



**Kevin McCauley**  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's Newsletter



**The Inside News of  
PR and Marketing  
Communications**

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## MEGABUS SEARCHES FOR PR FIRM

Megabus.com is looking for a PR firm to handle a two-year \$500K communications program to position it as the “market-leading provider of affordable and high value travel across the US,” according to its RFP. There is an option for an additional year.

Part of Britain’s Stagecoach Group, Megabus operates daily express double-decker service to more than 100 cities in North America.



It wants a firm to highlight the safety record and eco-friendliness of its fleet.

The firm will promote Megabus as a “good corporate citizen” and the economic benefits it contributes to local economies, states the document.

The PR plan and strategy “will focus on generating a steady stream of positive media coverage, while attracting, growing and retaining potential customers.”

The firm will develop messaging geared to announcing new/enhanced routes and travel during key Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break, summer and back to school seasons.

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

Contact point is: [PRProposals@coachusa.com](mailto:PRProposals@coachusa.com). Responses are due by Sept. 28.

## WPP REVENUES DIP AS NORTH AMERICA LAGS

WPP’s reported first-quarter revenues slipped four percent to \$4.6B, though like-for-like performance inched ahead 0.8 percent. The poor financial performance sent WPP shares tumbling about eight percent.

A lackluster North America market held back growth as revenues there dropped 10.6 percent to \$1.7B on a reported basis and 1.1 percent LFL.

CEO Mark Read told the *Wall Street Journal* he’s unhappy with the creative shops in North America.



**Mark Read**

WPP’s PR/PA group (Hill+Knowlton Strategies, Burson Cohn & Wolfe, Finsbury, Ogilvy) reported a 6.7 percent decline in reported revenues to \$352M and a 1.5 percent gain on an LFL basis.

Read and COO Andrew Scott will take “a fresh look at our strategy, developing a vision for the group that recognizes the challenges and opportunities presented by the structural shifts in our industry.”

They promised to “proactively” deal with under-performing parts of WPP.

## EDELMAN WORKS CBS' MOONVES MESS

Edelman is helping CBS Corp. handle the bombshell exit of 15-year CEO Les Moonves amid allegations of sexual harassment, revamp of its board of directors and its agreement with majority shareholder Shari Redstone’s National Amusements Inc.



**Les Moonves**

Moonves is in line for a potential \$120M severance package, of which he will earmark \$20M to groups that support workplace equality for women.

An independent investigation of Moonves’ behavior and subsequent board evaluation of the report must be completed before he receives any severance comp.

COO since 2013, Joe Ianniello will serve as acting CEO until the board, which is getting six new independent directors, finds a permanent replacement.

As part of the agreement, NAI has agreed not to pursue a merger deal between its Viacom and CBS properties for at least two years.

Edelman’s Lex Suvanto and Laurie Hays support CBS executive VP/CCO Gil Schwartz and his team handle media regarding the CBS revamp.

WPP’s Finsbury unit has Sara Evans and Kerry Golds working the media for NAI.

## OGILVY NY HANDLES US PUSH FOR QATAR

Ogilvy’s New York office is handling a US PR effort to promote the Qatar Foundation, the nonprofit involved in education, science/research and community development.

Co-founded by Qatar’s leader Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani and Princess Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, the Foundation aims to position the Arab state as “a nation that can be a vanguard for productive change in the region,” according to Ogilvy’s federal filing.

Qatar-based Mamac Ogilvy and Mather engaged the NY outpost for the Foundation’s communications effort.

Ogilvy’s Qatari affiliate signed a three-year contract (with an option for a fourth year) with the Foundation in 2017.

In June, Ogilvy Government Relations (Washington) signed a subcontractor agreement with Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough to provide DC outreach to policymakers for the Government of Qatar.

Ogilvy is to receive a monthly \$10K retainer through May 31, 2019, for that effort.



## **BCW LAUNCHES BRAND IDENTITY, WEBSITE**

Burson Cohn & Wolfe unveiled its BCW brand mark, corporate website and an array of social media channels.



“With BCW, we combined the deep expertise of our two heritage organizations—Burson-Marsteller and Cohn & Wolfe—to create an advanced agency to meet the needs of today’s

clients and their targeted stakeholders,” said CEO Donna Imperato in unveiling the rebranding effort.

The focus of the [www.bcw-global.com](http://www.bcw-global.com) site is the firm’s work, added Jim Joseph, global president for brand solutions. “BCW is about combining world-class expertise in our legacy strengths with next-generation integrated solutions,” he said. “And that’s exactly what we wanted to express with our new branding and logo.”

BCW, which is owned by WPP, has 4,000 staffers.

### **APCO’s Tech Chair Thomas Shifts to BCW**

Michael Ann Thomas, senior VP/global technology chair at APCO Worldwide, joins BCW as executive VP-global technology solutions, taking over for Rowan Bennecke. Besides the two-year Seattle posting at APCO, Thomas served as a board member for MIT Hacking Medicine, VP-group director at Edelman, director at Raffetto Herman Strategic Communications and staffer at Ogilvy, Hill+Knowlton Strategies and WE Communications.

Imperato said Thomas is “fearless at a time when we need bold ideas, uninhibited creativity and a sophisticated understanding of the evolution of the world of technology.”

Thomas will report to Chris Foster, BCW’s North America president.

## **TERRIE WILLIAMS RETIRES, CLOSES PR SHOP**

Terrie Williams, who opened her eponymous PR firm in 1988, is closing the New York shop this month.

The 64-year-old is retiring to focus on personal wellness, family and the next chapter of her life, according to her announcement of the shutdown.

With Eddie Murphy and Miles Davis as its first clients, Terrie Williams Agency went on to handle some of the biggest names in entertainment, sports, business and politics—including Prince, Johnnie Cochran, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Jackie Joyner-Kersey and Sally Jessy Raphael.

The firm also worked with such corporate clients as Time Warner, HBO, AT&T, NBA and Essence Communications Partners.

She has earned a host of awards including PRSA New York Chapter’s Phillip Dorf Mentoring Award. In 1996, Williams was the first person of color honored with the Vernon C. Schranz Distinguished Lectureship in Public Relations at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

In stepping down, Williams thanked “countless individuals who have inspired me, guided me, and helped me throughout my career.”



**Terrie Williams**

## **PEOPLE ON THE MOVE**

**Philip Morris International** has brought on **Amanda Pierce** as head of communications in the UK. Pierce comes to Philip Morris after nine years at Burson-Marsteller, most recently as UK CEO. Before that, she was head of PR & internal communications at McDonald’s UK. In her new post, Pierce’s duties will include overseeing external communications, corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement.



**Amanda Pierce**

**Weber Shandwick** has brought on four new executives at The X Practice, its new agency model that combines innovation and technology-focused capabilities. **Tanvir Hannan** joins as executive VP and global head of analytics operations. He was formerly the head of conversations at Horizon Media. **Spencer Ante** is coming on as executive VP of digital content and editorial strategy. He was previously senior VP & editorial director at Edelman. **Katie Krum**, formerly senior director, content & engagement at Under Armour, joins as senior VP of integrated media strategy and digital lead for Weber Shandwick’s South region. **Vince Koh**, formerly VP, eCommerce|direct to consumer at Iconix Brand Group, joins as senior VP of commerce and conversion.

**Nicholas & Lence Communications** has hired **Larry Gottlieb** in the dual role of chief strategy officer and senior VP, business development. Gottlieb comes to NLC after spending five years as president & CEO of the Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation. Before that, he was director of economic development for Westchester County and previously served as managing director and market leader, PA at Burson-Marsteller.

**The Brandware Group**, which offers brand and market research, public relations, social media and digital media solutions, has named **Charles Mayer** chief operating officer. The new position is based at the agency’s Atlanta headquarters. Mayer comes to Brandware from the Oklahoman Media Company, where he was vice president, marketing.

**LaVoieHealthScience** has promoted **Sharon Correia** to senior vice president, integrated communications. Correia who came to LHS in 2016 as vice president, integrated communications, was previously senior director of corporate communications at Navidea Biopharmaceuticals. In her new post, she will continue to work on client strategy, execution, team building and high-level programming.



**Sharon Correia**

**Rogers & Cowan** has hired **Fraser Sinclair** to head up its human resources division. Sinclair joins R&C from BMG, Bertelsmann’s music division, where he was senior director, human resources. Before that he spent nearly five years as HR director at Golin in London; Golin and R&C are both part of IPG. In his new post, Sinclair will oversee HR for more than 200 employees in R&C’s Los Angeles, New York, Miami and Nashville offices.

## **PR STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

The *New York Times* recently posted an opinion piece on the merits of public health initiatives. The authors, economist Austin Frakt and pediatrician Aaron E. Carroll, make the case that public health campaigns deliver outsized return on investment.

Under the subheading, “Public health needs better public relations,” the authors write: “Perhaps the biggest change needed is for public health to do a better job at trumpeting its success.”

I’ve worked in various positions in public health for more than a decade, beginning on the policy and regulatory side of public health, and now in public relations. It is surprising to me how many innovative approaches and breakthrough results go unrecognized.

Most of us are familiar with the major public health headlines: the opioid crisis and confusion around what to do to resolve it; the devastating impact that water contamination continues to have on communities in Flint, Michigan.



**Erynne Jones**

But the State Targeted Response to Opioid Crisis Grants? The impact of the U.S. Public Health Services Act State Loan Repayment Program funding on physician shortages? These programs are achieving amazing results, yet their impact is not being touted to a broader audience.

Here are some thoughts on elevating public relations in public health:

**Name and brand the campaign.** Determining the core concept, developing strong messaging, and tying all project activities back to a main purpose is critical.

**Take the time to test the campaign.** We worked with a client to test a public health campaign with 50 professionals in public health, physicians, and patients prior to launch. We learned that our core messages were on track. But we also learned that in California, we needed materials that appealed to different languages and cultures.

**Create materials that are written for public health stakeholders, but also inform the general public.** Fact sheets, social media messages, blog entries, and newsletter content speak plainly and clearly to multiple audiences. Encourage buy-in early from partners and key opinion leaders. Develop a strategy for working with both partner organizations and with key opinion leaders.

**Work with public relations professionals.** Many public health agencies take a “go-it-alone” approach in developing a public health initiative. In doing so, they miss out on the benefit of working with a public relations professional or agency that has multifaceted experiences and practices in areas like messaging, media relations, social media, speech and presentation writing, and multi-media production.

Positive publicity and strategic communications can result in opening doors for future funding for public health initiatives. So, let’s roll up our sleeves, extend a hand, and make sure these great stories don’t go untold.

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*Erynne Jones, MPH, handles public relations duties for KP Public Affairs in Sacramento, CA.*

## **THE IN-N-OUTS OF A FAKE NEWS STORY**

It started with a tweet by Gabe Schneider, a freelance reporter and *Columbia Journalism Review* contributor, hinting he’d uncovered something nefarious: “In-N-Out added a new item to their secret menu,” Schneider tweeted with a photo showing that the burger chain contributed \$25,000 to the California Republican Party.

The tweet found its way to Eric Bauman, chairman of the California Democratic Committee, who tweeted: “Et tu In-N-Out? Tens of thousands of dollars donated to the California Republican Party ... it’s time to #BoycottInNOut — let Trump and his cronies support these creeps ... perhaps animal style!”

Schneider and Bauman were perhaps too lazy to look up, or chose to ignore, that In-N-Out this election cycle also gave \$80,000 to Californians for Jobs and a Strong Economy, a committee focused on electing business-friendly Democrats to the state Legislature. The media began to cover a boycott that never remotely gained traction or support.



**Eric Starkman**

*Fortune* was among the first out of the box, with this click bait headline: “Left-Leaning Fast Food Fans Lose Appetite After In-N-Out Burger Donates To California Republicans.” The story didn’t quote or identify any left-leaning fans supporting a boycott.

Bauman’s message had a hidden undertone the media understood. Trump’s base includes Evangelical Christians, who oppose same sex marriage and other Bible-prohibited practices. Same sex marriage is an issue of considerable importance to Bauman; the award-winning robo caller lives in North Hollywood with his husband and his late mother’s partner Trisha.

In-N-Out is run by a conservative Christian family that prints Bible verses on its packaging. The media was judicious about its references to the family’s religious values but found creative ways to make the point. The *New York Times*, for example, when referring to Lynsi Snyder, the chain’s president, linked to an inspirational video she made for the GodTube channel.

The media ignored another side of In-N-Out. Glassdoor ranks the company No. 4 on its 2018 list of “Best Places to Work.” The company pays crew members considerably higher wages than McDonald’s and Burger King and they often get promoted up through the ranks to positions paying more than six figures. In-N-Out promoted fresh ingredients long before the trend took hold.

The California Democratic party was quick to distance itself from Bauman’s call for a boycott. And Bauman dropped his call for a boycott, suggesting he wasn’t really all that serious in the first place.

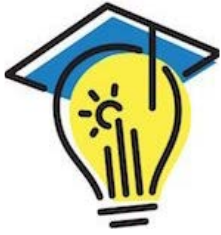
The ordeal is an example of why many Americans distrust the media and swallow President Trump’s claims that reporters are an enemy of the people.

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*Eric Starkman, a former financial journalist with major newspapers in the U.S. and Canada, managed an eponymous PR and crisis communications firm for more than 20 years.*

## URBAN SCHOOL ORGANIZATION ISSUES RFP

Chicago's Academy for Urban School Leadership is looking for a PR firm to provide communications support of its mission of service to the Windy City's most underserved communities.



In partnership with Chicago's public schools, AUSL manages 31 schools and runs the oldest teacher residency program in the US.

Serving 16K students, AUSL sees its mission as "realizing the promise of education equity in Chicago and beyond," according to its RFP.

AUSL's PR partner will handle strategic planning/creative consultation, promotions, media relations, crisis work, monitoring and special events.

The nonprofit group wants to select a firm ASAP.

Proposals and budgetary requirements go to David Brown, AUSL's associate director, marketing & communications, at 773/534-0129 and [dbrown@auslchicago.org](mailto:dbrown@auslchicago.org).

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

## 'PUBLIC ATTENTION' DRIVES TESLA EXEC EXIT

Dave Morton, who signed on at beleaguered Tesla electric car company a month ago, quit Sept. 7 due to the "level of public attention placed on the company."

In departing, the executive VP/CFO at Seagate Technology said he believes in the automaker's mission and prospects and has no qualms with its leadership and financial reporting.

Morton is joined by human resources director Gabrielle Toledano, who told Bloomberg that she isn't returning to Tesla following her leave of absence.

The exec departures follow the emergence of a video of CEO Elon Musk smoking marijuana during a Sept. 6 webcast interview with Joe Rogan, host of "Joe Rogan Experience."

The exits of Morton and Toledano come as Sarah O'Brien, Tesla's PR chief, left the company last week.

## HAUSER JOINS HUDSON INSTITUTE

Ann Marie Hauser has joined the Hudson Institute, conservative think tank, as VP for public affairs.

Most recently, Hauser was deputy staff director for the Senate Republican Conference, which is chaired by John Thune of South Dakota.



**Ann Marie Hauser**

She led efforts to promote the GOP's pro-growth policies after it regained the Senate majority in 2014.

Earlier, Hauser managed PA for Patomak Global Partners, financial services consultancy, and worked as managing VP for JDA Frontline, PA shop.

She served in the Bush II administration as PA director for the Dept. of Commerce and spokesperson at the Treasury Dept.

The late futurist Herman Kahn founded the Washington-based HI in 1961 to challenge conventional thinking and manage strategic transitions to the future.

## LOU HAMMOND GROUP EXPANDS TO TEXAS

Lou Hammond Group is expanding into the Houston market with a new office headed by Amanda Hansen.

Located midtown, LHG's Texas base of operations will offer communications, marketing, advertising, digital and creative services and media relations to clients in the real estate, hospitality, healthcare, financial services, energy, nonprofit and destination marketing sectors.



**Amanda Hansen**

Hansen, who will hold the title of LHG Houston president, comes to the firm from the Houston Golf Association, where she was VP of marketing and communications. Before that, she led the PR and social media team at MMI Agency, working with such Houston-based clients as MD Anderson Cancer Center, TIAA, AIG and Shell Oil.

LHG Houston's anchor client is McNair Interests, which Hansen is providing with PR, communications and marketing support.

Founded in 1984, LHG also has offices in New York, Charleston, S.C., Houston, Los Angeles, and Miami.

## TANNENBAUM REJOINS WEBER SHANDWICK

Jill Tannenbaum, who did a 1994-1998 stint as healthcare director at Weber Shandwick, has returned to the Interpublic unit as chief communications & marketing officer.

She left Weber Shandwick for a 10-year run at Cohn & Wolfe, first as senior VP-healthcare and then as chief marketing officer.

Tannenbaum exited in 2017 for the acting VP-communications post at Guardian Life and most recently was running her own firm.

Gail Heimann, president of Weber Shandwick, expects Tannenbaum "to help us take our storytelling—and engaging—to the next level."



**Jill Tannenbaum**

## MPAA SIGNS UP LAW FIRM TO FIGHT PIRACY

The Motion Picture Association of America, the lobbying group representing Hollywood's six major film studios, has tapped commercial law firm Becker & Poliakoff to tackle copyright issues on Capitol Hill.

MPAA hired Becker & Poliakoff to discuss copyright policy as it relates to streaming piracy devices and applications, as well as the economic impacts piracy has on the film industry, according to lobbying registration documents filed with Congress in September.

Last year, a federal judge granted the MPAA's request to shut down the operation of several piracy sites as part of a civil suit over copyright infringement.

A two-person team leads the MPAA account: Bert Gómez, a former senior vp of government relations for Univision who was the Spanish-language broadcaster's chief Washington, D.C. lobbyist; and Omar Franco, who was chief of staff for Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL).

## IS ADVERTISING SACKING NFL RATINGS?

Ads could be just as much to blame as player protests and the cratering of cable TV subscriptions for the sinking viewership for NFL games, according to a new study from Streaming Observer, a website that covers streaming media.



According to the report, the NFL's moves to reduce the effect of ads on the viewing experience have had little, if any, benefit. While the number of commercial breaks per quarter has been reduced from five to four, the study says the total number of ads broadcast has not seen a similar decline.

Because of that, Streaming Observer estimates that the "average NFL fan" will watch 24 hours of commercials over the course of a season.

Despite its decline—ad-related or not—the NFL remains the 10-ton gorilla of broadcast TV. To put things in context, primetime ratings for the season opener were more than triple those of the combined viewership for the night's programming on CBS, ABC, Fox and The CW.

## YOUNGER ADULTS RECONSIDER FACEBOOK

An increasing number of Facebook users in the U.S. have taken recent steps to put some distance between themselves and the social media giant, according to recent report released by Pew Research Center.

Pew's report found that about four-in-ten (42 percent) U.S. adults said they've taken a break from the platform for several weeks or more in the last 12 months.

More than a quarter (26 percent) reported that they've deleted Facebook's app from their cellphone.

Younger adults comprised the demographic most likely to have limited their relationship with the social media site recently. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of Facebook users ages 18 to 29 said they've adjusted their Facebook privacy settings in the last year.

Pew's report polled 4,594 U.S. adults between May and June.

## PR COUNSELOR/EDUCATOR KOPROWSKI DIES

Ken Koprowski, former VP-communications at General Electric, New York University adjunct professor and head of his own PR firm, has died.

During his more than 35-year career, Koprowski taught at UConn, Pace University and Quinnipiac University. He served as immediate past president of PRSA Westchester/Fairfield chapter. He opened Koprowski Communications in 2009.

A memorial service will be held Sept. 22 at 10 at the First Presbyterian Church, 1101 Bedford Street, Stamford, CT 06905. In lieu of flowers, donations go to DomusKids, 83 Lockwood Ave., Stamford, CT 06902 or the Family Centers, 40 Arch St., Greenwich CT 06830 in Koprowski's name.



**Ken Koprowski**

## TRUMP WANTS RE-WRITE OF LIBEL LAWS

The *Washington Post's* publication of excerpts from Bob Woodward's "Fear: Trump in the White House" has unleashed a tweetstorm in which president Trump says he doesn't know "why Washington politicians don't change libel laws."

However, defamation laws in the U.S. differ from state to state, so Washington politicians would have a difficult road ahead of them if they set themselves the task of establishing a uniform national standard of what constitutes libel.

The president has posted testimonials from top White House staffers to bolster his claims of the book's inaccuracy. A statement from John Kelly says that "The idea that I ever called the President an idiot is not true, in fact it's exactly the opposite."

Trump has also asked if Woodward is a "Dem operative" and says that "Fear" is "already discredited."

Trump's thumbs-down does not appear to be hurting the book's fortunes, however. It currently sits at No. 1 on the Amazon Top 100 list.

## WARNER BROS PRO GOODWIN TO AFI AS CCO

The American Film Institute has named Juli Goodwin to the new position of chief communications officer.

Goodwin left Warner Bros. Pictures, where she most recently served as executive VP of domestic publicity, in March. She had been with the studio since 2000, working on successful Oscar Best Picture campaigns for "Argo" and "Million Dollar Baby."

Before coming to Warner Bros., Goodwin was VP of publicity and promotions for Fine Line Features and director of publicity at Savoy Pictures.



**Juli Goodwin**

At the AFI, Goodwin will be a member of the senior management team, leading communications strategies for the organization's national arts and education programs.

## ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

**French|West|Vaughan** has been selected by the North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission to lead marketing and communications efforts. FWV will provide strategic counsel and execution of overall marketing and communications, including brand positioning, creative development, media relations, social media, events, digital advertising and website development. NCSPC works to increase sweet potato consumption through education, promotional activities, research and honorable horticultural practices amongst its producers.

**Relevance International** is the first agency of record for The World's 50 Best Restaurants, a worldwide ranking scheme for high-quality dining. The partnership follows an engagement covering global strategy, media and influencer relations and event support for The World's 50 Best Restaurants' 2018 awards ceremony. Relevance's London and New York offices will handle the effort, as well as promoting the company's #50BestTalks program taking place in San Francisco on Sept. 12 and its upcoming awards ceremony.

## COMMENTARY

### **KAEPERNICK SCORES PR GOLD FOR NIKE**

Colin Kaepernick wasn't be in the huddle of either the Philadelphia Eagles or Atlanta Falcons in the National Football League's season opener, but his presence hovered over the game.

The former San Francisco 49ers quarterback scored major publicity points when Nike unveiled its two-minute ad during the NFL showcase, featuring Kaepernick with Team Nike superstars LeBron James and Serena Williams. Good company, indeed.

That "Dream Crazy" ad is bound to drive Nike boycotters and Kaepernick critics nuts. President Trump took time out from his busy Sept. 5 schedule to tweet-bomb the athletic wear marketer: "Nike is getting absolutely killed with anger and boycotts. I wonder if they had any idea that it would be this way."

Mr. President, Nike knew exactly what it was getting into when it hired Kaepernick, who burst upon the national scene in 2016 by kneeling during the national anthem to protest racism and other social injustices.

While Trump backers are happily burning their pricey Nike footwear and cutting swoosh logos from shirts and socks, the company's target customer base of Gen-Z (18-21) and Millennials (22-37) are way more supportive than the protesters of the rights of sports figures to kneel during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner.

A Morning Consult poll taken following Nike's

Sept. 3 announcement of Kaepernick's hiring found that 52 percent of Gen-Zers are much more/somewhat more favorable or say it "makes no difference" if brands advocate for the rights of anthem kneelers. Twenty-one percent of that group either don't know or failed to express an opinion.

Millennials clocked in at 48 percent favorable or no difference. Eighteen percent have no opinion.

The views of Gen-Z and Millennial consumers sharply contrast with Trump backers. A whopping 58 percent of Trump supporters, a group that skews much older than Nike's target customer base, feel "much less favorable" and 11 percent "somewhat less favorable" toward brands that support the rights of anthem kneelers.

Nike's decision to suit up Kaepernick appears to be a marketing touchdown among its key customers.

Mary Scott, president of UEG, sports/entertainment/lifestyle marketing firm, made another key point in the Sept. 4 New York Times. "When was the last time we talked about a Nike campaign?," she asked. It's been a very long time.

Nike decision to "Just Do It" with Kaepernick has generated lots of buzz and support among the people it counts on to buy its stuff.

Nike's dealmaking prowess is right from the president's favorite book, "The Art of the Deal."

—Kevin McCauley

### **MUSK POT PROBLEM TANKS TESLA STOCK**

Usually, a media appearance by your CEO on a popular news or entertainment program translates into positive PR, especially when that CEO has a great time talking with the host. After Elon Musk appeared on "The Joe Rogan Experience," however, Tesla's share price fell more than six percent the following morning.



**Ronn Torossian**

The reason given for the drop in that Musk was seen to have "apparently" smoked marijuana during the program. Now, it wouldn't surprise anyone to learn that someone smoked pot on Rogan's show. The libertarian host is a proponent of legalizing weed.

Musk is no stranger to being outspoken—which has gotten him in trouble. An ill-advised Twitter spat led to rumblings that someone needed to be minding the store over at Tesla, but arguing on Twitter, while frowned on, doesn't carry the social stigma that marijuana use does in many areas of American culture.

In the video, Musk can be seen laughing about friends asking why he's smoking weed during the interview. The next morning, the stock price started to fall.

Others have a different explanation of why the stock

price fell. Right about the time the Rogan-Musk puff-pass video was gaining steam, Tesla announced that chief accounting officer Dave Morton was leaving the company a month after he took the job. Morton cited the public fire aimed at Tesla, as well as the pace of the job, as his reasons for stepping away:

"The level of public attention placed on the company, as well as the pace within the company, have exceeded my expectations... As a result, this caused me to reconsider my future. I want to be clear that I believe strongly in Tesla..."

There's no doubt that abrupt changes in primary positions in a company can cause the stock price to dip. Investors don't appreciate uncertainty. Given that, there's a strong case that it was Morton's decision, and not Musk's smoke-out, that cause the price to drop.

The fact that Morton tried to leave graciously speaks to the company's attempts to keep investors and the market in general from thinking things were amiss at Tesla, but the juxtaposition of a screen capture of Musk appearing to hit a joint and Morton resigning was not a good look for a company just getting past Musk-related PR issues.

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*Ronn Torossian is CEO of NYC-based PR agency 5WPR.*