



**Kevin McCauley**  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

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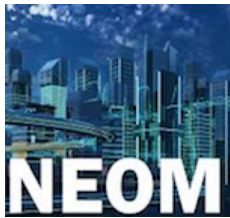


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## **EDELMAN JOINS SAUDI ARABIA'S TEAM NEOM**

[Edelman](#) agreed this month to provide communications services to Neom, the \$500B mega-city that is the linchpin of Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan to diversify the Kingdom's oil-based economy.



Fees for strategic counsel, media relations, stakeholder engagement and content development are capped at \$75K per-month under the pact that runs through February.

A formal contract between the No. 1 independent PR firm and Neom, which is owned by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, is currently under negotiation.

Neom was the site of a Nov. 22 secret meeting between Prince Salman, Israel prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Mossad spy agency chief Yossi Cohen, according to reports in the Israeli press. The Saudis say such a meeting never took place.

Edelman already works for Saudi Basic Industries, which earlier this year hired it to a \$5.6M pact for strategic communications surrounding the B20 summit. The B20 group represented the business voice at the B20 Summit that ran from Nov. 20-21 in Riyadh.

Edelman joins the Neom PR team that includes [Ruder Finn](#), which has a \$1.7M one-year website management and social media pact, and Teneo, holder of a six-month \$840K contract to manage the city's communications department.

## **EBAY'S CMO DEERING DRIVES TO FORD**

Suzy Deering, chief marketing officer at eBay, is joining Ford Motor Co. on Jan. 4 as its global marketing chief.

She will take over for Joy Falotico, who will focus on her responsibilities as president of the Lincoln Motor Co. unit.



**Suzy Deering**

The automaker hails Deering as "accomplished at using technology, data and analytics to anticipate customer needs and fulfill them with human-centered products and services."

Deering will work to modernize marketing, drive brand strategy and best practices and develop talent, reporting to Kumar Galhotra, president, Ford America and international markets group.

Prior to her five-year run as eBay's top marketing officer, Deering was CEO of Moxie, a technology-led marketing firm, and spent 13 years at Verizon Wireless, exiting as executive director of media, engagements and integrations.

## **PEBBLE MINES BGR'S EXPERTISE**

The Pebble Limited Partners has enlisted BGR Government Affairs to gain support for its controversial open-pit mine project located at the headwaters of Alaska's Bristol Bay, which is opposed by environmentalists, commercial fishermen, native Alaskans and the hospitality industry.

There's an estimated \$400B in reserves of gold, copper and molybdenum in the area, according to the Pebble Limited Partnership, which is owned by Canada's Northern Dynasty Minerals of Vancouver.

Alaska's Republican Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan oppose the mine, as does sportsman Donald Trump Jr., who took his son fishing trip at Bristol Bay in 2014.

The Army Corps of Engineers on Nov. 25 announced it plans to block the mine because it does not comply with Clean Water Act guidelines.

BGR founding partner Haley Barbour, former Mississippi governor and chair of the Republican National Committee, and state advocacy & government marketing practice head Loren Monroe, ex-aide to New Mexico Republican senator Pete Domenici, represent the Pebble Limited Partnership.



## **ALLEGHENY CO. ISSUES DRUG ABUSE RFP**

Pennsylvania's Allegheny County, which has 1.2M people including residents of Pittsburgh, wants to hire a PR firm to help it fight drug abuse and reduce the number of fatal overdoses, of which 89 percent are opioid-related.

Since 2008, Allegheny has experienced fatal overdose rates higher than those seen throughout much of the country, according to the RFP. The rapid increase in deaths starting in 2015 is largely due to the presence of synthetic drug fentanyl, used to supplement heroin and other illicit drugs.

"Emotional stressors such as potential job loss, working full-time from home without child care and a decrease in face-to-face social interaction has made it even more challenging for people to seek treatment or access treatment or recovery support," according to the document.

Allegheny wants a firm to generate awareness of the risks associated with substance use and create messaging to counter the stigma about entering drug treatment programs.

Allegheny plans to award a two-year contract worth \$550K. Proposals, due Dec. 31, must be sent electronically to <https://alleghenycounty.bonfirehub.com/portal/?tab=openOpportunities>.

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



## **BCW'S LAGANA MOVES TO BRUNSWICK**

Susan Lagana, who was managing director for PA & crisis at BCW, has moved to Brunswick Group as a partner in DC.

At the WPP unit, Lagana advised corporate clients on trade, national security, crisis preparedness & response, sustainability, environmental issues, climate policy and technology matters.



**Susan Lagana**

Earlier, she was director of PA and deputy assistant secretary for policy at the Dept. of Transportation, director of strategic communications at the US Navy and an attorney at Sidley Austin.

Brunswick chief Neal Wolin noted that Lagana has a “wealth of experience in advising on critical issues in the public and private sector as both a lawyer and PR practitioner.” She will “add

significant value to both US and international clients seeking expert counsel on how to navigate Washington.”

George Little, former chief of media relations for the Central Intelligence Agency, heads Brunswick’s Washington outpost.

## **LITTLE ROCK TRANSIT SEEKS PR PARTNERS**

The Little Rock metropolitan bus, rail and ride-hailing transit system is seeking qualifications from PR firms to provide marketing communications services on a project basis.

The two-member public engagement department of Rock Region Metro, which, carries more than 2.5M passengers per year, handles PR, PA, content development, social media and website management and community outreach.



It anticipates assigning project work—each task valued at under \$50K—to partners as it builds the Rock Region Metro brand. Selected firms will be on-call for a five-year basis with an

annual fee re-negotiation at Metro’s discretion.

Responses to the RFQ are due Dec. 14.

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

## **PHRMA NABS MGM'S DESHONG FOR PA JOB**

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America has hired Debra DeShong, who has strong ties to the Democratic party, as executive VP of public affairs.

She will join PhRMA in mid-December from MGM Resorts International, where she is senior VP-global communications and industry affairs.



**Debra DeShong**

DeShong was chief of staff to former US ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy, director of communications at the Democratic National Committee, director of communications for ex-Jersey Senator Bob Torricelli and press secretary to Maryland Congressman Steny Hoyer.

She also was executive VP/managing director of PA at Subject Matter and co-founded Point Black Public Affairs.

Stephen Ubi, PhRMA president/CEO, said DeShong has led PA campaigns that “punctured the din and advanced policy priorities.”

## **NEWS OF FIRMS**

**Seven Letter** launches Seven Letter Insight, a public opinion and messaging research offering. The new offering will be led by Matt George, founder and president of Matt George Associates and a former partner at Luntz Global Partners.

The agency says that Seven Letter Insight will provide qualitative and quantitative research tools as well as delivering audience segmentation targeting, granular messaging insights and in-depth data analysis. “Our approach with Seven Letter Insight is to deliver honest and accurate data analysis to craft effective, impactful messaging and reputation campaigns,” said George. Along with the announcement of the expanded service, Seven Letter Insight has

released results from its first-ever Seven Letter Insight Voter Priorities Survey, which polled 1,500 people nationwide to gain insight into voter attitudes and views following the election. Among its findings: 79 percent of Trump voters said that they believe the election was “stolen” through “illegal voting and fraud” and 66 of GOP voters think President Trump should run again for president in 2024.



**French|West|Vaughan** chairman and CEO Rick French is one of the producers of Clear Lake, a Buddy Holly-inspired biopic that is being helmed by Bruce Beresford, the Oscar-winning director of Driving Miss Daisy and Tender Mercies. In addition to French’s Prix Productions, the production team for the film also includes Stuart Benjamin Productions and music company BMG, which manages the Buddy Holly estate and controls the US publishing rights to his catalog.

**InspIR Group**, an investor relations and corporate communications agency with offices in New York, San Francisco and São Paulo, has formed a partnership with sustainable investment research and consulting firm **Third Economy**. The partnership combines Third Economy’s leadership and expertise in ESG with InspIR’s experience in investor relations, marketing and public offerings. “InspIR’s market dominance in Latin America, combined with Third Economy’s expertise in global sustainable investment trends, will help clients diversify and expand their investor base,” said Third Economy founder and CEO Chad Spittler.

**WPP** joins VMLY&R and Geometry to form **VMLY&R COMMERCE**, a “Creative Commerce Company” that will operate as a distinct unit within the VMLY&R global network. The new entity will be led by current Geometry global CEO Beth Ann Kaminkow, who takes on the position of VMLY&R COMMERCE global chief executive officer. VMLY&R COMMERCE will be fully operational from January 1, 2021, with the integration of the agencies’ teams and assets continuing through 2021.

**CSM Sport & Entertainment**, partnership and brand experience firm, launches a social impact consulting practice in North America that will work to help brands identify ways to align purpose with partnerships that deliver meaningful social and business impact. It is led by former LeadDog Marketing Group senior director, social impact Adrienne Ankola-Rochetti, who will take on the position of vice president of social impact. “Our dedicated focus to guiding brands into impactful relationships is a natural progression for our business,” said head of CSM North America Christa Carone.



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## USING DATA TO DRIVE PR STORYTELLING

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicting information about masks and social distancing caused widespread chaos and confusion. But once medical and science professionals reached a consensus by analyzing data, we adjusted to a new reality.



**Brian Sinderson**

Analyzing data to inform insights is a crucial skill, especially for tech marketers, and it's a key learning to take away from our current pandemic challenges. Communicators who stay focused on telling a good story by leveraging data-driven tools will continue to create accurate and compelling content, even in uncertain times.

Those of us in tech PR like to think everyone has the same knowledge of the sector as we do. But most people don't because jargon and policy get in the way. When we make our clients sound like know-it-alls, readers stop paying attention.

We can bring them back, however, by showing how technology impacts their everyday lives. If we know the audiences we want to reach before we start writing, we can tailor content to fit their needs.

Of course, we can't do this alone. We need to work with our clients to make our work more approachable and straightforward. That means we need to understand what audiences need and develop compelling stories that convey a distinct perspective to capture their attention.

Humans have cherished stories since they drew them on cave walls, and while the medium may have changed, the message remains the same. Creative content rules if facts and data-driven insights back it.

Because of this, it's important to gather accurate information as part of the storytelling process. Data and insights are part of the secret sauce that ties everything together. Tech marketers who combine good storytelling with credible statistics will help their clients secure a much-needed advantage in today's competitive world.

Information can be a powerful tool to make impactful change, and the good news is there is more of it available than ever before. But tech PR professionals also need to know how to use it. By selecting the right data points and combining them with a compelling story, they can help their clients address their customers' needs.

### A powerful toolbox

The importance of data-driven storytelling needs to be part of every organization's culture. That means training teams to find meaningful information, so they can craft compelling messages that inspire action.

We first need to understand what questions audiences are asking, so our stories can address those needs. We should use analytics tools to determine what problems or keywords users search for online around a given topic. We can then verify that our content addresses those queries and offer solutions that make it easy for audiences to act.

We also need to understand any data that our clients have to support a given topic, as well as any primary research they've fielded that can add credibility. For example, companies that provide cybersecurity solutions often track attacks made against I.T. network infrastructures. They also often survey I.T. decision-makers about the issues that keep them up at night. These insights can help make content more relat-

able and reinforce storylines.

Through news and social listening tools, tech PR pros can see which sites are most popular among the audience they want to reach. They can then get insight into the topics that readers are interested in or follow on social media. By helping their clients aim relevant content at these specific groups, PR teams can ensure they target the right people at the right time.

For trending news, it's crucial to use specific hashtags for cross-platform campaigns. Through access to social listening tools that harness information about diverse topics, account teams can target the right influencers with very broad or extremely targeted outreach as appropriate.

There are also plenty of evergreen issues that have a longer trajectory. Industry leaders should search these topics frequently to determine engagement and strike when the iron is hot. Jumping on a story early and sending a well-researched proactive pitch at just the right time will ensure your clients are in a reporter's head when they need that expertise.

These tools are not just relevant to tech clients. Agencies can use insights and strategies in many sectors to address relevant issues or create specific points of view tied to breaking news or industry issues. That way, they'll have this valuable information at their disposal whenever they need it.

Tech PR pros who know how to find and use data-driven information can better craft impactful stories that generate interest and ultimately translate to more sales opportunities. By selecting the right data points and combining them with a compelling narrative, they can solve clients' problems and make any subject more exciting or relevant. When done well, this is a winning strategy that will continue to pay dividends for clients.

*Brian Sinderson is Senior Partner and East Coast Tech Practice Lead at Finn Partners.*

## CALIFORNIA SEEKS PA FOR NEW EXPRESSWAY

The Capital SouthEast Connector Joint Powers Authority is looking for a firm to handle PA, government relations and strategic communications related to the planning, environmental clearance, engineering and eventual construction of a 34-mile limited access roadway accommodating car, truck, bus, bicycle and pedestrian traffic in the region surrounding Sacramento.

The firm will lead a PA strategy to capture project funding at all levels of transportation project delivery: federal, state, regional and local governments, according to the RFP.

Responsibilities include 1) initiating a one or two-day strategic planning session in 2021 to review JPA strategic priorities, vision and action plan, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; 2) arranging a study mission to relevant or similar projects in the US that could provide insight or lessons learned for project delivery and funding; 3) conducting research and keeping a record of all proposed or enacted legislation, regulations, and policies; 4) identifying any that have the potential to affect the Connector JPA in any way; 5) coordinating visits with individual elected leaders and policymakers and 6) driving media coverage.

Responses are due Nov. 30. Email the proposal response to [Minnemad@SacCounty.net](mailto:Minnemad@SacCounty.net) or mail a flash drive to: Derek Minnema; Executive Director; Capital SouthEast Connector; 10640 Mather Boulevard, Suite 120; Mather, CA 95655.

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



## **VIRGINIA STATE POLICE SEEKS DE&I PARTNER**

The Virginia State Police, the biggest law enforcement agency in the commonwealth, is looking to hire a firm to devise a diversity, equity and inclusion plan.



The selected firm will help VSP leadership “evaluate, clarify, define, measure and implement DE&I strategies and goals,” according to the RFP.

It will develop a strategic plan one year after the contract award date that reflects on the department’s current strengths, challenges and opportunities in relation to DE&I and provides a

roadmap to attain goals that are accountable and sustainable.

VSP will award a one-year contract with four optional successive one-year renewals.

Proposals are due Dec. 15. Send the original, five paper copies and a CD or flash drive in an envelope marked “Proposal No. 156-21-024, Consulting Services for Strategic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan” to: Commonwealth of Virginia; Virginia Department of State Police; Attn: Patricia A. Rhodes; 7700 Midlothian Turnpike; North Chesterfield, VA 23235.

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

## **UNIVISION’S AMIRSHAHI SHOPS AT MACY’S**

Malek Robert (Bobby) Amirshahi is joining Macy’s on Dec. 7 as senior VP-corporate communications.

Currently, he is senior VP-corporate communications at Univision, the No. 1 Hispanic media company in the US. Earlier, he had PR and CSR stints at Time Warner Cable and Cox Enterprises.

At Macy’s Amirshahi will drive external/internal messaging and handle ESG issues. Based in New York, he succeeds Cheryl Heinonen, who will be leaving the company after the holiday season.



**Bobby Amirshahi**

Macy’s, which also owns the Bloomingdale’s and Bluemercury brands, posted a \$91M third-quarter

loss as sales declined 22.8 percent to \$4B due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **EDELMAN, PROSEK ON STANHOPE/FWM DEAL**

Edelman Smithfield and Prosek Partners are working the Stanhope Capital and FWM Holdings merger to create one of the world’s biggest independent wealth management firms, with assets of more than \$24B.

London-based Stanhope, which counts former WPP chief Martin Sorrell as a member of its advisory board, manages \$13B in assets from offices in London, Geneva and Paris.

FWM, which was established to oversee the wealth of the Forbes family, has \$11.2B in assets under management from offices in New York, Philadelphia and Palm Beach.

Stanhope CEO Daniel Pinto, who will helm the combined group, called the tie-up a “unique opportunity to create a truly global investment firm.”

Edelman Smithfield, London-based capital markets specialist of the No. 1 independent PR firm, has Andrew Wilde and Jess Gill representing Stanhope. Prosek Partners’ Nadia Damouni and Melanie Gounardes work for FWM.

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**EVINS Communications** wins **Double Cross Vodka**, a brand of distilled spirit produced in the Slovak Republic.

EVINS will be handling PR and social media initiatives for the brand, which says its products are distilled from water sourced from 200-foot-deep aquifers in the heart of Slovakia. EVINS roster of beverage clients also includes Cheeky Cocktails, Laphroaig Single Malt Scotch and Maker’s Mark Bourbon.



**Cindy Riccio Communications** picks up **myKEYPER.com** and **IndieGetup.com**. Keyper is the creator of a patented key ring bracelet and has expanded its product line to include matching “IT Bags,” a combination key purse, purse organizer, travel purse and clutch purse. Keyper co-founder and owner Dana Robinson says that CRC has been engaged to “generate awareness for Keyper in the busy holiday shopping season.”

**J Public Relations** adds **The Ocean Club**, **The Cloudeveil** and **The Newbury Hotel** to its roster of hotel clients. For The Ocean Club, a Four Seasons resort in the Bahamas, JPR is agency of record for public relations. JPR will serve as agency of record for social media and public relations for The Cloudeveil, an Autograph Collection hotel in Jackson Hole, WY. The Newbury Hotel in Boston has engaged JPR as its social media and content strategy agency of record.

## **EVENTS**

**Finn Partners** managing partner, global health Gil Bashe is moderating a Dec. 8 webinar focused on ethics, the biopharma industry and whether the sector can regain the high reputation it once had. “Ethics in the Business of Healthcare,” which is being presented by the Galien Foundation and Jerusalem Ethics Forum, will feature a discussion with four major players on the health innovation landscape: AstraZeneca and Certara board member Sheri McCoy; Flagship Pioneer chief medical officer Dr. Michael Rosenblatt; Microsoft chief science and medical officer Dr. Junaid Bajwa; and Mel Spigelman, CEO of TB Alliance. The webinar runs from noon to 1 p.m. To register for the webinar, [click here](#).



**Gil Bashe**

**MMGY Travel Intelligence** and **Enlightn Strategies** are partnering on a Dec. 2 webinar at which MMGY Travel Intelligence EVP of insights & strategy Chris Davidson and Enlightn Strategies president Brian Applegarth, will go over the findings from “Cannabis Tourism: Opportunities, Issues & Strategies,” a report that analyzes survey data collected from 1,500 Americans interested in cannabis tourism activities. For more information on the event, which gets underway at 1 p.m., or to register, [click here](#).

**The Institute for Public Relations** is presenting a free virtual event on Dec. 2. The IPR 2020 Virtual Research Symposium will share research and insights on topics including the future of work, business ecosystems, how COVID-19 impacts communications and diversity. IPR says that the event is its way of thanking those who have supported the organization over the past year. To register for the event, which runs from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., [click here](#).

## **BLACK AMERICANS DRIVE TRAVEL MARKET**

Whether it's for leisure or professional travel, Black Americans are an increasingly pivotal factor in the overall travel market, a new study from MMGY Global says.



“[The Black Traveler: Insights, Opportunities & Priorities](#)” found that Black US leisure travelers spent \$109.4 billion on leisure travel in 2019, accounting for 12.5 percent of total US leisure travel spending.

Those numbers were the result of 458.2 million Black US traveler stays, representing 13.1 percent of the market. On average, Black leisure travelers took three overnight vacations, with a stay of 2.5 nights (at an average cost of \$600 per night) for each vacation.

When it comes to professional travel, Black travelers are also a force to be reckoned with. A survey of 200 members of the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals showed that meeting professionals plan an average of 7.5 meetings per year, typically spending an average of over \$900,000 annually. More than half of those surveyed (57 percent) also said they typically plan off-site events for meeting attendees – adding to the positive economic impact for local communities.

However, the meeting professionals surveyed said they continue to encounter roadblocks when organizing events for Black groups. A large majority (84 percent) said some destinations are less welcoming of meetings with a majority of Black attendees.

When scouting out possible meeting locations, word-of-mouth was named the top source of information. Another top consideration: a destination’s “transparent commitment to diversity.” More than three quarters (77 percent) of respondents said they look for diverse representation in the destination’s marketing materials as a key indicator of receptivity.

The study was created by MMGY Travel Intelligence on behalf of Black traveler advocacy organizations to identify the needs, behaviors and sentiments of the Black travel community. The final phase of the report is set to be released in January and will share data from a new survey analyzing the current opinions and attitudes of Black leisure travelers globally.

For more information, or to purchase the study, [click here](#).

## **S&P COUNTS ON JOELE FRANK IN IHS DEAL**

S&P Global is using Joele Frank to field inquiries surrounding its \$44B deal to merge with London’s IHS Markit to create a financial data and information giant to compete with market leader, Bloomberg.

**S&P Global**



IHS Markit

Shareholders of S&P will control 68 percent of the enlarged enterprise. S&P CEO Douglas Peterson will helm the combined company. IHS Markit chief Lance Uggia will become a special advisor for a year following the closing of the deal during the second half of next year.

The addition of IHS Markit will enable S&P “to better serve our markets and customers by creating new value and insights,” said Peterson.

The combined company, which will generate annual revenues of more than \$11.5B, will be based in New York.

[Joele Frank](#), [Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher](#) has Ed Trissel and Tim Ragonos representing S&P Global.

## **ON THE MOVE**

**Norfolk Southern** recruits **John Hatfield** for the VP-corporate communications job. Hatfield will also oversee the freight railroad’s foundation. He comes to the company from energy provider Arizona Public Service, where he was VP, communications and community affairs. Before that, he was director, corporate communications at public utility holding company Edison International and a senior VP at Golin.



**John Hatfield**

“John is a seasoned executive and experienced communication professional,” said Norfolk Southern Chairman president, and CEO James Squires.

### **Loop Media hires Greg Drebin**

as chief content and marketing officer. Drebin joins Loop from 20th Century Fox Television Distribution, where he was executive VP of worldwide marketing, publicity and research. He previously served as senior VP of programming and marketing at Warner Bros. International TV Branded Services. At Loop, Drebin will be tasked with developing content and brands as well as being responsible for the creative and marketing initiatives of Loop Media and its business and consumer-facing brands.

**Everbridge** names **Stacey Wu** chief marketing officer and **Jessica Deckinger** chief communications officer. Wu joins Everbridge from cybersecurity company Fortinet, where she served as senior vice president global marketing. She previously held executive marketing leadership and global demand generation positions at Avaya and Symantec. Deckinger joins Everbridge from Humana, where she served as CMO of its Author by Humana division. She has also held the CMO post at Adeo Health Science and Merchant Customer Exchange.

**Noom**, digital health company, brings on **Emma Frane** as VP of communications. Frane joins Noom from e-commerce company Casper, where she served as senior director, communications, overseeing communications and PR. She was previously communications director at Kate Spade & Company, and has also been an account supervisor at Edelman.

**Nevro** appoints **Julie Dewey** VP of investor relations and corporate communications. Dewey comes to the medical devices company from Wright Medical Group, where she was senior VP and chief communications officer. She has also held investor relations roles at ev3, Kyphon and Thoratec. “Julie has a tremendous depth of experience in all areas of investor relations and corporate communications,” said Nevro CFO Rod MacLeod.



**Julie Dewey**

**Smith College** names **Julia Yager** VP for college relations and communications, effective Jan. 1. Yager was previously at Public Radio International in Minneapolis, where she most recently held the post of senior vice president for marketing, sales and distribution. She has also been director of marketing communications for GE Capital Mortgage Insurance Corporation and an account coordinator for McKinney and Silver Advertising. In her new role, Yager will provide strategic thought leadership to the college and lead communications strategies to inform and inspire people about the impact Smith students, alumnae and faculty are having.

## COMMENTARY

“What if they gave a war and nobody came” was a popular mantra of the anti-war movement of the 1960s.

Adapted from a 1939 Carl Sandberg poem, that slogan can be updated for the age of COVID-19: “What if they developed a vaccine and nobody took it?”

The scientific teams at Pfizer, BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca have developed COVID-19 vaccines in record time, yet the public is hardly cheering their achievement.

Despite the devastation of COVID-19, only 53 percent of Americans plan to get the vaccine once it is available, according to a Morning Consult poll.

The anti-science Trump administration, which framed the pandemic as “fake news,” is why only 46 percent of Republicans (vs. 65 percent of Democrats) will take the vaccine.

PR can be the difference-maker and the second most effective weapon against the virus.

Team Trump had concocted a hair-brained scheme to launch a \$250M “don’t let COVID-19 get you down” propaganda push to boost America’s spirits and his re-election efforts. That went nowhere.

The Biden White House should bankroll a communications push to encourage Americans to take the vaccine.

The public would be receptive to a Team Biden pitch. A Morning Consult poll says 55 percent of Americans trust Biden more than Trump (33 percent) when it comes to handling the COVID-19 crisis.

Biden introduced his COVID-19 task force on Nov. 9. “Dealing with the coronavirus pandemic is one of the most important battles our administration will face, and I will be informed by science and by experts,” he said.

In his Nov. 25 Thanksgiving address, he rallied Americans to meet the challenges ahead as the country faces a long hard winter due to the pandemic.

In contrast, Trump has downplayed, mocked and ridiculed the recommendations of his COVID-19 task force. He boycotted the meetings, last attending one five months ago.

Dr. Scott Atlas, the president’s top medical advisor on the pandemic, has not attended a task force meeting since September. Atlas prefers to spread off-the-wall statements and misinformation about COVID-19 on Fox News.

The federal government is ready to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine. Operation Warp Speed claims it will be able to deliver 6.4M doses of Pfizer/BioNTech’s vaccine as soon as the treatment is approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

That program plans to increase distribution capacity next year as manufacturing capacity for the vaccine scales up.

It will be up to PR to persuade Americans to take their COVID-19 shots.

**PR firms have been put on notice** that their “multimillion-dollar greenwashing and misinformation campaigns” for fossil fuel clients that delay action on global warming are going to be outed, according to Clean Creatives, a group of communications professionals supported by Fossil Free Media.

Launched Nov. 19, CC aims to reveal the relationships between PR firms and fossil fuel clients, organize staffers who “feel conflicted about making propaganda for oil and gas

companies,” and contact sustainability-minded clients who might feel unhappy that their firm is actively undermining progress on climate change, according to a statement from Jamie Henn of Fossil Free Media.

The launch of CC coincides with a widely-read *New Yorker* article by longtime environmental activist Bill McKibben.

In his “[When ‘Creatives’ Turn Destructive: Image-Makers and the Climate Crisis](#),” McKibben wrote that PR, lobbying and advertising agencies provide the rationalizations and the justifications that slow the pace of climate action. “Although these agencies are less significant monetarily than the banks, they are more so intellectually; if money is the oxygen on which the fire of global warming burns, then PR campaigns and snappy catchphrases are the kindling,” he wrote.



Bill McKibben

Look for firms to follow the lead of Porter Novelli for its decision to cut ties with American Public Gas Association and its social media campaign to get millennials to incorporate natural gas into their lifestyles.

“We have determined our work with the American Public Gas Association is incongruous with our increased focus and priority on addressing climate justice—we will no longer support that work beyond 2020,” said Maggie Graham, PN’s global chief of staff, in a statement.

CC claims PN’s decision followed inquiries from McKibben and calls it the campaign’s first win.

**Trump has used General Motors CEO Mary Barra** as a PR punching bag, but she is now in the driver’s seat.

“Always a mess with Mary B,” he tweeted during the height of the pandemic after he accused GM of moving too slowly on making ventilators.

Following GM’s decisions to close plants in Michigan and Ohio in 2018, Trump told reporters that he was very tough with GM’s CEO and told her, “you better get back in,” referring to GM’s plant in Lordstown, Ohio.

The *Detroit Free Press* published an article on April 1 called “President Trump’s Shots at GM have Left Company Insiders Deeply Troubled.”

However, Barra has made a strong comeback with her Nov. 23 decision to cut ties with Trump’s campaign to nullify California’s strict fuel efficiency standard.

Her decision to pull GM’s support for the Trump administration was a “striking reversal,” and a signal that Corporate America is moving on from president Trump, noted the *New York Times*. “President-elect Biden recently said, ‘I believe that we can own the 21st-century car market again by moving to electric vehicles.’ We at GM couldn’t agree more,” Barra said.

The Times called GM’s move “a public humiliation” to Trump. Barra gave no warning to the White House, though she did speak to California’s top climate regulator who put together the Obama-era fuel economy moves.

Good job, Mary.

—Kevin McCauley