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O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of PR & Marketing Communications



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November 2, 2020 Vol. 53 No. 44

OMNICOM SUFFERS 11.5% Q3 REVENUE DROP

Omnicom CEO John Wren reports Q3 revenues dropped 11.5 percent to \$3.2B due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organic revenues fell 11.7 percent.



John Wren

The FleishmanHillard, Ketchum, Marina Maher Communications, Porter Novelli, Mercury and Cone spearheaded PR group posted a 4.3 percent dip in Q3 revenues to \$322.8M and a 3.4 percent drop on an organic basis.

Wren said travel, lodging, entertainment, energy, oil & gas, non-essential retail and automotive sectors took the hardest hit from the virus.

He added that though healthcare, pharmaceuticals, technology, telecommunications, financial and consumer

products areas “fared relatively well to date, conditions are volatile and economic uncertainty cuts across all clients, industries and geographies.”

Looking ahead, Wren said the revenue shortfalls suffered during the Q2 and Q3 are expected to continue through the rest of the year.

That reduced revenue “could adversely impact our ongoing results of operations and financial position and the effects could be material,” he said.

WPP POSTS 5.5% DIP IN Q3 REVENUES

WPP chief Mark Read reports a 5.5 percent decline in Q3 like-for-like revenues to \$3.9B as the firm battles the impact of the pandemic.

The PR group, which is led by BCW, Finsbury, Ogilvy and Hill+Knowlton Strategies, took a 4.8 percent hit in LFL revenues to \$285M. Reported revenues dropped 9.8 percent.



Mark Read

The PR unit remained “the best-performing segment in WPP,” according to Read, with client demand for strategic communications advice especially robust in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

While Read praised WPP’s resilience in a challenging market, he is cautious about the pace of the firm’s recovery given the tightening of COVID restrictions around the world and uncertainty in the global economic outlook.

WPP’s five top markets posted LFL revenue declines during the quarter. The US market saw a 5.5 percent dip, as did the UK (6.5 percent), Germany (1.8 percent), China (16.7 percent) and India (16.3 percent).

CALABLE ISSUES RFP TO BOOST AWARENESS

The California Achieving a Better Life Experience Act Board, which administers the CalABLE program that allows people to save for disability-related expenses in tax-advantaged investments, is looking for a firm to develop a marketing communications program.



The goal is to increase awareness of CalABLE through marketing, branding and outreach.

Targeted consumer groups are individuals with disabilities, parents of disabled children and their families, service providers and disability-centric media.

The selected firm will work with Board’s staff on the design/production of newsletters and program updates for public consumption across media channels including internet and email, social media and other channels with proven history of reaching the targeted audiences, according to the RFP.

Work on the two-year program, budgeted at \$610K, begins March 1, 2021. There is an option for another year at \$305K.

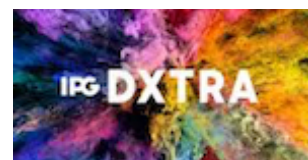
Proposals are due Nov. 17. Send the original proposal and five copies to: ABLE ACT Board; Attention: Dante Allen, Executive Director; 915 Capitol Mall, Room 590; Sacramento, CA 95814.

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

INTERPUBLIC RECASTS CMG AS IPG DXTRA

Interpublic Group has rebranded the constituency management group, a global collective of 28 marketing services and brands anchored by Weber Shandwick, Golin, Octagon, FutureBrand and Jack Morton, as IPG DXTRA. The new entity will provide those companies with a collaboration engine designed to enhance the impact and simplify the execution and management of integrated solutions.

IPG DXTRA’s global portfolio includes R&CPMK, which connects clients through entertainment, lifestyle, influence and pop culture; full-service digital marketing agency Genuine; digital experience agency Hugo & Cat; social content firm That Lot; global influencer marketing agency ITB; organizational and business transformation consultancy United Minds; and earned-first advertising agency The Brooklyn Brothers.



“IPG DXTRA is more than just a new name – it’s a symbol of how, for an increasing number of clients, we work across our best-in-class agency brands to intentionally bring forward highly relevant, specialized services to our clients,” said Andy Polansky, CEO of IPG DXTRA, told O’Dwyer’s.

FTI'S PR REVENUES DROP 11.8%

FTI Consulting posted an 11.8 percent drop in Q3 revenues to \$52.9M compared to the year-earlier record-setting performance as the COVID-19 pandemic hit its corporate reputation, M&A activity and large-scale project work. Adjusted EBITDA fell 33.3 percent to \$8.4M.



Mark McCall

Mark McCall, global leader of the strategic communications business, told O'Dwyer's that he's proud of how his team mobilized to help clients deal with the economic uncertainty during the COVID crisis. FTI's stratcom headcount jumped 6.5 percent to 766 from a year ago.

For the nine-month period, stratcom revenues tumbled 4.8 percent to \$168.2M and EBITDA plummeted 21.4 percent to \$34.7M. Overall, FTI Steve Gunby reported a 4.9 percent jump in revenues to \$622.2M. Net income declined 16.9 percent to \$50.2M.

FTI took a charge of \$7.1M during the quarter, of which \$4.7M was for lease abandonment and relocation costs related to New York City office consolidation.

ONTARIO VACATION SPOT FLOATS \$200K PACT

Tourism Vaughan Corp. is looking for a partner to handle its \$200K travel PR budget work on an "as-and-when-required basis" due to the uncertainty of the travel industry in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaughan is home to the largest concentration of family attractions in Ontario.

The mission of the selected firm will be to drive visitation back to Vaughan as the economy reopens, showcase its attractions, re-ignite the meetings and events sector and raise awareness of the area as a safe, family-friendly destination.

The communications partner will develop two promotional videos (leisure & business travel); maintain social media channels; launch targeted outreach through inbound content marketing, email marketing, social media ads, PR and influencer outreach; and handle content and creative for visitvaughan.com.

The contract will be awarded Dec. 1 and run through 2021.

Responses are due Nov. 6 electronically at <https://vaughan.bidsandtenders.ca>.

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

MORGAN RETURNS TO KEKST CNC

Jonathan Morgan, who exited Kekst CNC in 2006 to launch Perry Street Communications strategic PR shop, has returned to the Publicis Groupe unit as a partner in Dallas.



Jonathan Morgan

During his 14-year run at PSC, Morgan worked a number of joint campaigns with Kekst CNC.

"We know Jon well, and he brings to our firm a track record of success, wise counsel and judgment, entrepreneurial energy and strong relationships—attributes that will be highly beneficial to our clients," said Jeremy Fielding, Kekst CNC Co-CEO.

Prior to joining Kekst CNC in 2001, Morgan was director of research for Michael Dell's private investment firm and Texas assistant attorney general.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Diffusion lands **Infinite Objects** for a campaign to drive mainstream awareness of the company's core product, Video Prints, through a creative product seeding program timed for this holiday season. Video Prints are displays designed to play a single video on a loop, infinitely. Diffusion's outreach will target mainstream, consumer, lifestyle, technology and other vertical media while leveraging influencer relations to drive growth on social media and purchase conversions. Diffusion will also work with Infinite Objects to promote corporate and industry news, including upcoming collaborations between the brand and digital artists.

Violet PR wins **Newark Symphony Hall**. The venue, built in 1925 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, is owned by the City of Newark and operated by the non-profit Newark Performing Arts Corporation. Violet PR is tasked with communicating Newark Symphony Hall's history and legacy as an important cultural site for New Jersey, its important role today in Newark's resurgence, its opportunities for local performing artists and status as a home for creators of color from around the world.



Brandstyle Communications picks up **Geojam**, a rewards-based music platform bringing artists and fans together through customized experiences and limited-edition product drops. The agency will also serve as AOR for MEETNorth, a dating app that offers Covid-specific features, allowing users to rate, monitor and preserve their personal comfort levels when meeting others.

5W Public Relations will work to raise awareness for the relaunch of footwear retailer **Payless**. The work includes the unveiling of an immersive e-commerce platform and new brick-and-mortar retail concept stores. The first prototype store will launch in December 2020 in Miami, the new home and headquarters for the brand, with plans to expand to 300-500 freestanding stores across North America over the next five years.



Gagnier Communications handles the listing of **Ajax I**, a SPAC that raised \$750M. The blank check company called Ajax will be listed on the New York Stock Exchange for the purpose of effecting a merger, asset acquisition or other business combination. Dan Gagnier worked the deal with managing partner Jeff Mathews, VP Lindsay Barber and senior associate Jeremy Schulman.

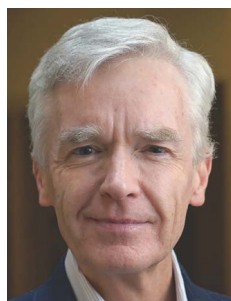
Hemsworth Communications adds vacation rental search engine **HomeToGo** to its client roster. Hemsworth is responsible for supporting HomeToGo's PR efforts across the US, including regional and national media relations campaigns designed to further establish the brand's presence as a cutting-edge product.

Miami-based **Carve Communications** lands cloud-based management software producer **OM System** to generate coverage for its platform that provides a way for businesses to manage their COVID-19 response efforts. Carve will also handle all media relations for branded live content marketing platform **First Tube Media**, raise brand engagement for auto parts online retailer **PartsHawk**, and build brand awareness and consumer engagement for **Victrola**, a manufacturer of turntables for the home.

HELPING HEALTHCARE BUILD TRUST

Society has been challenged by wave after wave of the unknown. Our consultancy focuses exclusively on healthcare organizations—and the physicians, nurses, leaders and other heroes who care for patients—where the questions include: Should I go back to the doctor's office? Whom should I trust, my doctor or my governor? Where can I get real information?

It's been a wakeup call, reminding us that delivering care isn't just about the medical science; it's about creating an environment where people feel safe, cared for and comfortable. That reminder has, in turn, revealed a clear opportunity for healthcare communications: to identify and equip the right messengers and, by doing so, elevating their organizations.



David Jarrard

And then, to help ensure the operational reality fits with the messages being delivered.

Clinical staff are ideally positioned to deliver both the scientific and emotional messages needed to create this environment. It's needed more now than ever. A recent survey fielded by our firm revealed the public doesn't feel particularly safe in healthcare settings—rating their feelings of safety no higher than 5.8 on a 10-point scale. They were also no more likely to return for care

in September than they were when we ran a similar survey in April. Furthermore, barely half (53 percent) of people responding to our September survey said they were likely to get a COVID-19 vaccine when available. Clearly, there's work to be done in getting people the care they—and society—need.

What, then, is the role of communications to help people feel comfortable, allay their fears, bring them back and give them a great experience when they arrive?

First, communications teams need to elevate clinical staff to be the key messengers. Our survey showed that nurses and doctors are highly trusted when it comes to delivering information about healthcare. Almost nine out of 10 respondents said they trust clinicians and a similar proportion said they expect doctors and nurses to be involved in healthcare conversations and educate the public.

This opens up a clear opportunity for communications teams to identify, train and equip clinical staff to become the messengers for their organizations and leverage the remarkable trust they carry. In this moment, communications teams must be involved in the conversation and push to ensure that leadership isn't just answering the question, "What do we need to say?" but also, "Who needs to say it?" If the "who" is a trusted voice, the message has a good chance of resonating.

Second, they can help healthcare providers deliver on the experience they're promising. That entails keeping a watchful eye on corporate body language. We all understand the idea of body language and instinctively know that the wrong body language will drown out the most well-spoken words. The same is true for organizations, especially in healthcare.

We've seen what happens when the body language of a provider isn't right. For instance, when fear of the virus was at its zenith in May, one of my partners walked into a major academic medical center for a gall bladder surgery appointment. After the consult—a "stunningly terrible" experience—she walked out and scheduled her surgery elsewhere. A whole host of "body language" issues had led her to leave: confusing parking, dirty elevators, caution tape across chairs, bad

lighting, no evidence of frequent cleaning and more. Maybe most damning was the distinct lack of empathy and warmth from the individuals she encountered along the way, including the resident and surgeon who conducted the consult.

If the communications team—whether internal or external—is responsible for the message and equipping the messengers, then it stands to reason that communications must also be heavily involved in ensuring that the message is lived. How an organization presents itself is, at its core, an issue of communications, not just verbal but experiential.

As we move away from the acute pandemic phase, the operational decisions and communications campaigns will change. But the principle remains: When people interact with a provider, they need to experience the same positive emotions they feel when they hear and see an ad for that provider.

David Jarrard is President and Chief Executive Officer of Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock.

FAKE NEWS WON'T END WITH THE ELECTION

A polarized media environment, a digital news ecosystem rife with misinformation and a President who continually slanders the press has eroded journalists' credibility as well as Americans' trust in the news industry.

But don't expect our "fake news" problem to get any better after the election, [according to a recent report](#) released by Chicago-based B2B communications agency Greentarget.

Greentarget's report surveyed journalists on their sentiments about the fake news phenomenon as well as what effects it's had on their profession. It found that while a quarter of the journos surveyed (25 percent) said they believe Trump has had a very negative impact on journalists' credibility, less than half (46 percent) expressed optimism that the prospect of a new administration would improve the situation.

In fact, only a third (34 percent) said they think the fake news problem started under Donald Trump's watch, even if a majority agree that the phenomenon has gotten worse in the last four years.

A big majority of respondents believe the fake news phenomenon has affected the news industry for the worse: 80 percent of journalists "strongly" believe fake news has negatively impacted their profession. Only three percent were neutral and an additional three percent disagreed about fake news' negative impact. More than half (56 percent) also said they believe social media platforms such as Facebook are the single greatest enablers of fake news content.

Despite their pessimism, reporters believe the burden falls on fellow journalists (23 percent), editors (22 percent) or news councils and journalism organizations (19 percent) to call out fake news and identify misleading information. Only 12 percent think the government should take the reins in the fight against fake news.

Similarly, while more than a third of journalists polled (39 percent) said they support using the law to curb fake news, almost as many (35 percent) said they don't support such anti-fake news laws. About a quarter of respondents (26 percent) said they remain indifferent on the matter.

Greentarget's report, "Fake News 2020: Combatting Misinformation & Disinformation In a Polarized World," surveyed more than 100 working journalists online between July and September. Half the journalists surveyed have worked in the profession for more than 20 years.



BROOKHAVEN (GA) SEEKS IMAGE WORK

Brookhaven, an ethnically diverse suburban community located northeast of Atlanta, is looking for a strategic communications partner to bolster its image and reputation.

Nearly a quarter (23.4 percent) of Brookhaven's 55,000 people are Hispanic and 10 percent are Black. That compares to 9.9 percent Hispanic and 32.6 percent for the rest of the Peachtree State.

Brookhaven boasts of affluent neighborhoods, numerous work/play communities, quality restaurants, shopping, and a diverse international population. The city is home to the headquarters of AT&T Mobility, Sysnet Global Solutions North America, The Weather Company and the Atlanta Hawks training facility.

The desired communications partner will have an extensive background in government, PR, mainstream news media and specialty in social media proactive outreach. Having experience in local politics and issues; branding, and economic development are preferred. It firm will be responsible for supporting Brookhaven's crisis communications (as needed), media relations, and public relations priorities.

Proposals are due Nov. 19 and must be sent electronically to the city's portal at <https://bit.ly/3e0hXKu>.

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

PEMBERTON TAKES DE&I POST AT OHG

Gena Pemberton, who has more than 20 years of corporate experience at Johnson & Johnson and Motorola, has joined Omnicom Health Group as group VP, director of diversity.

She will lead the implementation of Omnicom's OPEN 2.0 plan and head OHG's push to diversify its workforce.



Gena Pemberton

Pemberton ended a 13-year run at J&J in December 2019 when she exited as director-finance leadership development programs & recruiting. Most recently, she was senior director for diversity, equity & inclusion at Alliance for Inclusive Multicultural Marketing.

In her new post, Pemberton will report to Carolyn Bartholdson, OHG's chief human resources officer.

On Oct. 14, Omnicom announced that Tiffany Warren, who was senior VP & chief diversity officer, was leaving for a DE&I position at Sony Music Corp.

STANTON PR BACKS AAVANTIBIO LAUNCH

Stanton PR & Marketing represents the syndicate of life sciences investors that created AavantiBio, a gene therapy company focused on patients with rare genetic disorders.

Bain Capital Life Sciences, Perceptive Advisors, RA Capital Management and Sarepta Therapeutics put together \$107M in Series A financing to launch AavantiBio.

Alexander "Bo" Cumbo, who served as chief commercial officer and executive VP at Sarepta, will helm AavantiBio, which is headquartered in the Boston area.

"Bo Cumbo has built a first-in-class rare disease commercial organization and has made tremendous contributions to Sarepta," said Doug Ingram, CEO. "We look forward to continuing to work with Bo as he builds a strong AavantiBio team and advances therapies to treat FA and other rare diseases."

Stanton's Scott Lessne handles AavantiBio.

SENATE REPORT SEEKS AID FOR LOCAL NEWS

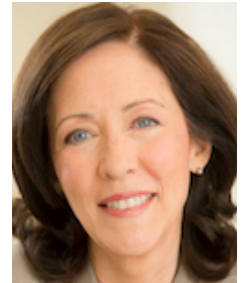
Local newspapers will all but vanish within five years, largely due to the unfair and abusive practices of tech platforms, according to a study from Democrats on the Senate Commerce Committee that calls for new Federal Trade Commission authority to protect endangered newspapers.

By the end of the five years, newspapers will have lost 70 percent of the revenue that they had in 2000. More than 40,000 newsroom jobs have been cut since 2005 and another 7,000 will be lost this year, leaving a workforce of about 30,000.

"We shouldn't let regional and community news die as local newspapers and broadcasters adjust to digital delivery because online giants are unfairly leveraging the advertising market against them," said Maria Cantwell, ranking Democrat on the Commerce Committee.

The Report notes that "local news has been hijacked by a few large news aggregation platforms, notably Google and Facebook, which have become the dominant players in online advertisers," and says that Congress and the FTC should work to ensure fair return for local news content.

The Report also calls for rules to prevent unfair, deceptive and abusive practices to stop platforms from taking local news content without financial payment and retaliating against local news by hiding or removing their content from search engines or social media feeds.



Maria Cantwell

NEWS OF FIRMS

David Garrison, founding principal of Edelman Consulting, and **Peter McKillop**, who was managing director at BlackRock, launch **Climate&Capital Media** to focus on business & finance in emerging climate economy. A membership service, Climate&Capital will publish content, host events and manage a directory. To coincide with the launch, Climate&Capital has published a feature on 10 young climate entrepreneurs delivering climate change solutions around the world.

ROKK Solutions has formed a strategic partnership with **Impact ROI**, under which Impact CEO Steve Rochlin will serve as a senior advisor for ROKK's recently launched social impact communications practice, led by agency managing director Lindsay Singleton. The practice is focused on helping clients build bipartisan long-term relationships with key influencers on Capitol Hill and across the country around topics of mutual interest.

Red Lorry Yellow Lorry has opened its first office in France. Supplementing the agency's existing offices in London, Berlin, Boston and Los Angeles, the Paris office is intended to help RLYL grow its presence in the region and increase the support it is able to provide to local and international customers. "France is becoming an increasingly important market for our clients," said agency CEO Guy Walsingham. "This new office in the heart of Paris marks an exciting step forward."



Steve Rochlin

BRANDS AT GREATER RISK OF ONLINE ATTACK

In today's political climate, where everyone's an activist and brands find themselves vying for relevancy by aligning themselves with any number of contentious social causes, perhaps it's no surprise companies are a common target for harassment and toxic content across social media platforms.

As a result, [according to a report by early-warning risk intelligence provider Crisp](#), negative comments about brands or companies are surging online.

The report, which asked respondents how digital chatter and consumer comments online affect their purchasing behaviors, found that more than two-thirds (68 percent) reported witnessing a "significant rise" in the frequency of derogatory, offensive or hurtful comments about companies on brand-owned social media pages. More than half (51 percent) also said they've seen an uptick in negative comments on brand-sponsored ads running on social media sites.

More than half of respondents (60 percent) said they're more likely to be skeptical of companies and their leaders as a result of harmful comments made about them online, regardless of whether or not those comments are true. 43 percent said they've decided not to purchase an item or service after encountering negative comments about the company online.

A majority of consumers polled (64 percent) said they hold brands responsible for addressing any inappropriate or harmful content made on their social media pages.

Crisp's "Brands at Risk" report surveyed 1,039 respondents in July. The survey was conducted by UK-based customer insight and analytics group STRAT7.

ON THE MOVE

Lux Capital, an early-stage venture capital firm that invests in emerging science and technology, has named former



Scott Rubin

Google director of corporate communications and public affairs **Scott Rubin** chief marketing officer, a newly created role at the company. Rubin joins Lux from computer software company Atlassian, where he served as vice president of brand and communications. At Lux, Rubin will lead brand, marketing, and communications for the company, as well as providing strategic counsel to its portfolio companies.

Public Communications Inc. has named **Michael Queroz** vice president, digital. Queroz, who has been with the agency since 2014, most recently served as director of digital. In his new role, he will manage PCI's digital team as well as providing strategic counsel across all the agency's sectors. "Michael is building a unique digital team that integrates storytelling, content creating, technical skills and strategies," said CEO Jill Allread.

VidCon, a conference for online video and digital creators, has promoted **Celine Sargent** to executive producer of international and **Brooke Berry** to senior manager of social media. Sargent, who has most recently served as executive producer of VidCon London, will be the primary liaison between VidCon and its international markets, including overseeing and organizing all non-US events. Before coming to VidCon, Berry was senior manager of talent partnerships at media platform Awesomeness. She will be responsible for shaping the overall editorial voice for VidCon's brand.

MARYLAND SEEKS FIRM FOR OPIOID OUTREACH

Maryland's Dept. of Health is seeking a communications partner to assess current educational resources available to healthcare providers related to opioid abuse, identify gaps, and develop a communications plan based on the findings to fill potential PR shortfalls.

The desired firm will analyze outreach on opioids, controlled substance prescribing/dispensing and overdose prevention. It will conduct interviews with doctors in large hospitals and private practices for their input on existing outreach activities and gather recommendations for improvement.

Maryland's PR partner will then develop a strategic communications program to support behavioral change via "messaging framing that is most persuasive to target audiences," according to the RFP.

It will forge a creative strategy and teach healthcare professionals how to deliver PR messages.

Proposals are due Nov. 13. They should be sent electronically to anna.gribble@maryland.gov.

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

MDC'S Q3 REVENUES CRASH 17.3%

MDC Partners CEO Mark Penn reports Q3 revenues plummeted 17.3 percent to \$283.4M due to a "significant but reduced drag of the COVID-19 pandemic." Organic growth crashed 16.4 percent during the period.

He played up MDC's nine percent "sequential growth" over Q2 and \$32M in net new business wins.

Penn said MDC has made progress on its plan to form agency networks and increase collaborative pitches. The firm also launched its first major digital marketing product, centralized back-office operations and consolidated real estate.

MDC's PR firms are KWT Global, Allison + Partners, Hunter and Veritas. The firm sold financial firm Sloane & Co. to SKDKnickerbocker, which is part of Penn's Stagwell Group, in February.

Stagwell in October announced a non-binding agreement to acquire MDC, which currently trades at \$2.15 per share.



Mark Penn

RATIONAL PICKS UP EL SALVADOR

Rational PR has signed a contract worth \$65K per month to provide PR and communications support to El Salvador.

The six-month pact calls for drafting press releases, talking points, social media statements and organizing events.

Rational CEO Patrick Dorton heads the El Salvador team that includes Andrew Homan (director of digital media) and Nicolas Fitzgerald (senior director of PR).

In August, El Salvador hired and fired the Sonoran Policy Group, which had a \$450K contract.

The Associated Press reported that El Salvador dropped SPG after the wire service requested a comment about the contract from the country's office of the president.

El Salvador's president Nayib Bukele, a close ally of president Trump, faces criticism that his "popular policies mask an authoritarian streak," according to the AP.

Amnesty International reported Oct. 5 that Bukele, who promised to respect human rights when he took office a year ago, is continuing a policy of repression and militarization of public security in El Salvador.

COMMENTARY



There is no question that Donald Trump, who dismisses climate change as a hoax cooked up by China and famously suggested that drinking disinfectants may be a way to cure COVID-19, presides over the most anti-science White House that this nation has ever seen.

Since up is down and down is up in Trump Land, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, issued [a press release on Oct. 27](#) to tout its major accomplishments.

It is a doozy and ranks as one of the worst press releases that I have seen in my more than 30-year run at O'Dwyer's. The release lacks details and says nothing.

The White House Science & Tech squad hails the twitter-in-chief for ending COVID-19. That "accomplishment" is a tad premature as the virus infected a record number of Americans (99,321) on Oct. 30 and has killed more than 231K of us.

A House subcommittee on the handling of COVID-19 [released a report on Oct. 30](#) calling it "among the worst failures of leadership in American history" and an "American fiasco."

There is another section in the White House release called "Understanding Our Planet" that is a real head-scratcher.

It credits Trump's leadership for having "taken action to understand and protect our environment to ensure that the American people will have clean air, clean water and a resilient environment for generations to come." That word salad is meaningless, gobbledygook.

I don't know what planet the S&T office is talking about, but on Earth their guy transformed the EPA into a clubhouse for fossil fuel lobbyists and moved to trash the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. Trump also never stumbled upon an Obama era environmental regulation that he liked.

But the following quote is the kicker:

"Over the past four years, President Trump's policies and investments in science and technology ensure America stands ready to solve today's most pressing challenges and that our workforce is prepared for tomorrow's innovations. For years to come these achievements will guarantee the US remains the leader in research, discovery and the advancement of industries that will shape our future."

Those hollow words are attributed to none other, but Ivanka Trump, one-time weekend teen model and marketer of Chinese-made clothing and shoes who must have a couple of high school science classes under her fashionable belt.

Melania must have been too busy to sing the praises of hubby.

The inclusion of Ivanka makes a joke about the "Advancing America's Global Leadership in Science and Technology: Trump Administration Highlights: 2017-2020" report.

But that might be the point of the Trump administration scientists who toughed out four years of the White House's absolute indifference to science and embracement of off-the-wall nonsense.

They are ready to close the books on the Trump nightmare and cheer Joe Biden as he works to restore the integrity of America in the global scientific community.

Many political pundits downplayed Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign as little more than a market-ing move to generate publicity for the media company they thought he would launch after losing to Hillary Clinton.

It's funny how things work out.

Trump TV may have to wait until he leaves office on Jan. 20, but in the interim, he gets to rule over the Voice of America, thanks to the political hack that he chose to run the US Agency for Global Media, VOA's parent.

In June, Trump selected Michal Pack, a conservative filmmaker who made two documentaries with former Breitbart News chief Steve Bannon, to run the US Agency for Global Media. Pack also was publisher of *The Claremont Review*, which the *New York Times* dubbed the "bible of highbrow Trumpism."

On Oct. 26, Pack came through, junking the rule protecting government-funded news outlets from federal tampering.

Signed into law by president Gerald Ford in 1976, that firewall protected the VOA and fellow US-bankrolled outlets Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Radio Free Asia and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting from being transformed into propaganda outlets for sitting presidents.

David Ensor, former director of the VOA, [told the NYT](#) that the firewall "is something that distinguishes the VOA from authoritarian radio and broadcasting organizations."

That's precisely why Pack bulldozed it to set up a media empire for his boss.

Local news outlets need PR ASAP... Americans love local news outlets but are largely unaware of their financial plight.

Polls consistently show trust in local news is much more than national media. A 2019 Knight-Gallup poll found that 66 percent of respondents say local news reports the news without bias compared to 31 percent who believe national news organizations do the same.

The public also places great value in local news being part of their communities. A 2018 Pew Research Center poll found 85 percent of Americans say it is important for journalists to understand their community's history and 81 percent want reporters to be engaged in their local areas.

Americans are talking the talk but not walking the walk. More than seven-in-ten (71 percent) believe local outlets are doing well financially. And just 14 percent of respondents paid for local news during the past year, according to Pew.

The Poynter Institute reports more than 50 newsrooms have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A Congressional report says local news organizations will vanish within five years.

Aggressive PR is needed to highlight the gloom and doom facing small and mid-sized news outlets before it is too late.

And in the immortal words of Yankee great Yogi Berra, "It gets late early out there."

Though Yogi was talking about the late afternoon shadows reaching left field in Yankee Stadium, he could have been referring to the dire financial condition of today's local newspapers.

—Kevin McCauley