Jack O'Dwyer,
Editor-in-Chief

O'Dwyer's Newsletter

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

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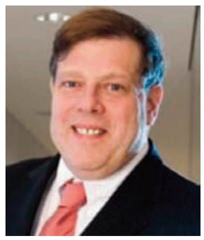
PENN-LED INVESTMENT FIRM BUYS SKDKNICK

Stagwell Group, the investment group led by polling guru and former Burson-Marsteller chief Mark Penn, has made its first major deal with a move to buy SKD-Knickerbocker, the Democrat-heavy PR and public affairs firm.

The former Squier Knapp Dunn merged with Knickerbocker Consulting in 2004 to form SKDK and is led by Bill Knapp, Anita Dunn, managing partner Josh Isay, Jennifer Cunningham and Hilary Rosen. Bob Squier, the well-known political adman, died in 2000.



Penn

Penn set up Stagwell in June after his exit as EVP and chief strategy officer at Microsoft. Former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer is an investor in Stagwell. Penn called strategic corporate and political communications a "critical growing area," adding SKDK shows growth potential in digital.

SKDK will continue to operate independently under Stagwell, which added that the PR firm's partners have long-term contracts. The firm has traditionally aligned with progressive clients and staffers, including crisis communications for Planned Parenthood amid its recent troubles, although its corporate work has softened the firm's political leanings.

On its formation in June, Stagwell said it had closed on $250 million in investment capital and could use leverage to make up to $750 million in acquisitions. Penn told the *New York Times* the firm plans to acquire firms that specialize in digital design, Hollywood ventures, ad buying and financial communications.

UNIV OF TOLEDO SEEKS REPUTATION BOOST

The University of Toledo, the 23,000-student Ohio institution, is reaching out for reputation advice.

The school, with the third-largest public university operating budget in the state, released an RFP this week targeting research and reputation management firms to "clarify and strengthen" its brand regionally, nationally and internationally.

The university's office of branding and creative service, along with its communications, advancement and enrollment units, wants to collaborate with a firm to develop an updated brand strategy and integrated communications plan that aligns with its strategic plan and mission.

Proposals are due Oct. 21.

RFP: http://odwpr.us/1LhFlwA.

MWWPR TAPS MCCAULEY AS VP, EDITORIAL

MWWPR has tapped veteran journalist Kevin McCauley as VP for editorial services.

McCauley

McCauley, who has more than 30 years of experience covering PR, advertising and marketing, including 25 years with O'Dwyer's, is based in the agency's New York Office.

He will be responsible for editorial development, content creation, marketing, white papers and executive communications for MWWPR and its clients. He also will work with and mentor MWWPR's team of writers and content creators.

"I've known Kevin and have respected his work for quite a long time," said Michael W. Kempner, president-CEO of MWWPR, in a statement. "He is a clear, concise and talented writer who will help raise the editorial 'voice' of our firm and our clients. His deep understanding of the public relations and marketing environment will be a strong addition to our content team by helping them to stay ahead of critical trends."

Prior to joining MWWPR, McCauley worked for 25 years at the O'Dwyer Co., and earlier wrote for *The Gallagher Report*.

SAUDI INVEST. AUTHORITY TABBED EDELMAN

The Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority engaged Edelman for PR support as it made a pitch that the Saudi economy is attractive for investment and diversifying in September.

Al Othman

SAGIA manages the kingdom's investment landscape and works to promote economic investment in the country.

Abdullatif bin Ahmed Al Othman, a former senior VP for Saudi Aramco, heads the authority.

Edelman's work supported Al Othman's early September trip to Washington.

Edelman, which has worked in PR capacities for the Saudi government in recent years, including its permanent mission to the United Nations, was charged with engaging opinion influencers, establishing media opportunities, and assisting with editorial placement on behalf of the authority, according to its federal filing.

The firm describes its client's role to furnish "Saudi Arabia as an attractive destination for [foreign direct investment] and highlight Saudi Arabia's economy as transforming into one that is diversified."

Qorvis MSL is the Kingdom's main US PR rep.

OGILVY PR TAPS MANSON AS UK CEO

Ogilvy Public Relations on Wednesday promoted Marshall Manson to UK CEO at Ogilvy PR. For the last two years Manson served as managing director, EAME (Europe, the Middle East and Africa), Social@Ogilvy.

The move follows the recent promotion of Michael Frohlich to CEO of the agency's EMEA region.

Manson

Manson "delivers success for our clients and our business in spades," said Frohlich, in a news release. "He is known not only as a world-class strategist creating winning social media solutions but also as a respected mentor and leader, making great waves in a very short time to improve our social capabilities across the Ogilvy Group UK and EMEA."

Manson will retain his EMEA title while Social@Ogilvy Global Managing Director Thomas Crampton leads the search for a successor.

Prior to joining Ogilvy, Manson was EMEA Managing Director of Digital for Edelman.

GRAYLING TO POWER ENERGY CONGRESS

The World Energy Congress, the triennial global energy sustainability confab, has plugged in Grayling to guide communications for the 2016 event slated for Istanbul.

Grayling's Turkey and UK outposts will lead the assignment, which the firm won after a competitive review. The work includes global media relations and social media engagement.

The conference is run by the London-based World Energy Council with accreditation from the United Nations and attracts a premier lineup of energy ministers from across the globe. The Instanbul conference is set for Oct. 10-13, 2016 with the theme "Embracing New Frontiers."

The last WEC was in Daegu in 2013. It was last held in the US in Detroit in 1974.

Grayling Turkey managing director Ana Dodea called the WEC "an incredibly influential global event, widely attended by government ministers and key players from the international energy industry."

AP SCRIBE FROMMER HEADS SPORTS FOR DSG

Fred Frommer, a former Associated Press writer who covered sports and politics from Washington, has joined Dewey Square Group in the capital to counsel clients in its new sports business unit.

Frommer is the author of four books on baseball including "You Gotta Have Heart" and "Washington Baseball Fan's Little Book of Wisdom." He has written for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Politico Magazine*, among others.

Dewey Square chair Chuck Campion noted Frommer has covered issues at the crux of sports and public policy, making him the ideal "quarterback" for the firm's new practice.

He was at CNN and the *Washington Post's* online edition before moving to the AP.

STANFORD DEAN GETS CRISIS EDUCATION

Garth Saloner, the dean of Stanford's graduate business school who resigned in September amid a lawsuit by a former professor, is relying on Edelman for crisis PR counsel.

Saloner led the business school since 2009 and is slated to step down at the end of the academic year in 2016. A former professor has sued the university for discrimination and Saloner, who reportedly had a relationship with the professor's estranged wife, was caught in the middle of the legal tussle. He has called the suit "baseless and protracted" and said he quit because the ongoing litigation and media interest would be a distraction to the school.

Fortune reported that Edelman executive VP Kathryn Kranhold is advising Saloner amid the scrutiny. Kranhold is a former Brunswick Group director and senior VP of corporate comms. for Disney who started out in journalism.

Edelman has advised other universities in crisis in recent years, including Penn State in the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse scandal, the University of North Carolina as it faced allegations of coddling athletes academically, and the Univ. of Michigan after the resignation of its athletic director and football coach last year.

CHASE WORKS DIGITAL FOR MAKOVSKY

Justin Chase, former president at communications agency Hypertonic, has joined Makovsky as Chief Digital Officer and Executive Vice President.

At Makovsky, Chase will be responsible for strengthening the firm's digital practice, including its social and mobile media capabilities. This involves leading a separate digital practice within the firm, as well as collaborating with Makovsky's existing digital practices.

Chase

"With Justin, we have brought in a strategic marketer who has both run and built agencies for the digital, social and mobile age," said Makovsky President and CEO Ken Makovsky.

He added: "This gives us a tremendous weapon in our arsenal that allows us to build strong digital capabilities, imbed digital into nearly everything that we do and lead our clients with strategies that are disruptive, relevant and shaped by our progressive view of what PR means today. I'm very pleased he will direct this important growth area in order for us to fully provide the best in digital communications for our clients."

Chase was founder and president at Hypertonic, a digital marketing and communications agency with a focus on health.

Prior to Hypertonic, he was director of social media at Attention, and logged stints at Fluent, Inc., and Digitas.

Makovsky is based in New York.

NTVB BUYS TV GUIDE

Private equity firm OpenGate Capital has sold TVGM Holdings L.L.C., owner of iconic, former household staple *TV Guide*. It has been purchased by NTVB Media, publisher of *TV Weekly*.

The sale, which combines TV Guide's current 1.8M subscribers with NTVB's roster of 1M subscribers, effectively establishes NTVB as the nation's largest publisher of consumer television magazines.

The terms of the deal, which also includes purchase of site TVInsider.com, were not disclosed.

In a statement, NTVB CEO Andy DeAngelis said acquiring the publication allows NTVB to offer advertisers and programmers an effective means of reaching diverse segments of today's TV audiences.

"TV Guide Magazine has played an important role in television entertainment and pop culture for more than 60 years and is the perfect complement to our suite of media brands," DeAngelis said. "Now more than ever viewers need a trusted guide to the vast array of available programming. By adding TVGM to our existing roster of TV-centric publications, we will be able to do more than anyone else to help them cut through the clutter and find the programming they want and value."

Besides TV Weekly, NTVB also publishes cable and satellite publications such as *Channel Guide Magazine*, *DISH Entertainment Magazine* and *VIEW!* magazine, as well as online publications TVWeeklyNow.com and ChannelGuidemag.com.

TV Guide published its first issue in 1953, and the digest-sized weekly soon became a household name, peaking with a circulation of 20 million in the 1970s. It was sold in 1988 to News Corp. for $3 billion, accounting for one of the largest media acquisitions at the time.

Gemstar purchased the publication a decade later, but rising debt caused that company to sell the print portion of the brand in 2008 to OpenGate, famously, for $1. CBS in 2013 acquired its remaining digital assets for $100M.

GANNETT GRABS JOURNAL MEDIA FOR $280M

Newspaper giant Gannett just got substantially bigger. Gannett, which publishes *USA Today*, said late Wednesday that it was buying Journal Media Group for $280 million.

Journal Media owns 17 small- and medium-sized newspapers in 9 states, including the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Naples Daily News*, and the *Commercial Appeal*, which is based in Memphis, Tennessee. It also owns 18 weekly publications in 14 local markets, encompassing nine states.

Under the terms of the transaction, Journal Media Group shareholders will receive cash of $12.00 per share in cash. Based on the closing price of Journal Media Group on October 7, that represents a premium of nearly 45 percent.

Look for Gannett to digitally cross-pollinate its flagship *USA Today*, with some of the additional publications now in Gannett's stable.

"Our merger will combine the best of each of our organizations to create a journalism-led, investor-focused company which will provide substantial value to the shareholders of both companies," said Robert Dickey, president-CEO of Gannett, in a statement. "This transaction is an excellent first step in the industry consolidation strategy we have communicated to our shareholders and is a good example of the value-creating opportunities we believe are available."

The deal is in keeping with the ongoing roll-up throughout the media, as traditional brands join forces and create scale for consumers and media buyers.

The purchase increases Gannett's annual revenues by $450 million and its daily circulation by 675,000, the company said.

But with media consolidation comes redundancies and, most likely, layoffs.

PR pros who have relationships with reporters and editors at Gannett's various publications will throughout the next few months have to pay very close attention to staff cuts, editorial sections they might have pitched in the past that go away, as well as new editorial opportunities that arise.

However, the endgame is probably fewer pitching opportunities, which means PR pros will have to be much more strategic.

Journal Media Group was formed in 2015 via a merger of the newspaper operations of The E.W. Scripps Company and Journal Communications Inc.

REDDIT LAUNCHES NEWS VEHICLE

Popular web aggregator Reddit has unveiled its newest property, a standalone news site titled Upvoted.

That site, which will offer news content and feature its own editorial staff, is now live.

Upvoted will publish between 10 and 20 articles per day, as well as infographics, videos and podcasts.

News items culled from Reddit's forums and submitted by its legion of users will serve as the inspiration for the majority of the site's content.

In a move that seems at odds with Reddit's community-based, "open" content ethos, articles posted on Upvoted won't allow comments or feature user voting capabilities.

Upvoted's writing staff will be led by Vickie Chang, previously editorial director at MySpace.

Given the site's massive influence and the morass of content its users generate each day, the move seems a likely next step for controversial Reddit, which bills itself as the "front page of the Internet."

Wired posited that Upvoted is an opportunity for Reddit to take advantage of content that is regularly poached from that site and repurposed by news outlets around the world. In a move mirroring the *New York Times'* contentious "native advertising" program, the site will be funded primarily by sponsored content, to be penned by Upvoted staff.

(Continued on page 4)

REDDIT NEWS VEHICLE (Continued from page 3)

Launched in 2005 by University of VA students Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian, Reddit remains one of the most popular community-based forums on the Internet, accounting for more than 200 million unique visitors every month. Content is supplied via its registered users, organized into categories of interest — known as "subreddits" — and voted on to determine its visibility on the site.

Condé Nast acquired Reddit in 2006 before it became an unaffiliated subsidiary of that publisher's parent company, Advance Publications.

Reddit this summer went into crisis mode after several policy decisions and key staff changes raised the ire of both the site's users and its moderators, resulting in a firestorm of criticism and ultimately, a decline in traffic. After shutting down several forums and terminating a popular moderator, Former CEO Ellen Pao resigned in July when she became the victim of an online harassment campaign that culminated with a petition calling for her ouster.

Pao penned an op-ed in the *Washington Post* detailing her experiences working in an online culture where trolling and personal attacks are common.

Co-founder Huffman, who returned to the company after a six-year absence, replaced her.

The site has since enacted policy changes aimed at cracking down on bullying and potentially offensive content.

STAFF BUYOUTS SET TO BEGIN AT TRIBUNE

An employee buyout program is slated to begin at Tribune Publishing, which owns daily news vehicles the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Baltimore Sun*, among others.

The voluntary buyouts, which are available only to non-union employees, are part of a strategic effort by Tribune's senior management to stave off a series of layoffs that had been expected at the Chicago-based newspaper giant.

The cuts would affect employees across Tribune's platform of media offerings, many of them newsroom positions. The Los Angeles Times is expected to be hit hardest, where "at least 50 editorial positions are expected to be cut," according to a Monday CNNMoney report.

In a memo to staff, Tribune Publishing CEO Jack Griffin wrote that "in the challenging revenue environment that all publishing companies face, it is critical that we make hard decisions and take the necessary steps that continue to position Tribune Publishing Company for success over the long term."

Tribune staffers have until October 23 to agree to the terms of their buyout package, according to a Monday Chicago Tribune report. If the reduction effort doesn't allow Tribune to achieve its cost saving goals, a layoff plan is expected to follow.

The cuts come after a management overhaul at the Times in early Sept., where several members of that paper's leadership team were ousted, including publisher Austin Beutner, who also ran the *San Diego Union-Tribune* after its Tribune purchase in May. Beutner, whose firing was detailed in a Sept. 20 *New York Times* report, was replaced by former Chicago Tribune executive — and later Baltimore Sun publisher — Timothy Ryan.

Times editor Davan Maharaj on Sept. 22 sent a memo to staff first alluding to the possibility of a buyout program, which he described as a way for employees to "make decisions about their own personal and professional situations at a time when the company must continue to execute on its strategic plan, which includes reducing costs."

PRESS CLUB PUTS ROCKWELL PAINTING IN PLAY

The National Press Club is in for a big change.

But this has nothing to do with NPC embracing digital technology, social media or other platforms that are profoundly affecting the nation's newsroom and media organizations.

Rather, this is about helping to fund NPC's future: An agreement was made late last week by the boards of the National Press Club and nonprofit National Press Club Journalism Institute to sell the club's Norman Rockwell painting, "Norman Rockwell Visits a Country Editor."

The sale, which will take place at an auction at Christie's on Nov. 19., is expected to fetch between $10 million and $15 million. Seventy percent of the proceeds will go to the Club, 30 percent to the Institute.

John Hughes, president of the National Press Club, said in a blog post that the decision to sell the painting does not mean the club and the institute are "desperate" for money. "The Club has been profitable for seven years in a row while the journalism industry struggles," he said. "However, our board members determined that over time, the costs of securing such a valuable artifact would be a drain on the financial resources of the Club and the Institute. The Club is the world's leading professional organization for journalists. It didn't make sense for us to begin diverting so many of our resources for art security."

He added, "In a sale, we secure the Club's future and help prepare for the day when the subsidized rent we have enjoyed for decades goes away. We are in a better position to care for our facility, offer world-class programs and support and grow our membership."

BRIEF: Internet radio service **Pandora** has moved to purchase live events company **Ticketfly**. That transaction is reportedly valued at $450M. Pandora founder Tim Westergren said the acquisition would offer a new music discovery vehicle that connects consumers, artists and promoters.

NEWS OF PR FIRMS

VA DRAWS PR RFP TO WEAN OFF TOBACCO

Virginia, a top four state for tobacco production, is looking for PR help for its program to wean the Commonwealth off the tobacco industry.

The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, originally set up in 1999, wants a PR firm to develop a comprehensive external communications strategy focused on earned media to boost its work and the agency's profile regionally and statewide.

The Richmond-based commission was part of the Master Settlement Agreement between the states and Big Tobacco and sits on an endowment worth more than $260M. In addition to a communications plan, the commission wants a firm to draft op-eds, create templates for use by PR staff, create media and stakeholder targets, and provide other PR-related recommendations.

Proposals are due Oct. 15. RFP: http://odwpr.us/1PbAOBV.

KARBO TARGETS TECH STARTUPS

With technology startups, PR is generally not high on the priority list. Funding may eventually materialize—if the company has a successful debut, that is—but is far from a sure thing.

Now tech startups have the opportunity to enter a market with a bigger PR impact and better visibility, thanks to a new program that Karbo Communications has introduced.

The PowerStart PR Launch Program, created for pre-Series A technology companies, is offered via a tiered pricing structure.

The offering includes the Karbo Communications' Essential Differentiation and Messaging (EDM) process, spokesperson coaching, story pitching to top-tier press, media kit/press material development, interview management and social media content.

In addition, companies have the option to purchase à la carte items such as video creation, contributed article placements, customer case studies, speaking opportunities, award submissions, promotions, advertising and review programs.

There are more than 20,000 startups in the Silicon Valley alone, Karbo Communications said. According to CB Insights via *Fortune*, startup funding for the U.S. is projected to reach a whopping $70 billion by the end of this year.

"The reality is that a lot of startups have phenomenal products, but they lack the financial resources to execute top-flight launches," said Julie Karbo, founder-CEO of Karbo Communications, in a statement. "At Karbo Com, our philosophy is that you only have one chance to launch your company, and it should be with your strongest foot forward. If a startup waits until acquiring a Series A round to make an impact, they risk the market simply passing them by."

NEW ACCOUNTS

New York Area

Lane, New York/Portland Roasting Coffee, specialty coffee roaster; Regal Springs, sustainable supplier of tilapia for restaurants, grocers and consumers around the world, and Steaz, natural, organic and fair trade green tea-based beverages, all for PR.

Nancy J. Friedman PR, New York/Li-Lac Chocolates, Greenwich Village chocolate purveyor, for PR for the opening of its factory in Industry city, as well as comms. support of its online store, brick and mortal locations and overall brand.

The Brandman Agency, New York/The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, Riverside, Calif., landmark hotel destination, for PR.

Cutler PR, New York/Duda, Silicon Valley-based website-building platform, and Oomph, Australian-based marketing tech company, as AOR for PR. The firm also expanded its relationship with RR Media, a provider of global digital media services to the broadcast industry, becoming global AOR for PR in a widened campaign that now includes the U.S., U.K. and Europe. Work for all three clients includes strategic counsel and message development, media relations, thought leadership, speaking opportunities and award nominations.

East

MMI, Raleigh, N.C./Raleigh Orthopaedic Clinic, for ongoing strategic consulting, advertising, digital strategy and media relations; Riley Contracting Group, for brand reputation, sales collateral and PR strategy; BioMarine, for media relations to increase awareness of the organization's annual global convention, BioMarine Business Convention, set for Wilmington, N.C. this month; Nurse Care of North Carolina, for website design and development, brand identity and video production services.

Southeast

Max Borges Agency, Miami/CEDIA, the Custom Electronic Design & Installation Assn., for building and executing a multi-channel communications program supporting its mission to be a resource for home technology. The group has 3,500 member companies that it reps on legislative issues, research efforts, consumer education and industry awards.

rbb Communications, Miami/VITAS Healthcare, leading end-of-life care provider, for PR counsel, including online reputation and media relations. VITAS has 47 hospice programs in 16 states and Washington, D.C.

TransMedia Group, Boca Raton/Kayak gold medalists Bruce Gipson of Boca Raton and Lee McGregor of South Africa, for PR surrounding their attempt to break a world record kayaking from Bimini to Fort Lauderdale in 11 hours, 46 minutes, which they set 31 years ago in their 30s. The event will also support Wounded Warriors of South Florida.

Southwest

TrizCom PR, Dallas/Aidan Gray, McKinney, Tex.-based home furnishing and decor company, as AOR. The retailer also has a presence in Atlanta, North Carolina, and nothern and southern California.

NEWS OF SERVICES

WINGO JOINS AD COUNCIL BOARD

Robert Wingo, chairman of Austin-based agency SandersWingo, has been elected to The Advertising Council's board of directors.

PSA mainstay the Ad Council remains the largest producer of public service advertisements in the country. The non-profit produces, distributes and promotes social message campaigns to a network of more than 30,000 media outlets, including broadcast, print, and Internet placements. Ads run in space donated by media, and the Ad Council's board donates both financial support and creative insights to its campaigns.


Wingo

The Ad Council's board is currently led by David Christopher, chief marketing officer of AT&T Mobility. Christopher was appointed to that position in July.

Wingo said in a statement: "2016 will be a dynamic and productive year for the Ad Council, and I'm looking forward to being part of it."

SandersWingo clients include AT&T, Chevrolet, KFC, State Farm, and the U.S. Postal Service.

PR COUNCIL NAMES 2016 BOARD

The PR Council, the industry's trade association, on Friday announced the election of its new officer and directors.

The Chair, elected to his second term, is Christopher Graves, Global Chairman of Ogilvy Public Relations.

Returning with Graves in the executive suite are Aaron Schoenherr (Greentarget) as secretary and Bryan Harris (Taylor) as treasurer.

The Council also announced new board members, all CEOs/Principals of their agencies, respectively: Don Baer (Burson-Marsteller), Fred Cook (Golin), Heidi Hovland (DeVries Global), Sandra Fathi (Affect) and Tonya Veasey (OCG PR).

Continuing directors are: Aaron Kwittken (Kwittken + Company Worldwide), Maureen Lippe (Lippe Taylor), Jason Mandell (LaunchSquad), Ron Guirguis, replacing Paul Newman (MSLGROUP), Mark Thorne (Hill+Knowlton Strategies), Virginia Devlin (Current), Carrie Jones (JPA Health Communications), Daryl McCullough (Citizen Relations), Todd Hansen (O'Malley Hansen Communications), Ron Sachs (Sachs Media Group) and Karen van Bergen (Porter Novelli).

"We know that we have so much work to do on several fronts, from diversity and inclusion to rapid adaptation," said Graves, in a statement.

THE STEVENS GROUP UPS JACHETTI

The Stevens Group (TSG), which specializes in mergers and acquisitions for the PR agency field, on Wednesday promoted Rich Jachetti to senior partner. Jachetti joined the firm as senior associate last January.

Before joining TSG, Jachetti founded Emotionmapping LLC, an integrated marketing communications company based in Westchester, New York that specialized in providing advertising, PR, sales promotion and digital marketing consultation and services.

PEOPLE

Joined

Russ Dyer, VP of corporate affairs, to Mondelēz International, Deerfield, Ill., as VP, global commnications. He succeeds Sara Sizer, who recently left the company. He spent the last three years at Kraft Foods Group, most recently as VP of Corporate Affairs, and before that was a director at Weber Shandwick Worldwide. Dyer is responsible for all strategic communications plans and oversees the worldwide external and internal communication activities for the global snacking company, whose brands include Cadbury, Nabisco and Oreo.


Dyer

David Grant, longtime president of LVM Group in New York, has moved to Steinreich Communications, New York, as a senior VP. Grant is a former VP at Rubenstein who moved to LVM in the mid-1970s and spent the last four decades there.


Grant

Robert Hubbell, a veteran corporate and agency communicator who left Cantor Fitzgerald last December as managing director of global communications and marketing, to geospatial analytics startup Coastal Risk Consulting in a VP role. Hubbell was an EVP and managing director for Edelman before moving to Andersen Worldwide in the mid-1990s as managing director of global comms. After stints at KPMG and GCG partners, he moved to BGC Partners, a spinoff of Cantor Fitzgerald, which he joined in 2006. He was also VP of IR and corporate comms. for Hasbro and led Edelman's PR21 operation.

Caitlin Miller, senior client relationship team leader, FLM+ Public Affairs, to North Bridge Communications, Washington, D.C., as a senior A/E. She was a senior A/M for DCI Group and directed government relations and policy for the Iowa Cattlemen's Assn.

Megan Thomas, global head of communications for Sanofi Oncology, to Makovsky, New York, as senior VP of its health pracice. She remains based in Cambridge, Mass. She spent five years as director and senior director of global PR for Novartis Oncology and four years as assoc. director of US PR for Novartis Pharmaceuticals. She reports to health unit co-leads Tom Jones and Alexandra Peterson.

Promoted

Monica Marshall, a senior client counselor at Ketchum, to director of sustainability and social impact for the firm, heading its CSR and sustainability specialties as the firm combines them in a new offering. She was deputy director and global head of private partnerships for the United Nations World Food Programme before re-joining Ketchum in 2013.

Sarah Davasher-Wisdom to senior VP of public affairs and strategy, Greater Louisville Inc., the chamber of commerce and business development org for that Kentucky city. She previously managed government relations for the Tennessee Valley Authority and was a strategic comms. officer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

SARD MOUNTS PR DEFENSE FOR HEARTWARE

HeartWare International, which is tangling with an activist investor opposed to its $860M acquisition of Valtech Cardio, is relying on Sard Verbinnen & Co. for PR support.

Heartware, a Framingham, Mass.-based maker of heart pumps for patients with advanced heart failure, announced in September its deal for Valtech, an Israel-based developer of valve repair and replacement devices for heart valve diseases.

Engaged Capital, a top 20 shareholder of Heartware, went public this week against the Valtech deal with the help of PR shop Bayfield Strategy. EC released a letter to Heartware's board which laments "years of disappointing returns" and urges the board to "walk away from this highly-dilutive, highly-risky acquisition and return to the company's focus to the core left ventricular assist device business."

The hedge fund wants Heartware to pursue its own sale, rather than the acquisition.

Heartware "respectfully disagreed" with the EC position, noting the fund only recently bought Heartware shares and affirming its commitment to the deal. "We are confident this acquisition will deliver significantly greater value to shareholders and patients alike than could be achieved through Engaged capital's recommended alternatives," the company said.

Sard managing directors Andrew Cole and Mark Harnett lead the Heartware account for the firm.

SITRICK TAKES OXIS BOARD SLOT

Los Angeles crisis and financial PR maven Michael Sitrick is in line for a board seat with Oxis International, the Tampa-based marijuana sector biotech developing immunotherapies to treat cancer.


Sitrick

Sitrick was named to the company's business advisory board, which sets him up to become a board member when the company "uplists" to the Nasdaq stock exchange.

Anthony Cataldo, who took the Orix reins as chairman and CEO last November, praised Sitrick's strategic communications expertise, as well as "a wealth of experience and knowledge in management, corporate governance and value creation."

Sitrick leads L.A.-based Sitrick and Company.

Orix has expresssed a desire to move its shares to the Nasdaq, which requires a rise in its share price.

MWWPR ACQUIRES BERK COMMUNICATIONS

The PR agency field may be in the grip of an acquisition spree.

In the latest deal, MWWPR has purchased a minority stake in Berk Communications and Marketing Group, which specializes in sports, entertainment, travel, lifestyle and event planning PR. Financial terms were not disclosed.

Based in New York City, Berk Communications will become an independent subsidiary of MWWPR and continue to operate under its own name. Berk founder, Ron Berkowitz, will continue to serve as President-CEO.

Berk clients include some of the top brands, such as FX Networks, and GQ, and sports personalities, including Yankee slugger Alex Rodriquez and NBA superstar Kevin Durant.

"At MWWPR, our top priority is investing in people and resources that enhance the services we can offer our clients," said Michael W. Kempner, president- CEO of MWWPR, in a statement.

The MWWPR-Berk deal comes just a few weeks after Finn Partners acquired Horn Group, for an undisclosed price, to bolster Finn's strengths in big data, security, cloud applications, digital publishing and mobile sectors.

FANTASY SPORTS BIZ UNDER MICROSCOPE

When your brand is uttered in the same breath as "insider trading" you know you have a serious crisis on your hands. It's what two of the major fantasy sports companies are now facing after they were forced to release statements Monday defending their businesses' integrity after what amounted to allegations of insider trading and that employees were placing bets using information not generally available to the public. That's according to the *New York Times*.

The statements were released after an employee at DraftKings, one of the two major companies, admitted last week to inadvertently releasing data before the start of the third week of N.F.L. games, the Times said. The employee, a midlevel content manager, won $350,000 at a rival site, FanDuel, that same week.

Both DraftKings and FanDuel are now under the glare of the media, regulators and, quite possibly, the U.S. Congress.

Fantasy Sports, of course, have become all the rage in the last few years, with wall-to-wall ads during football game broadcasts. They started off innocently enough, with fans playing against each other for the fun of it. But more recently fantasy sports have ballooned into a billion-dollar business.

Daily games will generate around $2.6 billion in entry fees this year and grow 41 percent annually, reaching $14.4 billion in 2020, per Eilers Research.

According to the Times, both DraftKings and FanDuel have set up online daily and weekly games based on a similar concept in which fans pay an entry fee to a website—from 25 cents to $1,000—to play dozens if not hundreds of opponents, with prize pools that can pay $2 million to the winner.

On Monday, DraftKings and FanDuel released a joint statement that said "nothing is more important" than the "integrity of the games we offer," but offered few specifics about how they keep contests on the level.

A spokeswoman for DraftKings told the Times that Haskell simply made a mistake and that the company was certain he did not use the information improperly. She declined to go into specifics about the safeguards or the company's auditing policies.

The latest crisis to hit Westhampton Beach—the possible closing of its only supermarket—has landed at the feet of the administration of Mayor Maria Moore. As usual, Moore and the four trustees have opted to do nothing.

We're advocating that Moore remove herself from office although in many ways she has already done that.

She has allowed the trampling of some of the most basic principles of America including freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Attempts by us to address the two most recent meetings of the trustees were met with harassment by WHB lawyers who kept saying, "Address the board, address the board," even though we had said we were doing just that at the outset. In addition, we were ordered from the mike after five minutes each time.

The videotape of the Sept. 3 meeting is posted online and the Oct. 8 meeting will be posted later this week.

Why Is Free Speech Throttled?

Moore and the trustees won't let us talk because we challenge them on so many points.

The major issue facing WHB is the threat of more than $1 million in fines and costs arising from WHB's opposition to an eruv Jewish religious boundary that would encircle the village. WHB's entire budget is only $9.8M.

Moore and the trustees have been contending since the first of the year that the eruv cannot be discussed in public by them. It's a subject also banned at the WH library where Moore was a director until recently. A revolt is going on at the library with workers voting Aug. 21 to establish the first union in 100+ years. Citizens are demanding the resignation of board president Joan Levan and replacement of the appointed board with an elected board.

What has happened is that Southampton, in the last few seconds of its Aug. 25 meeting, decided to cave to the East End Eruv Assn. http://tinyurl.com/o9err2a and allow an eruv in return for EEEA's promise not to seek millions in penalties. No comment by the SH Council members or citizens was allowed. If that wasn't a dirty deal, we don't know what is.

Talk About Eruv Is Now Allowed!

Following that sell-out, WHB trustees suddenly decided that it was O.K. to talk about the "eruv litigation" and let lawyer Brian Sokoloff hold the floor for 55 minutes Sept. 3.

What did Sokoloff say? He preached fear to the audience—fear of $1 million+ in legal costs (not covered by insurance) because the loser in a "civil rights" case pays the costs of the victor. You heard this right. WHB is accused of depriving EEEA constituents of their "civil right" to place religious symbols permanently on 47 WHB utility poles. The wacky courts accept this premise, ignoring the Constitution's ban on the government taking part in religious practices.

Sokoloff, in our opinion, was softening up the citizens so they would accept an SH-type deal. The problem is that Brian Tymann and Rob Rubio were elected to the WHB board June 19 on the promise that they would not sign any such agreement. The EEEA made this demand at the Feb. 24 conference with Judge Kathleen Tomlinson.

We asked Moore and the trustees Oct. 8 whether the EEEA has offered an SH-type deal to WHB. They refused to answer.

The refusal to respond shows the giant hole in the "Open Meetings Law" of New York State. The public can attend government board meetings, talk, and ask questions. But board members are under no duty to reply.

Moore Ducks Free Speech, Free Press

Throttling us and harassing us during the "Public Comment" section of the WHB trustee meetings is only one aspect of press avoidance policies of Moore.

Neither she nor the trustees ever hold a press conference, the hallmark of democracy. If Presidents of the U.S. have to have them regularly, why not mayors of small towns?

Unused is the Condorcet http://civs.cs.cornell.edu/ and other secure email voting services. WHB could collect the emails of registered voters and check how they feel about public issues. Confidentiality is assured.

Supermarket Fate Is Current Crisis

The current crisis being ducked by the board is the possible closing of bankrupt Waldbaum's, WHB's only supermarket. Workers are asking citizens to boycott Best Yet Market, the expected new owner, unless Best Yet agrees to accept a union.

A dozen Waldbaum's employees showed up at the Oct. 8 WHB meeting hoping to get some support from Moore and the trustees. The entire board plus outside legal counsel Anthony Pasca erupted in a paroxysm of denial of any possible action that could help the 80 employees.

"It would be improper for village trustees to intervene and the village is powerless in this situation," said WHB lawyer Anthony Pasca.

We don't agree. The trustees could pass a resolution supporting the quest of the workers for fair treatment. They could explore what terms are being offered and get answers to questions. Calls are not being returned by Best Yet, 27east.com reporter Greg Wehner wrote Oct. 9.

WH Library Ignores Local Problems

WHB trustees could also ask the board of the WH library to do research on the supermarket issue. The library has 13 full time and 35 part time employees plus five regular substitutes. It is sitting on $4.1 million in cash and savings when annual expenses are only $2.5M.

Emails and phone numbers of the library trustees are not available except that of Karen Andrews who is with the Corcoran Group, WHB, part of Realogy Holdings Corp., Madison, N.J. The $5.52 billion public company (NYSE:RLGY) is headed CEO Roger Smith.

The Corcoran and Realogy brands should not be associated with a board that is not responsive to the public. The board refuses to shift its meetings from 9:30 a.m. to the evening which would allow more residents to attend.

– Jack O'Dwyer

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