experience at United Way Worldwide, Edelman and OpinionMakers International, where he was a founding partner.

“Bill’s experience implementing public affairs and marketing campaigns that drive member value, increase revenue and innovate our product offerings will be critical to IFA as the franchise sector leads the economic recovery and continues to grow,” said Matt Haller, IFA CEO.



Bill Meierling

CAN YOU MANDATE BETTER HEALTH?

Americans are struggling through work-life balance exhaustion, an overload of dark news and a pandemic that seems to extend forever. And yet, Ruder Finn's recent FutureThink Index found that as a society, we remain mostly



Kathy Bloomgarden

positive about our futures, with 58 percent of Americans feeling positive about what's to come in terms of career, health and technology.

The Ruder Finn FutureThink Index is a new tracking study that aims to measure how Americans think about the future, and explores how the Transparency, Dialogue and Knowledge connections respondents have with businesses and providers impacts their outlook and behaviors.

The study emphasizes healthcare as a critical force impacting people's futures: as the pandemic goes on, with additional waves of COVID, we still need to battle the healthcare needs of the population to get back to normal or to build back better. There are several areas which are urgent: vaccinating more of the population and adopting healthier behaviors, improving health through individual use of new technologies and reaching more of the underserved population. The index lends insight into how to progress in each of these three areas that are fundamental to improving health.

Individual responsibility for new health behaviors

As the current wave of COVID and the Delta variant illustrate, we still need to reach those who remain vaccine-hesitant. Businesses and leaders have tried both vaccine requirements and incentives, and the President has just announced vaccine mandates for government workers, asking businesses with more than 100 employees to mandate vaccines or submit to weekly testing. But it doesn't only have to be a stick-or-carrot approach. Making a meaningful connection with those who are resistant must also be part of the solution. Our study shows that when people have high TDK connection with healthcare leaders and providers, they're 20 percent more likely to get vaccinated. This means that leaders who exercise and encourage transparency, dialogue and knowledge-sharing have a significant impact on vaccine positivity. Going forward, we must emphasize educational efforts to share knowledge about vaccinations and COVID as well as stimulate a dialogue with those who are trusted in the community. Local voices are often more impactful than national influencers. Health professionals need to be paired with religious leaders, advocacy groups and peers to increase dialogue and create an environment of understanding. To increase personal relevance, we also need to explore the factors and channels that influence each demographic cohort. For example, our study shows that vaccine rates correlate directly with people's levels of TDK connection: the percentage of Gen Xers with high Health TDK connection is more than twice that of Gen Z; and the percentage of people in cities with high Health TDK connection is 50 percent-plus higher than in the suburbs or rural areas, with knowledge-sharing being the most significant driver of positive change in those groups.

The impact of approaching healthcare through a transparency, dialogue and knowledge sharing lens has impact beyond just vaccinations. Americans with high Health TDK

connection are overall 37 percent more likely to take personal action to improve their health: 22 percent more likely to change eating diet and habits, 55 percent more likely to use a wearable health device and 45 percent more likely to start a new prescription medication.

Adopting new technology tools

We learned a great deal from the pandemic about how technology could transform most industries. The increase in telemedicine has skyrocketed to 38 times higher than it was before the pandemic, according to [McKinsey & Company](#). The amount of money being poured into digital-health startups is already upwards of \$14.7 billion in 2021 as reported by the [Wall Street Journal](#). 2021 is projected to be the most-funded year to date for the digital health sector. From smart watches and other wearables to at-home COVID tests, there's a wave of innovation that could help people to improve their health.

One example is how technology is helping ameliorate the increased levels of mental stress experienced during the pandemic. During the pandemic, about 42 percent of employees globally said their mental health declined. Employers have sponsored digital health offerings on demand, including meditation apps, online therapy sessions, digital biomarker apps, analytic tools that collect remote data from wearables and provide guidance on when to seek help to boost positive mindsets. Of course, people need to use the tools and not drop out of these systems, which is where a TDK connection can make a difference. Americans with high TDK connection are 78 percent more likely to use new technologies than people with medium or low TDK connection.

Reaching the underserved

We also need to double our efforts to reach more segments of the population, especially those who have suffered from low access to healthcare. The FutureThink Index shows populations who are uncertain about their outlook for the future are increasingly less likely to act to better their own health.

Consider that rural residents are among the most vaccine-hesitant group in America, despite the fact that people in rural areas are at an increased risk for severe COVID-19. [CNN highlights](#) that 80 percent of rural Americans live in locations designated as "medically underserved," with lower access to regular doctor appointments and consistent healthcare insurance.

These audiences are not receiving regular and authentic communications that shape their thinking and therefore are suffering from what we term "Negative FutureThink," which, in fact, leads not only to things like health instability but also more overarching stagnation toward action and change.

The good news is that the American Dream is alive and well; a new leadership model has built better connection with Americans, helping to shape a positive FutureThink across all demographics. We have learned a great deal about the healthcare gaps we have to fill coming out of the pandemic. With a new commitment to increasing transparency, dialogue and knowledge-sharing, we can improve connection to achieve better healthcare outcomes.

Kathy Bloomgarden is CEO of Ruder Finn. The Ruder Finn FutureThink Index study was designed in conjunction with Full Spectrum Insights and surveyed a representative sample of 2,000 18+ year old Americans between July 25 and August 28, 2021 on Pollfish.

FTI CONSULTING POSTS 31% SURGE

FTI Consulting's strategic communications unit posted a 31.1 percent jump in Q3 revenues to \$69.4M, driven by a robust demand for its corporate reputation and PA services. Operating income for the segment surged 178.4 percent to \$14.2M.



Mark McCall

Mark McCall, who heads the stratcomm business, said momentum grew during the quarter as businesses throughout the world opened up as the COVID-19 pandemic subsided.

"We continued to expand our global network beyond our London, EU and US base into Australia, Asia and Latin America," he told O'Dwyer's.

For the nine-month period, stratcomm revenues were up 17.6 percent to \$197.8M. Income jumped 65.9 percent to \$35.5M. Segment headcount rose 6.1 percent to 817 people for the year.

FTI CEO Steven Gunby raised overall guidance for 2021 due to what he called the "powerful results" achieved by his company during a period when "clients faced their most significant challenges and opportunities."

DAVIS & LIVINGSTON CUT TIES WITH WARLORD

Lanny Davis and former Congressman Bob Livingston terminated their relationship with Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar on September 30.

The partners promoted Haftar's support of a free and fair, United Nations-supervised election in Libya on Dec. 24 to facilitate a peaceful, stable, unified and democratic country.

Lanny J. Davis Assocs. and The Livingston Group signed a contract on Aug. 24 to represent the 77-year-old field marshal, who is a US citizen.

They were to receive a \$160K payment to cover the first-month fee of a six-month contract.

In a statement, Davis and Livingston said: "We offer the field marshal our best wishes that he can carry out the commitment he made to us, leading us to represent him under FARA and as stated in our mission statement in our contract: That he will continue to support the UN-supervised free and fair elections as scheduled on 24 December 2021."

MANULIFE'S GOODALL SHIFTS TO DXC TECH

Carol Goodall, who was VP-global communications at Toronto-based Manulife insurance and financial services giant, has joined DXC Technology as VP & head of communications.



Carol Goodall

Tysons, Va.-based DXC is a \$17B provider of IT services that counts half the Fortune 500 as customers. The New York Stock Exchange-listed company has 130K employees in more than 70 countries.

Goodall joined Manulife, which has \$1.1T in assets under management and operates as John Hancock in the US, in 2017 as head of global internal communications.

Earlier she was global head of employee communications at Royal Bank of Scotland and senior director of internal communications at Rogers Communications.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

J/PR is named agency of record for public relations and social media strategy for both **California Olive Ranch** and its sister brand, **Lucini Italia**. The agency will collaborate in the storytelling behind both brands, their upcoming launches and innovations. California Olive Ranch is the country's largest domestic producer of extra virgin olive oil. In addition, J/PR has also signed on as public relations agency in North America for **Hawaiian Airlines**, working to position Hawaiian as the carrier of choice and increase market share.



WITHIN is selected by **Rite Aid** as its digital media agency of record. The agency is tasked with creating an integrated, data-driven approach to unify Rite Aid's marketing strategy and customer experience, leveraging a diverse media mix and a cross-channel measurement approach. The companies will work together to communicate Rite Aid's unique value proposition. "We are evolving our approach to ensure relevancy and a strong customer experience," said Rite Aid chief merchandising and marketing officer Erik Keptner.

Diamond PR adds **Quintessence Aguilla**, a nine-suite Relais & Chateaux hotel near Anguilla's white-sand Long Bay Beach, and **The Santa Maria**, a Luxury Collection hotel & golf resort in Panama City's Santa Maria neighborhood. The agency will handle services including media relations, creative ideation, individual and group press trips, national partnerships, television opportunities and social media consulting for the clients.

NEWS OF FIRMS

The Bliss Group introduces Bliss Impact, an offering focused on providing counsel, campaign management and collaboration for clients who want to align their strategic priorities and sustainable programs with societal change. Bliss Impact will work with clients to launch and manage purpose-driven initiatives in such sectors as environmental protection, DE&I, reputation, investing and social engagement.



H Code starts up A Code, a digital media solutions platform focused on the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. Former HubSpot marketing leader Sunny Chen has been appointed to lead the company as A Code's product marketing manager. The platform's offerings include A Code Intelligence Center, which leverages data-driven and quantitative approaches to understanding the Asian media landscape; A Code Content Studio, which will create culturally connected campaigns; and A Code Digital Media Solutions, an in-house creative services team.

Edelman launches Edelman Smithfield in Canada, a dedicated financial and capital markets communications boutique agency within the larger firm. Since 2015, when Edelman acquired Smithfield Consultants, it has operated its financial and capital markets communications specialty in London as Edelman Smithfield. Edelman Smithfield in Canada will be led by Edelman EVP, Toronto David Ryan as managing director. Nina Godard, who led Edelman's financial communications specialty in Canada prior to the launch of Edelman Smithfield, will serve as vice president.

WEBER CHAIR JACK LESLIE TO STEP DOWN

Jack Leslie plans to retire as [Weber Shandwick](#) chairman at the end of March after a 45-year career in public affairs and corporate communications, which included stints as political director for Sen. Ted Kennedy and president of the legendary Sawyer Miller Group.



Jack Leslie

He will continue to advise Weber Shandwick and clients on corporate reputation, public policy and social impact matters after stepping down as chairman. “The story of Weber Shandwick’s journey to becoming the powerhouse it is today could not have been written without Jack Leslie,” said Andy Polansky, ex-Weber Shandwick CEO and current IPG DXTRA chief.

Gail Heimann, Weber Shandwick CEO, credits Leslie’s leadership and influence in helping to form “an organization that not only solves complex challenges for a diverse mix of clients, but one that delivers with purpose and a passion for doing well by doing good.”

Leslie is a longtime activist for humanitarian assistance, international development and global health issues.

He chaired the USA for UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) during the 1990s and was appointed by president Obama as chair of the US African Development Foundation, where Leslie led missions to 25 African countries.

CA WATER DISTRICT NEEDS SHARPER PR

The Marina Coast Water District is looking for a firm to help it communicate more effectively to the public.

Marina is located on California Route 1 between Monterey and Salinas.

MCWD, which serves about 36K people, wants a partner with at least five years of experience that is knowledgeable about the branding process, savvy with non-traditional communications/outreach tools, able to meet established deadlines and assume project management duties.

It plans to award a one-year contract that may be renewed annually upon mutual consent.

Proposals are due Nov. 5. They may be sent electronically to Paula Riso at priso@mcwd.org, or five copies could be mailed to: Marina Coast Water District; 11 Reservation Road; Marina, CA 93933; ATTN: Paula Riso.

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

FACEBOOK’S CHRISTENSEN TO POINTSBET

Facebook head of US brand & consumer marketing Kyle Christensen is heading to online gaming operator PointsBet, where he will take on the post of US chief marketing officer.



Kyle Christensen

At Facebook, Christensen led the company’s first-ever brand marketing campaign, More Together, as well as handling the launch of Facebook’s video platform, Facebook Watch.

In his new post, Christensen will oversee PointsBet’s overall marketing strategy, working with core partners to drive product growth and gain overall market share. He will report to Points-

Bet US chief operating officer Johnny Aitken.

ON THE MOVE

[Goodman Media International](#) brings on **Edwige Buteau** as vice president. Most recently, Buteau served as the head of public relations at Gift of Life Marrow Registry. She previously ran her own consultancy, Spot PR and was a senior managing director at RFBinder. At GMI, she will lead such activities as national consumer and trade media outreach, strategic messaging and executive positioning.



Edwige Buteau

Antenna Group appoints former *Wall Street Journal* senior energy reporter and editor **Cassandra Sweet** vice president of cleantech. Sweet was most recently a vice president at Mission Control Communications, overseeing public relations, marketing and brand building activities for early-stage climate tech and mobility startups and investors. She has also worked at Singer Associates and Technica Communications. In her new position, Sweet will play a key role in advising a portfolio of Antenna’s cleantech clients on their communications strategy.

[Crosby Marketing Communications](#) hires **Florence Lochrane** as social media supervisor and **Jennifer Forester** as social media manager. Lochrane most recently served as communications manager for renewable energy company Enviva Biomass, where she led all social media strategies, content planning and community management. Forester was previously digital media coordinator at The Children’s Inn at NIH, a nonprofit that provides residential services for children and young adults participating in NIH clinical research studies.

[FINN Partners](#) global health chair **Gil Bashe** joins the corporate strategic advisory board of Resilient Health, which offers cloud-based, telehealth and remote-care technologies. Bashe will advise Resilient executives on their public health, partnership and brand-building efforts. Resilient was among the 10 companies selected by Melinda French Gates’ Pivotal Ventures and TechStars to participate in its inaugural [Future of Longevity Accelerator](#), which supports startups building products and services for the unmet needs of older adults and their caregivers.



Gil Bashe

[Padilla](#) promotes senior directors **Kim Blake** and **Julie McCracken** to vice president posts. Blake, who will serve as vice president in the agency’s health practice, leads its work for clients such as CommonSpirit Health, Mayo Clinic, VITAS Healthcare, and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. McCracken, who is now vice president in the agency’s corporate advisory group, focuses on social impact, employee engagement, corporate culture and change communications

Seven Letter hires **Kris Fetterman** as a director. Fetterman previously served as a communications strategist at Blue Engine, which rebranded as Seven Letter in 2019. He was most recently a writer at Pivotal Ventures. Before that, he was on the speechwriting team of the 2016 Democratic National Convention and wrote over 500 speeches for U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro. Seven Letter has also promoted chief of staff **Catherine Adamchak** to partner and named founding partner **Allison Fastow** head of Seven Letter talent and engagement.

COMMENTARY



Daryl Simm

Succession countdown clock begins at Omnicom as Daryl Simm takes the newly created president/COO post, positioning the 60-year-old as successor to longtime chief John Wren.

The 69-year-old Wren was elected president in 1996 and CEO in 1997, succeeding Bruce Crawford. He added the chairman title in 2018 following the retirement of 90-year-old Crawford, who was executive chairman.

OMC's board said it contacted various investors who were comfortable with combining the chairman/CEO roles due to the "complexity of our business, the critical nature of Wren's long standing client relationships to a professional services business such as ours."

Simm has been running Omnicom's media group for more than two decades. The company's press release states that he "will work directly with chairman and CEO John Wren to oversee business operations across Omnicom."

Wren is "very pleased to have him in this new role at Omnicom."

The countdown clock may turn out to be more of a succession calendar for Simm.

Facebook can run but it can't hide. By changing the corporate name to "Meta," CEO Mark Zuckerberg hopes he can escape into the "metaverse" and leave the myriad crises dogging the social media platform far behind.

"From now on, we're going to be the metaverse first. Not Facebook first," Zuckerberg said at the company's Connect annual hardware event. That's magical thinking, Zuck.

In ordering the corporate makeover, Zuckerberg only reinforces the notion that he is absolutely clueless when it comes to public relations.

The Facebook founder only has to take a gander at fellow high-tech behemoth, Google. The search engine formed the Alphabet corporate shell in 2015. Reporters barely mention Alphabet when doing stories about Google. The name Alphabet is only used in reference to its quarterly earnings.

Zuckerberg is the face of Facebook, and no meta how hard he tries to escape into the virtual world, fixing Facebook's real-world problems has to be his top priority.

David Beckham, former captain of England's soccer team and inspiration for the 2002 rom-com "Bend It Like Beckham," is putting his prestige on the line, agreeing to a \$200M deal to become the face of the 2022 Qatar World Cup.

Qatar has been under fire for human rights abuses since it won the right to stage the World Cup in 2010.

The Arab state has brought in thousands of migrant workers to construct the infrastructure needed for the matches.

Amnesty International says thousands of them have died, and their deaths have not been investigated by Qatari officials.

The non-profit wants World Cup ambassador Beckham to speak out about the sorry human rights situation in Qatar.

The former Manchester United star believes the first World

Cup awarded to a predominantly Muslim state will inspire positive change in the region.

It's up to Beckham to nurture that change.

The weather forecast calls for a storm of misinformation ahead as the United Nations' COP26 climate conference kicks off in Glasgow.

APCO Worldwide and Logically released a report on Oct. 27 that found international events and major government policy interventions are key drivers for spikes in climate change misinformation.

It said the 2020 World Economic Forum "Great Reset" theme triggered a major new climate misinformation conspiracy.

Daniella Lebor, director of APCO, believes the communications business can do a lot more to counter misinformation by deploying countermeasures focused on addressing false content. "Large scale interventions such as public awareness campaigns, improved data sharing between social media platforms and researchers, and investments in high quality media literacy practices are vital components to successfully addressing our current information crisis," she said.

Bernie loves Sarah. Taking a page from Sarah Palin's book, national treasure Bernie Sanders whacked the mainstream media for their "extraordinarily poor job" in covering what was actually in president Biden's "Build Back Better" program. Did you mean to say "lamestream," Bernie?

Sanders lamented the endless stories breathlessly reporting about the insider politics connected with Biden's plan, conflicts between the House and Senate, the size of the program and high-profile opposition of Sens. Joe Manchin and Krysten Sinema.

Sanders said extremism is not the only threat to America's democracy. Ignorance and lack of knowledge could also do the trick.

Blue Crab Strategies, the progressive communications firm in Washington, DC, has posted a "land recognition" statement on its website to pay tribute to Indigenous people.

"We acknowledge that we live and work on the unceded lands of many Indigenous peoples," the statement reads.

"We respect the Treaties that were made on these lands and acknowledge the numerous and significant harms that were done to the Indigenous people who inhabited this land for thousands of years. We honor with gratitude these lands and the people who have stewarded them throughout the generations. We ask that our partners join us in acknowledging these communities, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations."

[The New York Times reported Nov. 1](#) that "land acknowledgment" statements are increasingly facing criticism for seeming shallow and taking the focus away from policies that support Indigenous people.

Those statements aim to convey "thank you" or indicate that the speaker is a "guest," but are especially "empty and alienating," [wrote Summer Wilkie](#), a member of the Cherokee Nation.

—Kevin McCauley