

## How Four Women Built a Powerhouse PR Firm in Hollywood's Digital Age

By: Alyssa Richey

In the flashing lights and chaos of Hollywood, high-profile celebrities are pictured strong and confident in standoffs with paparazzi. In this digital-first [modern culture](#), the mere association with a celebrity name enhances a [brand's value](#) and aesthetic. On the red carpet or even the streets of Beverly Hills, celebrities are sought after by corporations to advertise their products as a “must have”, intertwining their personal lifestyle and business. Of course, this prevalent strategy is the oil in the media machine for many celebrities who are yearning to be the next big story. For those who are on the outside, these buzzing stories ‘magically appear’, but major PR companies invest countless hours into strategy meetings and creating meticulous media pitches to drive brand success. This includes The Lede Company, which was founded on decades of campaign success with the goal of strengthening high-profile clients' brand identities.



Figure 1: From left to right: Amanda Silverman, Christine Su, Meredith O'Sullivan and Sarah Levinson Rothman at the Lede Company's New York office.

While the company name might not ring a bell, if you're chronically online, you have come across their campaigns or seen their tactics in action. More likely, you may recognize their top-tier client list, which includes clients such as Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Pharrell Williams and even the Obamas' production company, Higher Ground Productions. Remember the Chris Rock and Will Smith incident at the Oscars? Meredith O'Sullivan, co-CEO of The Lede Company, guided Will Smith through that crisis as social media exploded with speculation and conspiracy theories for weeks.

The [Lede Company](#) was founded by four women: Meredith O'Sullivan, Sarah Levinson Rothman, Amanda Silverman and Christine Su. Each woman serves as co-CEO with equal ownership, an unusual structure that reflects their collaborative approach. The company began when Meredith, Sarah, and Amanda left senior positions at a major PR firm to start their own agency. Christine joined later after leaving a leadership role at Converse. The founders recognized a major shift happening in PR: the rise of social media was fundamentally changing how brands and celebrities communicate with the public.

“We all were there for that shift when we were young assistants, just starting out. Things used to move so slowly. We'd get a fax from a newspaper saying, ‘You have three days to comment on this thing for your client.’ Three days! And there'd be panic. Today you have less than two seconds to react,” O'Sullivan said in a company interview.

For these entrepreneurs, it wasn't just about being the boss. Their drive to build their own company was fueled by a desire for deeper connections with clients and more compassion for employees. Together, these founders are focused on [positive impact](#); they have supported many racial and social justice campaigns, such as the "Time's Up" campaign led by Hollywood celebrities. The company emphasizes workplace culture, creating a positive workspace that helps employees balance their personal and professional lives.



Figure 2: The Lede company logo is pictured.

The Lede Company has three foundational pillars: storytelling through culture, inclusivity and forward-thinking. With these pillars, they have found that audiences respond to authentic narratives they can relate to. This means showcasing values of loyalty, dedication, joy or even grief through art and fashion. The underlying philosophy is simple: if audiences can relate, they'll engage. This is the strategy modern society seeks.

These four women have mastered the balance of humanizing high-profile celebrities while protecting their brand strength.

Naturally, this is why The Lede Company inspires me. As I continue my public relations career, I look forward to learning from their innovative approaches to modern celebrity communications.

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#### **About the author:**



Alyssa Richey is an early-career PR professional, who is passionate about strategic storytelling and branding. She is a senior at the University of North Texas studying Journalism with a concentration in public relations.