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O'Dwyer's

Newsletter

The Inside News of
PR and Marketing
Communications

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October 3, 2016 Vol. 49 No. 40

HOTWIRE MAKES BIG US PLAY WITH EASTWICK

Hotwire, the US and UK tech PR specialist that has been lining up international partners of late, has acquired Eastwick Communications, a 25-year-old bi-coastal US tech firm.

The combined US operation counts 70 staffers in San Francisco and New York.

Eastwick founder and CEO Barbara Bates and president Heather Kernahan will retain those roles within Hotwire, overseeing San Francisco and New York under Hotwire global CEO Brendon Craigie.



Bates, Craigie

Craigie noted the deal will push Hotwire, owned by Australia's Energo Group Limited, into the upper echelon of tech PR firms in the US and "put a big bold question mark against the traditional multinational PR agency model."

"It really came down to two things," Craigie told O'Dwyer's. "A true appreciation of the importance of our people and how we need to strive to create new challenges and opportunities for them. Plus, a joint unwavering focus on being first to 'what's next'."

Hotwire has recently inked partnerships with firms in Latin America, the Netherlands and Middle East in a bid to compete with the large global agencies.

Bates, a former VP of the Benjamin Group who led marketing communications for Acuson and Calma in the 1980s, said the deal will allow her firm to "multiply the impact of our creative thinking, helping our clients to accelerate their reputation and growth not only in North America, but across the globe."

UBER PR EXEC HOURDAJIAN TO CANAAN VC

Nairi Hourdajian, a Glover Park Group alum who was Uber's first communications executive, is leaving the ride-hailing service for a top post at venture capital firm Canaan Partners.

Hourdajian worked the political ranks as a staff assistant to Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.) and policy director for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee before moving to Glover Park in 2011.

She joined Uber as head of global communications in 2013 and directed corporate comms. last year.

She will take up the VP of communications role at Menlo Park, Calif.-based Canaan, which works with Grayling and Canale Communications.

NEXT FIFTEEN ACQUIRES PINNACLE

UK-based PR and digital communications group Next Fifteen, parent company of agencies Text100, Bite, M Booth, Lexis and The OutCast Agency, has acquired tech content and digital media agency Pinnacle Marketing Comms.

The acquisition was initially valued at £4.4 million (about \$5.7 million), of which £4 million will be paid in cash, according to a statement issued today by Next Fifteen.



NEXT15

London-based Pinnacle specializes in technology marketing and social media campaigns for clients in the electronics, telecom and industrial engineering sectors. Clients include Toshiba Electronics, Sandvik Coromant and European Telecommunications Standards Institute. Approximately a quarter of Pinnacle's revenue derive from U.S. business, according to the company. The shop was co-founded in 1996 by Simon Flatt, who also serves as managing director. The firm staffs about 30.

Pinnacle retains its office, brand and staff. Pinnacle will now be managed as a sub-brand under the same umbrella as Publitek Limited, the UK-based B2B content marketing shop Next Fifteen acquired in March.

(Continued on page 2)

GABON GETS OGILVY MEDIA COUNSEL

Ogilvy PR has been hired to push earned media opportunities with the political press on behalf of the Gabonese Republic.

The oil-rich west coast African nation has been the site of international controversy following the August re-election of its president, Ali Bongo Ondimba. Bongo, the son of former president Omar Bongo, has ruled Gabon since his father's death in 2009, and was incumbent in a much-disputed election that ultimately culminated with Bongo's win by a razor-thin victory (only about 5,500 votes) on August 27.

Violent protests broke out in Gabon's capital, Libreville, following the election, and Bongo's political rival, former African union chairperson Jean Ping, immediately rejected the results, claiming the election had been rigged by the elections commission. Gabon's top court conducted a recount and this week reaffirmed Bongo's win. He was sworn in for another seven-year term today.

The European Union, which dispatched an electoral observation mission to Gabon for the August presidential

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OGILVY COUNSELS GABON (Continued from pg. 1)

election, expressed concerns regarding the results, claiming Gabon's constitutional court was "unable to satisfactorily rectify anomalies observed during the count."

According to Foreign Agents Registration Act documents filed in September, Ogilvy will provide PR counsel and communications support in the form of media relations, materials development and online communication activities, which includes networking meetings for the purpose of "educating members of Congress and Administration officials regarding the Gabonese Republic's concerns and positions on various issues."

The salvo also includes "opinion piece placement in political media publications," FARA documents read.

The Ogilvy & Mather PR giant will coordinate its work with Liban Soleman, Gabon cabinet chief and senior advisor to Bongo.

NEXT FIFTEEN GRABS PINNACLE (Cont'd from 1)

Those companies will work closely together and operate under a unit titled Publitek Group. Flatt will now wear the title of Publitek Group president.

"The acquisition of Pinnacle helps us to address the strong demand for highly specialized technical content that resonates with niche, professional audiences," Next Fifteen CEO Tim Dyson told O'Dwyer's. "We acquired B2B content marketing business Publitek earlier this year to improve our capabilities in this area. Following this most recent acquisition, the combination of both Pinnacle and Publitek's expertise will hugely enhance our offering in the technical marketing sector."

"We have every confidence that the two businesses will successfully complement each other, supported by the respective principals' history of working together, while each retaining their distinct brands and client relationships, and their geographical independence," Dyson said.

Next Fifteen earlier this year also acquired London-based creative agency ODD and Marlow-based digital shop together, and last year picked up content marketing firm Republic Publishing and London's digital marketing agency IncrediBull World, the latter of which was integrated into Text100.

Next Fifteen revenues, profits climb

The acquisition coincides with the announcement of Next Fifteen's half-year financials. The PR and marketing group today reported revenues of £80.5 million (about \$104.4 million) for the first six months of the year ending July 31, revealing growth of 30.3 percent. Organic revenue was £12.8 million (about \$16.6 million), revealing a 50.6 percent surge during this period. Next Fifteen also reported a 54.2 percent leap in operating profit to £11.1 million (about \$14.4 million) and a 47.2 percent rise in headline profit before tax to £10.6 million (about \$13.8 million).

Among the company's U.S. business, organic growth was 17.2 percent. U.S. revenues grew 27 percent to £50.7 million (about \$66 million), led by strong performances at Outcast, M Booth, Beyond and Bite.

Google remains Next Fifteen's largest client by revenue.

MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS

BRANDS FAIL TO REACH CONSUMERS ONLINE

Brands are struggling to engage consumers online and should reassess their strategies if they want to successfully target consumers through social media, according to findings in a recent survey of global digital attitudes and behaviors by research agency Kantar TNS.

More than a third of global Internet users — 34 percent — said they feel "constantly followed" by brand advertising online, and 26 percent said they now "actively ignore" branded social content. In the U.S. the figures were more stark, with 39 percent of Internet users claiming they now actively ignore branded social posts or content.

The figures seem to worsen with older age groups: 37 percent of Internet users between the ages of 35 and 44 said they "completely object" to the idea of brands tracking their online behaviors, and more than half — 51 percent — of Internet users between the ages of 55 and 65 said they actively ignore content from brands. About one in five — 20 percent — of global Internet users said they now watch user-generated content online more often than branded or professionally-produced content, and the same number between the ages of 16 and 34 admitted to using ad blockers.

Facebookers Receptive to Brands

On the other hand, the Kantar TNS study found that when it comes to Facebook, most Internet users seem receptive to branded content. Globally, 79 percent of respondents said they read brand posts on Facebook, and 75 percent said they watch branded video content regularly on the social site (oddly, Colombia was the country that ranked highest in both categories, with 95 percent and 93 percent of Colombian respondents reporting that they engage in this behavior, respectively). Globally, 76 percent admitted to liking or posting comments on Facebook brand pages.

Overall, 38 percent of worldwide respondents said they're open to reading or watching brand content on social media, and the same percentage said they're amenable to sharing information if some kind of reward is offered, though 32 percent said they believe brands present different levels of customer service online and offline. Countries with the highest percentage of respondents who claimed to enjoy reading or watching online brand content included Brazil, India, Mongolia and Saudi Arabia. Skepticism of brand content was highest in Scandinavian nations, with 57 percent of respondents in both Sweden and Denmark claiming that they actively ignore branded content.

The study also suggested that influencer activation might go a long way in swaying consumers' trust. Globally, 40 percent of 16–24 year-olds surveyed claimed to trust what others said online regarding brands more than "official" sources such as advertising.

The popularity of Instagram and Snapchat has also surged in recent years, according to the study, with almost half — 43 percent — of U.S. Internet users now using photo-sharing service Instagram (compared to only 19 percent in 2014) and about the same number globally (42 percent).

Kantar is owned by WPP.

NEWS OF PR FIRMS

HIPPEAS PICKS M&C SAATCHI PR

Livio Bisterzo, CEO of Green Park Brands, has chosen M&C Saatchi PR to help break into the crowded field of salty snacks in the U.S.

Only 35 years old, Bisterzo hopes to reach out to Millennials with his product's organic nature, nutritional value (130 calories per serving), and global nature. A portion of profits will go to chickpea farmers in developing nations.

Six flavors of HIPPEAS are offered: Far Out Fajita, Vegan White Cheddar, Maple Haze, Pepper Power, Sriracha Sunshine and Happenin' Hickory.

"M&C Saatchi PR is grounded in their commitment to drive our mission of spreading Peas and Love, making them the perfect partner to tell our story," Bisterzo said. You can only find HIPPEAS at Starbucks right now in the Vegan White Cheddar and Far Out Fajita flavors. Look for Whole Foods and Amazon to carry them soon.

"We are inspired by the HIPPEAS vision and encourage snackers nationwide to Give Peas a Chance," Jen Dobrzelecki, executive VP at M&C Saatchi PR U.S., said.

The account will be led out of the M&C Saatchi PR New York office.

BRIEF: New York-based agency Feintuch Communications has been named PR agency of record for marketing consultancy the Center for Emotional Marketing. CEM is a full service strategy and innovation firm with roots in neuroscience and psychology.

NEWS OF SERVICES

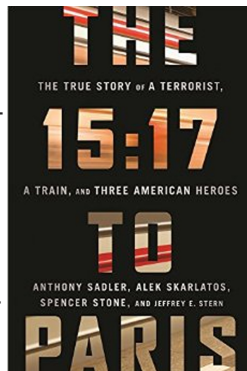
AURITT COMMS. GUIDES AMERICAN HEROES

Spencer Stone, Anthony Sadler and Alex Skarlatos, friends since middle school, were vacationing in Europe last summer. While relaxing on the train from Amsterdam to Paris on August 21, 2015 they were startled awake by screams and breaking glass. Their actions in the next moments stopped a violent terrorist from killing over 500 people on that train.

The chilling story is told by these heroes in **THE 15:17 TO PARIS: The True Story of a Terrorist, a Train, and Three American Heroes.**

Auritt Communications Group was called on to provide media training for Stone and Sadler before they embarked on a week-long media blitz of national network television and radio appearances which included CNN's New Day, Fox & Friends, The Kelly File, The 700 Club, Leonard Lopate, and ABC Radio. Skarlatos was in 'sniper school' at the time.

"It was wonderful to work with these young men who, unarmed, charged and tackled the gunman pointing a loaded AK-47 at them," said Joan Auritt who conducted the training with Auritt team member, Deirdre Reilly. Both are former network TV producers and experienced media coaches.



NEW ACCOUNTS

New York Area

Coyne PR, Parsippany, N.J./Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, a renewal, according to federal documents filed Sept. 26. The British-controlled territory's DOT initially hired Coyne last year after a competitive review. That agreement, which became effective May 1, 2015, charged Coyne with providing communications, PR and marketing services work for the DOT that includes strategic counsel, program development, press outreach and sponsorship and partnership activation. Budget is \$20,000 per month.

Resound Marketing, Princeton, N.J./GameOn, sports mobile app, as AOR for the cloud-based engagement platform that connects sports fans and provides them with game scores and news. The firm will direct a marketing and PR strategy to elevate the platform's brand awareness and expand its audience by coordinating press opportunities in the New York and Silicon Valley media markets. The San Francisco-based company was founded in 2014 and lists Joe Montana, Snoop Dogg and Gary Payton as investors.

East

PAN Communications, Boston/roOomy, an app which lets a user turn 2D images into a 3D model so you can easily visualize living spaces, as AOR.

marlo marketing, Boston/Margaritas Management Group, which oversees operations of east coast restaurant chain Margaritas Mexican Restaurant. The appointment follows a three-month brand review that began earlier this year.

PEOPLE

Joined

Mike Fernandez, corporate VP and head of global corporate affairs as well as communications, brand and marketing services, government relations and social responsibility for Cargill, to Burson-Marsteller, as global chair of the WPP unit's corporate and financial practice

Tanya Bradsher, a veteran military and government communicator, to the American Psychiatric Association as chief of communications for the Arlington, Va.-based trade group. Jason Young exited the role in June on his appointment by the Obama administration to be assistant commissioner of media affairs and senior advisor to the commissioner at the Food and Drug Administration. Bradsher, a former Army press and PA officer, recently served as chief of plans for public affairs at the Defense Health Agency, Tricare, as well as assistant secretary for PA at the US Dept. of Homeland Security.

Peter Cumello, managing director of finance, Accenture, to Text100, New York, as global chief financial officer. Prior to that, he was with Accenture/Microsoft tech services joint venture Avanade, where he served as North American senior vice president of finance and was also CFO of its Asia Pacific region.

Dina White, PR director and a 16-year veteran of AMC Networks to Krupp Communications, New York, as VP of media relations. She ran her own shop and handled TV publicity at Integrated PR, as well.

SOUTHARD, FREEMAN TO MERGE

New York-based agency Southard Communications, Inc. and Fairfield, NJ-based firm Freeman Public Relations, Inc. plan to merge. The newly-minted agency will be titled Southard|Freeman Communications, Inc.

Southard|Freeman is slated to begin operations on January 1. All current employees will remain and the company will maintain its roster of combined offices: Southard's current lower Manhattan headquarters as well as its Chicago and Los Angeles locations, in addition to Freeman's Fairfield offices. The combined entity will staff between 25 and 30.

Southard president and CEO Bill Southard takes the title of Southard|Freeman CEO. Freeman CEO Bruce Maguire will become president.

Southard, which was founded in 1994, is a full-service agency that specializes in media relations, digital communications, strategic counseling, reputation management and crisis communications. Clients include Thames & Kosmos, Para'Kito mosquito repellent, 888/All American Poker Network and Green Toys.

Freeman PR was the successor to agency Gerald Freeman, Inc., which was founded in 1955. Freeman's current clients include Entenmann's Donuts/Little Bites snacks, Jeep, Petmate Products, ShedRain Umbrellas, PLAYMOBIL and Zing Toys. The agency was behind the famous Tickle Me Elmo product launch in 1996. It recently relocated to Fairfield, NJ from nearby Totowa.

Southard told O'Dwyer's that the two agencies complement each other in ways that are "truly endless."

"Our strengths in juvenile products and tech innovations combined with Freeman's experience in food and the pet industry makes us a formidable more well-rounded agency. Couple that with our combined rich history and achievements/accolades in the toy space and this really makes us extremely competitive and poised for continued growth," Southard said.

BUCKLEY LEADS SUBJECT MATTER IN DC

John Buckley, a 35-year political and corporate communicator most recently serving as managing director for The Harbour Group, has shifted to Subject Matter in Washington as the firm's first CEO.

Subject Matter is the combined PR operation of Home Front Communications and lobbying shop Elmen-dorf|Ryan, which merged in 2015. Partner Dan Sallick said the agency spent the past year integrating operations and saw this as the right time to bring in a leader to manage and plan its next phase of expansion.

Buckley was a press deputy to the Regan-Bush re-election campaign in 1984 and moved on to serve as press secretary for Rep. Jack Kemp in Congress and in his presidential campaign.

He moved to the agency realm with Robinson, Lake Lerer & Montgomery (now Finsbury) and later served as senior VP of communications for Fannie Mae and executive VP for communications at AOL. Sallick is joined by partners Steve Elmendorf, Jimmy Ryan and Paul Frick.

PR OPINION

"Deepwater Horizon" is a riveting film about the BP 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that was the worst in U.S. history, costing 11 lives and taking 87 days to bring under control.

The brunt of the blame descended on BP which did its best to deflect some of it while promising to mend its ways.

BP Spokesman Geoff Morrell said, "The Deepwater Horizon movie is Hollywood's take on a tragic and complex accident. It is not an accurate portrayal of the events that led to the accident, our people, or the character of our company. In fact, it ignores the conclusions reached in every official investigation: that the accident was the result of multiple errors made by a number of companies.

"Coming as it does six-and-a-half years after the accident, the movie does not reflect who we are today, the lengths we've gone to restore the Gulf, the work we've done to become safer, and the trust we've earned back around the world."

Movie is Fast-Paced, Confusing

Moviegoers are going to hear a lot of techno-babble such as the "cement bond log" and see lots of explosions and fire but will be hard-pressed to know exactly what happened or who is the most to blame. Five million barrels of oil escaped and the cost was put at \$13 billion.

The complicated technology involved in deep-sea oil drilling, which can tap reserves almost two miles below the surface, will be a revelation to many. There are nearly 500 such rigs worldwide with the North Sea having the most (184 in one recent count).

Obama announced in 2010 that he was opening new areas in U.S. coastal waters to offshore drilling for gas and oil. But he rescinded the decision that November.

Achenbach Says "Capping Stack" Needed

Joel Achenbach of *The Washington Post*, who had written a book on the incident called "A Hole at the Bottom of the Sea," reviewed the movie Sept. 29.

Failure to cap the undersea well with sufficient concrete was the main problem. Indications that such a failure was taking place were ignored.

Achenbach says BP finally ended up plugging the well by "using a piece of hardware that was sitting on a dock all along in Southern Louisiana—the 3-ram capping stack." This is a complicated piece of machinery more than 50-feet high.

Site leader Donald Vidrine, played by John Malkovich, is concerned that the operation is 43 days behind schedule and costing \$1 million a day.

Writes Achenbach: "When gas surged up the well after an inadequate cement job, the violent kick bent the drillpipe that had been threaded through the blowout preventer. Thus when the blind shear rams closed, to cut the pipe, they couldn't get a clean bite on the drillpipe and it remained open, allowing the gas to reach the rig...boom."

— Jack O'Dwyer