

# O'Dwyer's

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FIRMS RANKED BY ANNUAL GROWTH, PG. 53

PR FIRMS RANKED BY NET FEES, PG. 50

FIRMS RANKED BY REGION, PG. 54



## ANNUAL RANKINGS ISSUE

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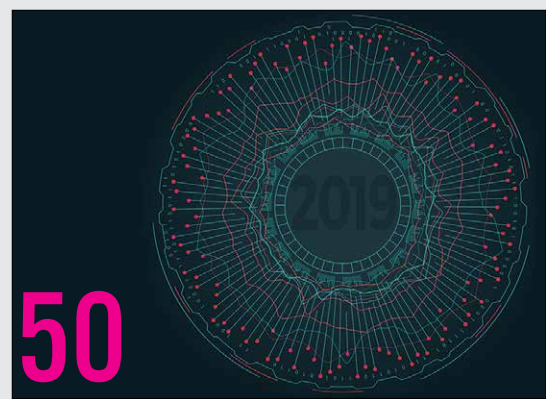


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## Drop the 'socially conscious' brand act

**W**e all know the drill. Consumers today are more attuned to their purchasing habits and how they impact the world, and expect brands to take a stand on social and political issues with clearly-defined values that align with their own.

In recent years, we've witnessed the rise of the socially-conscious brand, of companies reshaping their reputations through random acts of kindness and tossing their hats in the ring on any number of hot-button social issues in a bid to position themselves as authorities on everything from climate change to racial injustice to sexual harassment. Unfortunately, too many of these efforts are disingenuous, and it's only a matter of time until consumers grow cynical about this overplayed strategy and begin getting the sneaking suspicion that many of these initiatives are empty advocacy platitudes, consumer marketing efforts disguised as corporate benevolence. The fifteen minutes are just about up.

An unpopular opinion, I'll admit. But one issue isn't up for debate: Americans want corporations to be socially aware, and the public's perception of brands is now greatly determined by companies' commitment to causes we believe in. A March Hotwire survey found that nine out of 10 consumers consider themselves conscious of how their personal values align with their purchasing habits, and 76 percent said they now make a concerted effort to buy products and services only from companies whose beliefs are in line with their own.

Another similar recent survey discovered that 71 percent of U.S. shoppers think it's important for businesses to take a stance on social causes, with three-quarters claiming they're more inclined to buy from companies that support issues they agree with. The same study also found that some social stances now influence consumers' buying decisions more than price: a company's environmentally-friendly business record, for example, took greater precedence among more Americans (71 percent) than how much a product costs (44 percent).

Granted, consumers place higher expectations on some industries' commitment to CSR initiatives than others; according to a recent Clutch survey, 70 percent of respondents said they associate the food sector—namely, restaurants and food retailers—as uniquely poised to tackle issues such as food insecurity in their local communities. Additionally, 70 percent said they expect the tech industry to take the lead in addressing data and privacy issues, and 65 percent want the fashion industry to invest more in the use of ethically-sourced materials.

Marketers are keenly aware of this, of course, and as a result, Corporate Social Responsibility programs have exploded in popularity in recent years. The Hotwire survey found that more than half of the marketers polled (61 percent) believe their organization should take a more proactive stance on social issues. It's a nice idea, I suppose, and each of these topics invokes conversations worth having, but there's just something vaguely opportunistic about the notion of a company whose lone priority is profit stealing the mic every time a controversial issue arises in the national conversation. Does anyone actually believe Gillette exists to cure toxic masculinity, or that it's Nike's mission to end police brutality?

If those aforementioned companies' recent earnings are any indication, some clearly do. And therein lies the problem. Companies that shape public opinion through self-congratulatory acts of advocacy are simply responding to consumer demand. The greater challenge will be convincing Americans in this "woke" age that buying things will never alone suffice as a moral value expression. The socially-conscious shopper conducts a performative display to take a stand on something he knows he'll never be called on to actually fix; it allows us to engage in these narcissistic moral purity contests where we compete to achieve the prestige of being labeled the most conscientious among our peer group. But hey, it feels good to believe we're making a difference, right? I wonder how much these "enlightened" consumers actually do in the way of directly helping their communities, be it through volunteering at a shelter, or canvassing for a political candidate, but why do any of that when you can buy a pint of Ben & Jerry's and leave with the feeling that you're Rosa Parks? The undue moral scrutiny we give our purchasing habits feeds a lazy misconception that the private sector can do all the ethical heavy-lifting for us and we don't have to do anything aside from buy certain products. This isn't how reality works.

Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that more consumers are beginning to question the motives of companies who engage in CSR. According to a Harris Poll Reputation Quotient study, 40 percent of Americans said they believe companies that embark on CSR initiatives only do so to bolster their public image. My guess is we can expect that number to surge in the coming years.

For this reason, it isn't difficult to see how CSR initiatives can result in disaster. Most people know a fake when they see one, and for this reason, CSR carries a lot of attendant risk. Indeed, one recent study (see full story on page 9) found that silence might be most companies' best policy on social issues, as consumers are less likely to boycott brands that remain mum on political issues they care about than they are to stop supporting brands that take a stance on issues with which they disagree. Perhaps this is one more reason, as the adage goes, that if you aren't willing to walk the walk, maybe you shouldn't talk the talk. ○

— Jon Gingerich



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# Negative publicity response can boost brand value

Research shows that companies can sometimes gain value when responding to a celebrity endorser whose bad misbehavior has threatened their brand.

By Jon Gingerich

It happens all the time: a brand's celebrity spokesperson finds him/herself at the center of a controversy, which unwittingly generates negative publicity for the endorsing brand. While currently one of marketers' preferred avenues for driving brand awareness and boosting sales, celebrity endorsement remains a practice area also wrought with challenges, chief among them being the liabilities they present when celebrities behave poorly, and what disastrous effects these crises can have on a company's reputation and stock returns.

Now, new research sheds some light on what economic effects a company's reaction to these unforeseen events might have.

The study, which was conducted jointly by researchers at the University of Connecticut and Free University of Berlin, analyzed 128

separate instances between 1988 and 2016 involving a celebrity endorser who generated negative publicity while being under contract with a publicly-traded company. The study then evaluated the varying reactions from the 230 companies affected (suspend or maintain the spokesperson relationship, or offer no response at all) as well as response time (slow vs. fast), to identify how those responses corresponded with daily gains or losses in the company's stock in the financial markets.

Aside from yielding some actionable insights regarding best steps and response time for brands that find themselves in the midst of a spokesperson controversy, the study also yielded a surprise finding: depending on their response to the event, brands can actually gain value following an

incident in which a celebrity endorser generated negative publicity.

Timing is key in a crisis. In analyzing companies' speed of response, the nature of its response, and how that response impacted returns, the study discovered that a faster announcement or statement after an incident of negative publicity saw company value increasing by 2.10 percent over the next four trading weeks. According to researchers, these positive effects held for different types of responses to endorser-related scandals.

These results are predicated on a fast response time. The study found the "window of opportunity" for companies responding to a negative event is relatively small, and that the positive effects of a firm's response on the daily abnormal stock returns begin diminishing quickly (by -.184 percent) about 72 hours after the negative event becomes public. After that, a response thereafter becomes ineffective, and "this diminishing effect becomes increasingly more negative with each day the firm does not respond," the study's authors wrote.

One thing's for sure: a response is always warranted. The study discovered that some definitive action on behalf of a company is always better than offering no response at all. Regardless of whether the company chooses to suspend or maintain its relationship with the endorser, issuing a statement announcing its plans is more likely to yield positive abnormal stock returns than remaining quiet.

"If the firm decides to remain quiet, investors do not receive any signal whether the firm is aware of the event," the study's authors wrote. "This ongoing uncertainty will lead investors to correct the initial reaction, and consequently stock returns will be more negative on the following days."

Finally, the study's authors warned that simply because these findings suggest that companies can actually gain value when responding to an endorser-related crisis, that shouldn't suggest companies do something to artificially cause a negative event, simply so they can quickly respond to it.

"Such willful deceit," the study's authors conclude, "will backfire immediately if it becomes public."

The report, "Managing Negative Celebrity Endorser Publicity: How Announcements of Firm (Non) Responses Impact Stock Returns," appears in *Management Science*, a peer-reviewed journal published by the Institute for Operational Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS). ○

## Marketers to raise influencer spends

A majority of marketers working in digital spaces now believe that influencer content outperforms brand-created content.

By Jon Gingerich

Most marketers working in digital spaces now believe that influencer content outperforms brand-created content, according to a new report released by content marketing company Linqia.

According to the report, which surveyed digital marketers on how agencies are planning to leverage influencer marketing in 2019, more than half (57 percent) of those surveyed reported that the content created by influencers outperforms brand-created content when repurposed in other marketing channels. Nearly one in five (18 percent) believe that it "greatly outperforms" brand-created content.

As a result, most marketing pros now say that average influencer marketing budgets are on the rise at their agency, with 54 percent reporting plans to spend more than \$250,000 this year on influencer marketing, and 17 percent reporting plans to spend upwards of \$1 million. More than a third (39 percent) of respondents stationed at agencies with digital marketing budgets above \$500,000 plan to increase their influencer marketing budget in 2019.

On average, more than a quarter (27 percent) of digital marketers said they ran five or more influencer marketing campaigns

last year. Two-thirds (66 percent) said they ran three or more campaigns in 2018.

A majority of respondents (34 percent) said their agency now manages all influencer marketing programs in-house, while about a quarter (26 percent) hire a specialty agency and 20 percent rely on a platform of some sort. 58 percent apply a one-off tactical campaign strategy to influencer marketing, while 42 percent now leverage influencer marketing across a multitude of initiatives across the year.

More than half (52 percent) said measuring ROI continues to be marketers' greatest challenge when working with influencer marketing programs. Engagement (89 percent), impressions (67 percent), brand awareness (65 percent) and clicks (63 percent) were reported as the top means of measuring the success of influencer marketing programs.

More than two-thirds (68 percent) of marketers cited Instagram as their preferred network for influencer marketing, followed by Facebook (51 percent). YouTube and blogs trailed next, followed by Pinterest and Twitter. Snapchat, meanwhile, bottomed out the list as the least important social network for influencer marketing in 2019. ○



# Silence best policy for brands on social issues

A recent study suggests that consumers are less likely to boycott companies that remain silent on social or political issues than they are to stop supporting companies that take a stance on issues with which they disagree.

By Jon Gingerich

Companies in recent years have internalized the notion that taking a stance on some of the pressing social, environmental and political challenges facing the world today is a great way to build awareness and engender a favorable public perception.

As it turns out, however, data now suggests that staying mum on these issues also has its own value, and might be the safe bet for businesses looking to avoid a PR backlash, according to a recent survey conducted by D.C.-based research and consulting firm Clutch.

Clutch's survey offers a rare caveat for today's corporate advocacy endeavors and other social responsibility initiatives in the sense that it suggests businesses that remain silent on social or political issues run a lower chance of losing customers than those that take a stand.

According to the survey, nearly two-

thirds of consumers (63 percent) claim they're likely to continue shopping at businesses that stay silent on issues they care about. A smaller percentage of consumers, however (58 percent), said they'd continue shopping at a business that takes a stance on an issue with which they disagree.

Suffice to say, speaking out in today's divisive political and social climate always carries some attendant risk, as the move could alienate existing advocates, not to mention the possible backlash that can occur if a company loses control of the intended message.

## Not all issues equal

The survey found that 15 percent of consumers are likely to stop shopping with a company that speaks out on political issues in a manner with which they disagree, and 10 percent said the same about companies that address issues related to gender. Only five percent said their buying decisions

would be deterred by companies' stances on human rights issues, and only two percent cited environmental stances as a deal-breaker.

Still, a majority of respondents (71 percent) remain adamant that they want businesses to speak out on social issues, and more than half (52 percent) think businesses should also air their sociopolitical stances publicly via social media.

Consumers particularly want businesses to tackle issues related to the environment (89 percent), human rights (80 percent), gender (74 percent) and politics (56 percent).

Clutch's "2019 PR and Corporate Social Responsibility Survey" polled 420 U.S. consumers who reported making a purchase within the last six months. Research was conducted at the end of December using brand intelligence research company Survata. ○



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# Executives matter most in crowded age of influencers

Digitally-enabled media influencers and executive thought leadership, once novel approaches employed to engage with targeted audience, have become commonplace. What matters now is deciding which strategic option makes sense for you.

By Arti Patel

While many perceive influencers and thought leaders as actors fulfilling the same roles within the marketing ecosystem on the surface, they're necessarily different. When deciding where to focus your marketing strategy, understanding the differences between the influencer and thought leadership approaches—and how they facilitate your business goals—is key.

These distinctions come down to two areas: their respective value propositions and preferred platforms.

## Value proposition

While influencers' value is rooted in quantity, thought leaders' value is rooted in quality.

There are five main types of influencers—celebrities, macro-influencers, professional influencers, micro-influencers, and brand advocates—with each employed to bring about specific business outcomes.

Influencers' worth is determined by the size and reach of their audience. As an influencer, your audience volume determines your power rankings, fees and standing within the professional hierarchy.

Conversely, thought leaders, especially of the C-suite variety, are judged on their business knowledge and subject-matter expertise. Often, these individuals are proactively looking to invest their time by sharing insights and intelligence for the benefit of their professional industry. Their ability to shift the momentum of an overall marketing plan is quite regularly undervalued, and often dictated by the types, and audiences of, the publications that feature them.

## Preferred platforms

Because of their different value propositions—and goals— influencers and thought leaders warrant different platforms. Influencers, as marketers—or sellers—of their own personal brands, prefer more consumer-oriented platforms like Instagram and Facebook, while thought leaders—more likely to target business decision-makers—focus on LinkedIn.

While influencers speak to an audience of potential—and more direct—buyers, thought leaders speak to business decision-makers. So, when targeting a professional audience is paramount, LinkedIn's 260 million active users worldwide represent an opportunity that can't be overlooked.

Underlining this opportunity, LinkedIn itself has appointed official “influencers”

from an ever-changing global collective of leaders and innovators like Bill and Melinda Gates, Arianna Huffington and Richard Branson to emphasize its focus on discussions around trending business issues.

So, what makes thought leadership so valuable right now?

## A defined market

In an ecosystem dominated by influencer marketing, it then seems like the obvious tactic to prioritize within your broader marketing strategy. Nevertheless, today's environment—which has created a stronger public appetite for differentiated, forward-looking thought leadership—gives you reason to rethink that plan.

Trust inequality between the informed public and mass population is at a record high today, driving the creation of a large, underserved audience hoping to discover information on its own. While trust in social media as a news source remains low at 43 percent, trust in search and traditional media is at a historic high globally, both at 65 percent. This means there's a market for executive thought leadership content, particularly published in traditional media outlets.

## Benefit your bottom line

A recent study of B2B thought leadership impact noted that while decision makers on the whole are spending more time reading thought leadership content—at least one hour per week—some senior decision makers are actively willing to pay a premium to work with companies that have clearly articulated their vision via thought leadership content.

Further, the study also noted B2B marketers and salespeople significantly underestimate the positive influence of thought leadership content on demand generation and sales efforts. Execute this content correctly and it becomes an increasingly meaningful tool in your marketing arsenal, helping to encourage positive brand sentiment, as well as foster meaningful public discourse across your consumer base.

Digital platforms like LinkedIn play a role too, serving as a launch point to help C-suite executives create a demand for their expert opinions, especially on trending news topics ripe for public discourse and engagement. By sharing insights on industry happenings and/or publishing authored content, thought leaders can take advantage of an opportunity to drive conversation with colleagues, peers and cus-

tomers about a host of topics.

If you engage in executive thought leadership, remember these four rules:

**Identify your key audiences.** Looking to directly reach consumers? Then implementing an influencer campaign might be the right choice. Otherwise, and especially if you're hoping to engage with key business decision-makers, you're best served by leaning into the thought leadership approach—and its core distribution channels like LinkedIn.

**Always add value.** The abundance of executive thought leadership and influencer content will continue to grow in the next few years. With a cacophony of voices growing in intensity, it's not necessarily being first or loudest that matters most, but rather the quality—or originality—of those insights that have the biggest impact. Once your goal—and corresponding platform—is confirmed, you should conduct research into what's already being said and identify ways your C-suite executives can rise above the fray and provide noteworthy insights to reinforce their business acumen.

**Be consistent.** Unlike influencer partnerships that are planned with a prospective end date in mind, thought leadership done correctly should only enhance and strengthen the relationship between the consumer and the brand over long periods of time. C-suite executives who participate should do so consistently. It will likely take several years to build up an engaged core audience, and the time investment is worth it.

**Realness matters.** Authenticity is key to the entire operation. Whether working with an internal team, outside counsel or going solo, a successful thought leader will always endeavor to remain true to his or her unique voice. The public will always detect and peel back a façade.

By installing an executive thought leadership plan, you stand to bridge information gaps between industry stakeholders through knowledge sharing, which gives you a direct opportunity to tangibly impact your bottom line.

*Arti Patel is an Account Supervisor who works with teams across Bliss Integrated Communication's healthcare, financial and professional services practice groups. ◉*



Arti Patel



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# Content by committee: the challenges and an antidote

The Pareto Principle, when coupled with a rigorous process around content creation, can foster optimal collaboration without the usual headaches.

By Ken MacFayden

James Joyce's *Ulysses*, by most accounts, rests atop the literary canon. Often overlooked, when it was first published, the reviews were mixed. One critic, a Harvard professor, diagnosed Joyce as being "in an advanced stage of psychic disintegration," while the author's contemporary, Virginia Woolf, called the book "a misfire" and "a bore," surmising it came across as diffuse, brackish and pretentious.

The point isn't that either side is right or wrong. But the disparate opinions—for a novel considered the greatest work of fiction ever written—should underscore that when it comes to any finished creative work, a definitive consensus is more of an abstract idea than a realistic outcome.

Given that most content-marketing efforts, at their heart, are collaborative endeavors, it speaks to why strategy and process are so important to align objectives and define responsibilities. Moreover, understanding the subjectivity involved will help contributors embrace the Pareto Principle, which is a prerequisite to establish an efficient and productive content-marketing program.

**"Striving to better, oft we mar what's well."**

Ray Dalio, founder of hedge fund Bridgewater Associates, is active on social media. Each day he posts a different "life principle" that reflects his philosophy around leadership and investing. In one April post, he implored his followers to "be an imperfectionist," explaining too much time is spent "on little differences at the margins at the expense of the important things."

It's not exactly a controversial take. Similar sentiments have been expressed throughout time, going back to Confucius, Shakespeare and Voltaire. Yet dissenters will hold that embracing imperfection equates to "a lack of effort," which is how multiple commenters responded to Dalio's post.

This may be true in certain roles with no margin for error. You wouldn't want your brain surgeon mumbling under her breath that "perfection is the enemy of progress." The goal of content marketing, however, is to drive awareness and influence consumer behaviors. And if counsel can't agree on an Oxford comma or whether sentences should ever begin with a conjunction, those micro quibbles—when multiplied—prevent content from ever seeing the light of day.

The Pareto Principle, while not precise, contends that roughly 80 percent of your

results stem from 20 percent of your efforts. Applied to content, this idea can help organizations determine where, exactly, efforts are being wasted. Armed with this perspective, they can devise a process that focuses exclusively on the 20 percent that matters.

It's not about striving for anything less than perfection; it's about recognizing at which point refinement turns into paralysis and at what expense to the objectives of a given marketing initiative.

**"A horse, designed by committee."**

Jeff Bezos famously instituted a "two pizzas" rule at Amazon. The mandate effectively limits the participation on a project to the number of people who can be fed by two large pizzas. The thinking, as conveyed in Brad Stone's book *The Everything Store*, is that by keeping projects small and agile, a concentrated team is more productive without having to coordinate across multiple groups.

Stone described it as an offshoot of Frederick Brooks' observation that adding manpower to complex tech initiatives slows rather than accelerates progress. An added benefit is that smaller teams also obviate groupthink, while empowering independent, innovative ideas, a process Bezos referred to as "wandering" in his most recent shareholder letter.

This is an important concept in content creation. When analyzed through the Pareto Principle lens, much of the wasted effort can be minimized through being more discriminating in determining who participates and at what stage of the process.

David Hume, in his essay "On the Standards of Taste," spent more than 7,500 words discussing the qualifications that should be mandatory for critics and editors. Yet, absent a process, everyone from interns to third-party consultants are invited to scrutinize what would otherwise be a finished product. Process wise, this equates to a game of 52-card pickup.

The most seamless and simple process is when a content champion emerges who relishes the writing role and has a nose for what's topical and interesting. The issue, however, is that writing often takes a backseat to other priorities that comprise executives' day to day. Most organizations, in turn, will either create an in-house editorial function or tap third parties to oversee a more holistic content strategy.

Our agency views the content-creation

process as a series of concentric circles. The ideation phase aims to be inclusive, and initially solicits ideas and commentary from wider, cross-functional teams. We specialize in financial services, so brainstorming calls may include portfolio managers, analysts, business-development or marketing executives, or even third parties such as academic researchers. Upon digesting the discussion, we'll come back to the wider group with a series of proposed themes or story angles.

Once a topic is determined, we then work directly with the proposed "author," whose name will be on the article. Through a short interview, we'll gain a better understanding around the points that matter most to the targeted audience, as well as any relevant examples or anecdotes. Our objective is to minimize the effort required from clients so they can dedicate more time to creating a consistent stream of content, which is when the effort, ultimately, pays dividends.

Some writers short change the value of an outline. When collaborating, though, this is the most important step to foster alignment and set expectations. It also represents a point in the process when it's still feasible to change course, providing a check point for would-be dissenters to either voice concerns or sign off on the direction of the piece. With a quorum in place, and with a greenlight on the proposed narrative, the editorial team proceeds to draft the article, working directly with the author to iterate and refine it. Usually, a finished product is ready after one or two rounds of edits. Once it goes through compliance, it's then ready for distribution. At this point it can be incorporated into marketing materials, reinforce social media campaigns, be pitched out to trade publications as a byline, or support any number of internal or external communication strategies.

The process works when the challenges in forming a consensus are resolved in the outline stage, allowing a smaller team to then concentrate on one executive's perceived view of "perfection." In keeping with the Pareto Principle, the process breaks the endless iteration loop, marked by detached contributors whose "two cents" can translate into a dollar's worth of interference in which the entire process is reopened and recycled with every passing suggestion. Again, this is not the fault of contributors,



Ken MacFayden

— Continued on page 22

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# What to do when you can't believe your eyes

Clever editing, misleading titles and manufactured images are making it easier to deceive and manipulate stakeholders. Here's what communicators can do to combat this truth decay.

By Christine Barney

Once upon a time, the world was black and white; we knew the good guys from the bad. At least we thought we did, and we enjoyed that clarity. We trusted our information sources to provide us with facts.

Technology now makes it easier for our eyes to deceive us and has accelerated the rate of "truth decay," a term coined by the RAND Corporation. This gradual decline of the ability to know what's true and what isn't presents serious challenges for organizations worldwide. What is truth decay and what can be done to protect the relationship brands have with stakeholders?

First let's look at what contributes to this phenomenon. It can be narrowed down to two trends:

**Society's growing hunger for the sensational.** The expression "if it bleeds, it leads" has existed for decades. In a chicken-or-the-egg scenario, the debate continues as to whether news media outlets overemphasize negative news to attract audiences or if they're just serving up audience preferences. The sensational headlines known as clickbait are just a new variation on an old theme. About four years ago, I started hearing reporters ask for support in promoting their stories, because clicks were part of their performance metrics. Remembering that at the end of the day, most information sources are also businesses looking to make a profit makes it easier to understand why they mirror back the news consumers want. And the news we want is visual, dramatic and served up in small bites for easy consumption. The 24/7 news cycle creates a constant need for content, and the reduced resources at news sources means fact checking falls by the wayside. So, with less scrutiny, there's likely to be less truth even from trusted sources.

**Technology makes it easy to manipulate stakeholders.** At a recent Page Society event, I heard RAND Corporation Deputy Chief Technology Officer Dr. Rand Waltzman make the audience very uncomfortable by showing examples of both simple and Mission-Impossible-like techniques to create news. The simple technique included clever editing such as a video cut short to show a brand spokesperson seemingly ignoring victims after a tragedy. Or consider the misleading copy from captions on actual photos like the hoax about the Sphinx in

Egypt being covered in snow when the photo was actually of a miniature Sphinx in Tokyo. This sophisticated technique includes manufactured images and sound. Photoshop has been around a long time, but it's getting harder and harder to detect image doctored in photos, not to mention video. With fewer than 15 seconds of someone's image and voice, you can now create avatars that say or do whatever you want. These deepfake videos were first reported in 2017, and soon fake celebrity porn was making news and being banned on social channels. In April 2018, Jordan Peele and Jonah Peretti created a deepfake using Barack Obama as a public service announcement regarding the danger of deepfakes. While the phenomenon of creating fakes isn't new, it's the realism of the evolving techniques that makes their impact more powerful. As artificial intelligence continues to advance, the ability to identify and control fakes will become even more of a challenge.

There are numerous examples of how manufactured and forced perspective erodes trust and impacts situations in everything from elections to healthcare. The increasing ease of these techniques is what has accelerated the rate of truth decay. So, what can ethical communicators do to combat this wave of misinformation and protect their brands? Consider these five guidelines.

**Don't blame the platforms or the government or expect them to solve the problem.** We may shake our heads when news media run a hoax photo or if a social media platform helps a fake video go viral, but regulation isn't going to make these issues go away and the platforms themselves can't police the quantity of content that goes up each second. Expecting someone else to fix the problem means a very long wait. You can't regulate your way to ethical behavior. But just like with anti-bullying programs, brands are in a unique position to put a spotlight on the problem and model good behavior.

**Keep your head out of the sand.** Don't assume people won't be influenced by "fakes." We've spent a long time accepting that "seeing is believing" and it will take time for people to adjust to a new era where they can't trust what they see. Take them seriously. Monitor and track attacks on your brand and be prepared to not just respond but anticipate.

**Go on the offensive.** Protect your brand by proactively telling your story to build a wall of positive perception and trust. For example, if you transparently and consistently put out video of your manufacturing process, stakeholders are more likely to question a fake that says you rely on child labor. Be prepared to fight fire with fire—or video with video—and aggressively debunk myths. Just being right isn't enough. If given the choice between watching a two-minute video of a car on fire versus reading your brand's press release on how safe your cars are in terms of fire injuries, we all know what people will choose. And think about clickbait strategies with your message. For a company focusing on energy efficiency, we saw a dramatic difference in response to the phrase "are you losing money" vs. "how to save money."



Christine Barney

**Predict the future.** Technology is changing rapidly; your job will never be done. Anticipate what could be the next possible attack on your brand. What new apps are out there that might present an opportunity or a challenge for you?

**Make friends.** Being on the defensive is always hard. But a tried and true public relations strategy still works today: have other people say good things about you, and the rewards will follow. So, ensure you have a strong circle of third-party supporters who can come to your aid, help tell your story and act as truth protectors for your brand.

Are the days of absolute truth over? Perhaps. But the news isn't all bad. We too have more tools and more technology to use in the fight to tell our stories. Ultimately, in this new gray world, communicators have a bigger job than ever in shaping stakeholder perceptions and slowing the rate of truth decay.

*Christine Barney is CEO and Managing Partner of rbb Communications. ◉*

## PR news brief

### APCO cuts ties with Huawei

APCO Worldwide has ended its nine-year relationship with Huawei, the Chinese electronics/telecomm giant at the heart of the U.S. battle with China on the technology and trade fronts.

"We have reached the end of the contract and we came to a mutual decision not to continue the contract," an APCO staffer told *O'Dwyer's*.

Former 14-term Congressman Don Bonker (D-WA) had handled APCO's representation with Huawei, officially terminated April 19. The U.S. slapped sanctions on Huawei, which is heavily subsidized by China's government, for violating a ban on the sale of high-tech equipment to Iran.

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# Straight path to success not necessary

The route most of us take to get where we are in the professional communications world doesn't necessarily move in a straight line.

By Thomas P. Butler

In April, I had two opportunities to appear before groups of high school students. One was to speak to a marketing class and the other was for Financial Literacy Month.

The objective on both occasions was to instill a greater understanding in these 16-18-year-old students regarding the professional opportunities that lie ahead, in whichever career path they select, and the importance education plays in building their skillsets.

What I've learned is that the professional path most of us took to get where we are now, doesn't always—or even typically—move in a straight line. Diversity of skills and experiences among my team of fellow strategic communicators at Butler Associates is the key to what makes our campaigns have greater impact for the clients we serve.

For me, the journey began with the study of Economics. How odd was it that a young man who'd expected he'd wind up on Wall Street—and had worked on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange for a summer during college—would instead wind up in media communications?

But those are the paths that eventually intersected.

## A beehive filled with top journalists

My own career began in the press office of New York City Hall, dealing with government and elected officials, public hearings and learning about strategic messaging regarding legislation and the operations of government. It was also a place that afforded daily interaction with some truly remarkable and esteemed journalists.

In the late 1980s, New York City had multiple daily newspapers with circulations close to or exceeding a million daily readers: *The New York Times*, *Daily News*, *Post*, *Newsday* and so much more. In New York, they say, all roads lead to City Hall, and it was truly a great place to cut your teeth in the media world.

The reporters covering the business of New York City were seasoned veterans in chronicling and editorializing about politics, real estate, business, taxation and finance. I believe the *New York Times* alone had four reporters assigned to the bureau and a columnist or two who'd be there on occasion as well.

City Hall in lower Manhattan—which was only a five-minute walk to the major financial markets: NYSE, the American Stock

Exchange or the Commodities Exchanges—was also a magnet for street and political theater, as an impassioned press conference or a well-executed publicity stunt could garner major headlines. We lived and worked there day after day, alongside so many members of the press who also called this beehive home.

Our public and media events included U.S. Senators, famous magazine publishers and billionaires, the first U.S. visit by Nelson Mandela, and one including the greatest living heavyweight boxing champs of the last 50 years, all above and beyond the fascinating business of the day. It was undeniably a magnet for the famous, successful and influential of the city.

My schooling had certainly not prepared me for this diverse universe, nor gotten me there. Instead it was youthful curiosity, interest and family background centered in and around politics and the feeling that, hey, why not give this “press office thing” a try, because if doesn't work out after a few years, Wall Street and a career in banking will still be there.

## Transition to agency life

With this rapid-paced environment of shaping client announcements, scheduling press conferences, working on the infrastructure of public events and ghostwriting, it's rather easy to expose the skillset deficiencies in any young aspiring communications staffer. A fast-paced newsroom environment serves as an ideal backdrop to the equally active agency world.

It's not just writing, but learning to pitch, how to compose effective bylined or opinion leader articles, linking your message and clients into breaking news cycles. The continuing transition and expansion of digital news delivery has rewritten the playbook, speeding up the learning process and forcing veteran practitioners to constantly adapt.

## Intersecting paths

Going back to that business degree, it has served me quite well, given that a significant part of our growing communications practice is focused on clients in the world of finance, business, real estate, infrastructure, construction services, hospitality and the legal profession.

Having the capability to link CEOs and top industry executives into the news, offering expertise about business events, economic

data and happenings, has kept their names and faces on a heavy rotation of influential business news channels and columns.

And as for the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, where I once thought my future would lie, it's instead my present, although more as a financial newsroom.

Just a few weeks before, we were there with the CEO of an infrastructure finance firm who was announcing the launch of a new initiative to invest in Public-Private-Partnership infrastructure projects all across the United States. His investors are college endowments, hedge funds and others who see the value in the investment community stepping into roles that were once only addressed by government.



Thomas P. Butler

Once hoping to be among those who built a financial career from the dynamic action taking place on the floor, now we were able to use it almost as a soundstage to broadcast favorable messaging for our clients.

From ringing the closing bell on the NASDAQ Exchange, to stories of our clients' success running across the stock ticker at the NASDAQ Market Site in Times Square, I've been able to combine the preparation from my younger days with the reality of my current work to bring clients into that space to help them propel their messages.

Three decades after entering the professional communications world, I can look back and recall countless client experiences, journalist interactions and winning campaign results, and a few occasions when prudent advice was offered, but clients simply chose to go a different route.

While the study of other professions, be they accounting or law, does perhaps have more of a straight path, as strategic communicators it's exactly our diverse backgrounds—and constant on-the-job-learning—that give our guidance and counsel greater strength.

Thankfully, on my way up in this business, I had the good fortune of smart and kind mentors that took the time to guide and direct me. They saw a hustle and a willingness to work, an until-I-got-it-right attitude. While I might've blushed back then, when told there was a better way to get something done, lessons from those more experienced peers and mentors do make up the success we build to reach the height of our careers.

Thomas P. Butler is President and Founder of Butler Associates, LLC. ○





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# Inoculating against bubble-think

The vaccine debate is just one example of how big data can help us get beyond our own perspectives to better understand the world as it really is.

By Ken Deutsch and Adam Pawluk

It was a familiar refrain for many of us after November, 2016: “We’re living in a bubble! We don’t understand the people!” Since that time, we all see this same story repeated. Confirmation bias is more powerful than any one of us realizes. Social media just tells us what we want to hear. Our news media of choice caters to narrowly defined groups and views.

Likely, every agency has been challenging itself to get outside of this bubble. We’re beginning to realize that “big data,” for all its faults, also presents an opportunity to get outside our own perspectives and better understand the world as it really is.

Few issues in healthcare represent this problem of self-selecting information as clearly as the debate around vaccines. For groups on both sides, the view is 100 percent clear: vaccines are either a miracle of modern medicine, or a harmful hoax. But even this level of understanding lacks the depth needed to solve the problem.

JPA has developed a tool we call Gretel, the only collection of health conversation data that cross-references advocacy, news and social media and online influencers. It’s a powerful engine that allows us to see across a universe of voices to zero in on what’s really going on, and it’s often full of surprises that we follow like breadcrumbs.

When we dig into the data in Gretel on the vaccine conversation, here’s what we see: the medical establishment, with all its scientific wisdom, spouts data points, study results and clinical facts. They make their case with MDs and PhDs and rely on traditional medical organizations and traditional media sources to carry their message.

On the other side of the issue, anti-vaxxers lay into the dangers of big pharma, the harm in our broken medical system, the problems with chemicals and putting bad things in our bodies. They make the case with moms and kids and regular folks who’ve allegedly been harmed by a medical hoax. News and social media focused on popular culture tend to pick up this message and spread the word. There’s a dash of pseudo-science thrown in, but the focus is on people who believe they’ve been affected and subsequently marginalized by mainstream beliefs.

In between these two camps exists a large, moveable middle of mainstream popular culture. Whose arguments do you think are more compelling to more of these people

in this middle? They’re not enticed by data. They’re not motivated by scientists. They’re moved to action by emotional appeals that feed into an increasing sense that our system is broken, that they’re pawns in a game of industry profits.

The expertise fails to land. The scientists and so-called “elites” talk only to themselves, and the people on the side of what’s best for public health lose messaging ground again and again to the anti-vaccine movement. A premise that seems ridiculous to many continues to gain steam.

It’s possible that recent outbreaks will lead to a reset in the discussion. However, instead of focusing just on studies and data and scientific expertise, we should be talking more about how our systems are designed to protect us, how small actions can save lives, and the real fears parents have about losing their children to highly contagious diseases.

## Conversation taking shape

It’s obvious that different health issues require different communications approaches. We now, however, can literally see the shape of a conversation, where the bubbles are and where they’re not, to determine how best to reach specific audiences.

For example, the oncology conversation takes a very different shape from the highly-fragmented vaccine debate. In oncology, we see very little bubble-think, because people are highly motivated to share as much information as possible with each other. We see this in the data, and we see this manifest itself across the oncology landscape. In a recent online discussion about lung cancer, patients, oncologists, radiologists and pathologists were all engaged, participating equally, and sharing knowledge with each other. When does that ever happen?

But we also can see distinctions that the professionals themselves may not even realize. While arguable, it has been said that oncologists in many ways are closer to their patients and the patient experience than other types of specialists. Oncologists may group themselves by their specialties, but we see another difference between groups of oncologists known as medical oncologists and surgical oncologists.

The surgical oncologists—accustomed to dealing with patients in an operating room—are less connected to patient groups and influencers. On the other hand, medical oncologists—face-to-face every day

with patients—are highly engaged with these groups. Depending on the communications need, we must reach these two groups in very different ways.

By mapping the relationships between the top influencers on an issue and then grouping them together based on what sources they pay attention to, we can generate an understanding of the conversation structure. As we see in these examples, different audiences connect in different ways around issues, with very real implications for how we design an effective communications program.

## Social becomes measuring stick

Social media provides a powerful channel to reach audiences, but it also offers a new avenue to understand the media landscape and to decide not just which outlet, but which media platforms work best to engage specific audiences.



Ken Deutsch

In the old days, we could only measure readership of a media outlet. We were lucky to be able to perform surveys or focus groups to better understand which outlets and messages were landing with specific audiences. We didn’t have the trove of public data we do today, documenting what content drives which conversations among which audiences.



Adam Pawluk

Our experience reaching emergency room physicians is a great example of unexpected insights hiding beneath the surface. In looking at how to best reach them, we were surprised to find they were more likely to cite blogs than medical trade publications in sharing information with each other. For the rest of us, blogs peaked a few years ago, but with emergency room doctors they’re continuing to thrive.

Taking a closer look, we saw these physicians love to share stories about odd things that happen in the emergency room. If you want to reach an emergency room physician, you’ll hit a home run if you can tie your cause to an unusual patient case and get it covered in a blog.

It’s exciting to realize how much better we can understand our audiences at both a macro level and on an individual level, thanks to the power of big data and data

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# The core of your communications strategy

## Considerations for building out your company's thought leadership platform.

By Darlene Doyle

**T**hought leadership is a key foundational element to your communications program. Authorities with expertise in a specialized field just seem important on a visceral level, but we've also been told by experts of its influence on buying decisions, market education, and on building your brand. And we've heard it directly from the source itself. 96 percent of B2B buyers reported wanting content with more input from industry thought leaders, according to HubSpot, a nod to thought leadership's impact on the path to purchase.

That should be good enough, right? But how do you explain to a C-suite executive who'd rather focus efforts elsewhere in the business why this is worth their time, energy and effort to establish themselves as a thought leader?

We all have people in our personal and professional lives whose voices we trust. A blog we follow, speaking engagements we attend or social channels we peruse consistently because we like what they have to say. They educate us on a topic of interest, provide fresh perspective and sometimes, hit us in the gut with a salient point that makes us say, "I never thought of it that way before." That's the quintessential thought leader.

Thought leadership is a powerful way to connect with your audience. It brings you—and your company—into relevant and meaningful conversations. And, most importantly, it builds trust. In a LinkedIn study of more than 1,300 business decision makers and C-suite executives, 82 percent reported that thought leadership has increased trust in an organization. People listen to and buy from people and, by extension, companies they trust.

Here are some key considerations for building out your company's thought leadership platform.

### Set your strategy

Building out a thought leadership platform can feel overwhelming. It can be tempting to just dive into the tactics and content creation machine. Before you lock yourself into a room and start typing your own version of Moby Dick, take some time to set your strategy. Define why thought leadership matters for your industry and company. Is your company early stage in a new market (you may need to hyper-focus on educational content) or late stage in a mature market (where differentiation and customer success stories are key)?

Are there gaps in the current resources/research available in your space? Are there voices of authority? And, if so, what are they saying? This will help determine how and where thought leadership can work for your business.

### Define your thought leadership pillars

We call this finding the white space. Put your data and analytics tools to work by taking a look at what the market is talking about: where's the conversation focused, what are the trending topics, what are your competitors saying, and what are they not saying? Map these conversations back to what topics and messages matter to your company and identify where there's an opening in the conversation to bring forth your company's expertise. A trending topic that doesn't map back to your business doesn't serve your needs. The sweet spot is in using this data to clearly define your thought leadership pillars and drive focus to the conversations that will have meaningful impact on your business.

### Develop your POV

Creating compelling points of view to drive your thought leadership pillars is critical to success. If you're saying the same thing everyone else is, you're not setting yourself or your company apart from the pack. In fact, a contrarian point of view can be exactly what's needed, but equally important is an insightful one. Put yourself in your customer's or prospect's shoes; this is your opportunity to help them. How can your POV educate them? Create a new way of thinking about a business problem or challenge? Plant a seed for how a new technology application could work for their business? Or correct misinformation that exists in the market? This is your chance to join the dialogue and start building trust.

### Choose your cast

Outline your thought leadership bench and align pillars and topics to their areas of expertise. Being thoughtful about creating clear "swim lanes" for your thought leaders is critical to establishing credible and consistent industry voices. Beyond expertise, it's also important to consider "passion topics" for your thought leaders. When someone is speaking on a topic they are passionate about, they bring another level of energy and enthusiasm to the conversation that translates to their audience. If your thought leaders aren't excited about or don't believe in their talk track, it's a non-starter. Passion topics create authenticity.

### Make it omnichannel

Creating a thought leader is, at its core, about creating someone's personal brand. Our "brands" are three-dimensional, and our strategies need to be as well. The core considerations here are your content mediums and channels, which are influenced by where your audience lives. Are there "must attend" events you should be speaking at? What are the top-read industry publications you need to be in? What social media channels are critical? If your audience isn't on Instagram, don't waste efforts on building a presence there. Focus on the channels and mediums that matter most.



Darlene Doyle

### Back it up with content and data

Your content is the lifeblood of your thought leadership strategy, supported by the fact that 47 percent of buyers viewed 3-5 pieces of content before engaging with a sales rep, according to Demand Gen Report. And this content will come in many shapes and sizes. As you're considering your channels, also consider your mediums. Long-form content plays a big part—bylines, blogs, eBooks and LinkedIn posts—and can provide essential platforms to express your ideas and POVs. But don't forget about the power of short-form, videos, quotes and posts. In a recent survey, 64 percent of respondents said watching a marketing video on Facebook influenced a purchase decision in the last month, according to Animoto. Whether it's video or some other type of content, they all serve a purpose in building your platform. Understand the unique power of each and put them to work for your brand. And back it up with data. Data makes your content sing and grounds your POVs in reality.

### Don't be self-serving

It can be a fine line to walk at times in ensuring your thought leadership platform supports your business objectives but doesn't become self-serving. Your product and innovation stories have a time and place but your thought leadership content needs to serve a greater good. There can be tie-backs to your business, but you lose your audience when you begin using your thought leadership platform as your product or company platform. Turn on your listening channels—on social, blogs and in the media—to learn about what the industry is talking about and learn how you can con-

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# Data matters, but can it make you fall in love?



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# Thought leadership requires thoughts *and* leadership

Companies must come to grips with the fact that not all leaders, no matter how successful, are necessarily thought leaders.

By Matt Kucharski

As a firm that helps organizations build, grow and protect their brands and reputations, it's common for clients to ask us to help establish them as thought leaders. After all, what company doesn't want to be the go-to expert in their respective space?

But logic suggests that not everyone can be a thought leader, and not every thought leader is the same. Part of determining thought-leadership strategy means looking in the mirror and asking whether you have the discipline, the courage and the vision to make it happen.

## Thought leader profiles

If Yogi Berra were still alive, he'd say the best thought leaders are ones with compelling thoughts and strong leadership. Simple, right?

Nope.

First, an organization must come to grips with what kind of thought leader it can be. At Padilla, we generally see three types:

**The sage:** this is the company with a long history who has seen it all and can put industry change into context. Successful "sage" thought leaders have the courage to question their own status quo, because if they don't, someone else will. Microsoft would fall into this camp as it helps move people from desktop to cloud. Lots of companies came before it, but when Microsoft—the undisputed leader in desktop computing—talked about the value of the cloud, people started adopting en masse.

**The disruptor:** the new upstart that's

challenging the way things are being done today. The truly credible ones do so while at the same time backing up their words with specific actions demonstrating their ability to deliver. That's the "leadership" part of thought leadership. We normally think of Tesla in this vein, though time will tell whether the company can deliver on its promise of a mass-produced, affordable electric car.

**The convener:** this is the organization that steps forward and brings disparate groups together to solve a common problem. Conveners must set aside their egos and put the cause before their own visibility—otherwise others won't want to take up their mantle. An example here might be United Way, which serves to help convene organizations around solving hunger, poverty and other pressing social issues. But it also could be Apple (normally thought of as a "disruptor"), who is largely credited with helping solve the issue of digital rights management for the music and entertainment industry.

## Having (and sharing) an opinion matters

Knowing what kind of thought leader you want to be is a start, but then you need the courage to express a strong point of view. Thought leaders have a vision that's different than their peers, and they're willing to express that vision even if it makes others (including their own customers and employees) uncomfortable. True thought leaders step outside of their industry norms to share their point of view on where the

world, or the industry, or the category, or the consumer (you get the gist) is headed.

Can the market leader also be the thought leader? After all, thought leaders question the status quo, and market leaders are the status quo. They can, but it requires a willingness to question and strategically disrupt their own status quo. Thought leadership, at its core, is about change and transformation, and that doesn't happen without a strong vision—and most importantly, sharing that vision beyond the walls of your organization. And it means establishing a content and connectivity strategy that builds and grows your reputation as a true thought leader. No organization ever became a thought leader by keeping opinions to themselves.

## Own it and act on it

Finally, you need to make a long-term commitment, acting in a manner that supports your thought-leadership platform. Thought leaders without actions are industry pretenders. Market leaders questioning their own status quo must take action to support their long-term vision, and disruptors need to show that they can consistently perform.

The truly remarkable companies convince stakeholders to believe in their view of where the world is going and their ability to deliver on that vision. That is thought leadership, and it's a true competitive advantage for today's best organizations.

*Matt Kucharski is President of Padilla.* ○



Matt Kucharski

## Your comms. strategy's core

—Continued from page 20

tribute to that dialogue. Informed POVs are built from a listening-first approach.

## Measure and refine

If it can't be measured, then it doesn't count. If you want to build support for why thought leadership should sit at the core of your communications strategy, you need to show proof. Like everything in marketing, thought leadership is an act of testing and refining. Set clear success metrics at the outset and be sure you have a plan—and the tools—in place for measuring impact. Media traction, SOV, social shares, engagement, likes, downloads, attendees: these are all ways to look at measuring success. There's nothing like hard metrics that matter to C-suite believers.

Finally, don't forget that success takes time, effort and patience. In the famous words of William Edward Hickson, "If at

## Inoculating against bubble-think

—Continued from page 18

visualization. As communicators, we have tools today that help us fight confirmation bias. Tools that prevent social media from telling us just what we want to hear. Tools that allow us to take a broad look across a universe of conversation and cater to narrowly defined groups and views.

It takes constant effort, invention and re-invention as communicators, but we're better than ever at understanding the world as it really is, and how to make a difference where it matters most.

first you don't succeed, try, try, try again."

*Darlene Doyle is Executive Vice President, Client Relations at PAN Communications.* ○

*Ken Deutsch is Head of Analytics & Research and Adam Pawluk is Senior Vice President at JPA Health Communications.* ○

## Content by committee

—Continued from page 12

who should offer feedback when solicited. The culprit, every time, can be traced back to the process and precisely when contributors should be asked to contribute. This is generally where content marketing programs either die or thrive to augment and enhance an integrated PR strategy.

*Ken MacFadyen is Head of Content at BackBay Communications.* ○



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*O'Dwyer's* Industry Rankings: #7 Healthcare and #26 Overall

# PR thrives amid tech's wide net for innovation

The historic disruption affecting today's tech sector has resulted in a number of unlikely alliances in recent years, as a host of traditionally non-tech companies enter into a thriving market that shows no signs of slowing down. It's also presented untold demand and opportunities for the communicators working within this landscape. *O'Dwyer's* interviewed several executives at agencies representing tech clients on their strategies for growth in tech's golden age and where they see the industry headed in a world where every PR agency is now a tech agency.

By Jon Gingerich

Calling tech an emerging market might offer a contender for understatement of the year. Digitization's rise and subsequent consolidation, the technologicalization of just about everything, has resulted in countless cross-over opportunities for PR professionals working for tech-based businesses and clients, as a host of traditionally non-tech companies now enter an ever-widening market, signaling one of the most profound changes to hit the communications field in recent years.

The numbers speak for themselves. The top 10 PR firms ranked by *O'Dwyer's* for technology this year brought in a combined total of nearly \$466 million in tech-related fees in 2018, a 7.3 percent increase—or about \$32 million—from last year's \$434 million. Eight of this year's top 10 tech firms were up in total billings last year—four of them by double digits—and all save one gained in tech-related fees last year.

We asked several of the top PR firms representing the tech marketplace to weigh in on some of the advances and unlikely alliances they've experienced in today's tech spaces, and what future changes we might expect in a world where tech seems to be everywhere.

## Hotwire expands foothold, talent

Hotwire maintained its position as one of our top-ranked technology PR firms, gaining more than \$3.6 million in tech-related net fees last year to take the number-two spot in *O'Dwyer's* 2019 rankings of technology PR firms, with \$36.8 million in 2018 tech-related billings, nearly three times what the New York-headquartered agency accounted for just three years before.



Heather Kernahan

Hotwire President of North America Heather Kernahan told *O'Dwyer's* that a continued expansion in North America played a sizeable role in the agency's success, as did bolstering Hotwire's capabilities in the areas of strategy, brand and marketing services and insights, as well as positioning

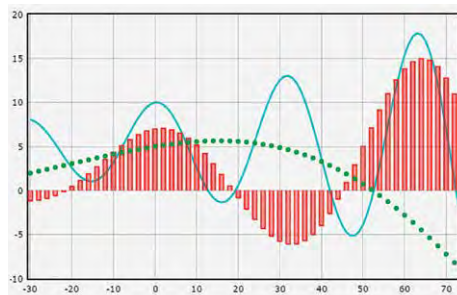
the firm as a challenger brand that can attract the right team talent.

The U.S. and U.K.-based tech PR specialist also launched a series of pop-up offices across North America, with the agency's downtown Minneapolis outpost adding five additional staff and anticipating to double its headcount by the end of this year. Kernahan said the pop-up office model allows the agency to enter new markets quickly and respond to customer requests while adding top talent across growing markets. The agency plans to open additional locations this year.

Kernahan noted that marketers today are taking more of a stand on high-stakes issues. A March report issued by the agency, which polled business decision makers, company marketing leaders and consumers to gauge opinions regarding the private sector's handling of social matters, discovered that more than half of marketing leaders surveyed (61 percent) believe their organization should take a more proactive stance on tackling key high-stakes issues. Among CMOs and senior communications executives, 78 percent said high-stakes issue planning is at least as important as any other factor in their marketing and communications plans.

"The top issues for marketing leaders in the U.S. are immigration, mental health and sexual harassment," Kernahan said. "These aren't issues that would show up on the B2B priority list in the past, but the melding of B2B and B2C means there are fewer boundaries on issues."

Kernahan also posited that strategy will gain importance in the months and years to come, as PR leaders have begun taking a



O'Dwyer's technology PR rankings, pg. 26

stronger leadership position in brand strategy conversations, a trend Kernahan said she expects to continue.

"Communications professionals looking to grow their skills should seek learning opportunities in the areas of strategy and insights," she said. "Those who can turn complex topics into simple-to-understand narratives will position themselves ahead in the field."

## ICR inches into top five

ICR gained more than \$1.1 million in 2018 tech-related fees to total nearly \$18.3 million in this practice area, joining *O'Dwyer's* top five tech firms for the first time this year, up from the number-six slot last year (\$17.1 million) and number-eight in 2017 (\$12.7 million).

The New York-based agency, which staffs about 190 and is known for its financial communications and investor relations work, also gained nine percent overall to \$69.1 million in total 2018 billings.

Partner Bo Park, who leads ICR's tech, media and telecom practice, cited an ability to blend the agency's Wall Street roots with traditional PR to engineer programs around its clients' individual business models as key to its success.

"Leveraging that framework to anticipate the next stages of growth, we're able to deliver a holistic story across audiences—from investors to customers, partners and employees—so that technology companies can enhance their profiles where it matters most," Park told *O'Dwyer's*.

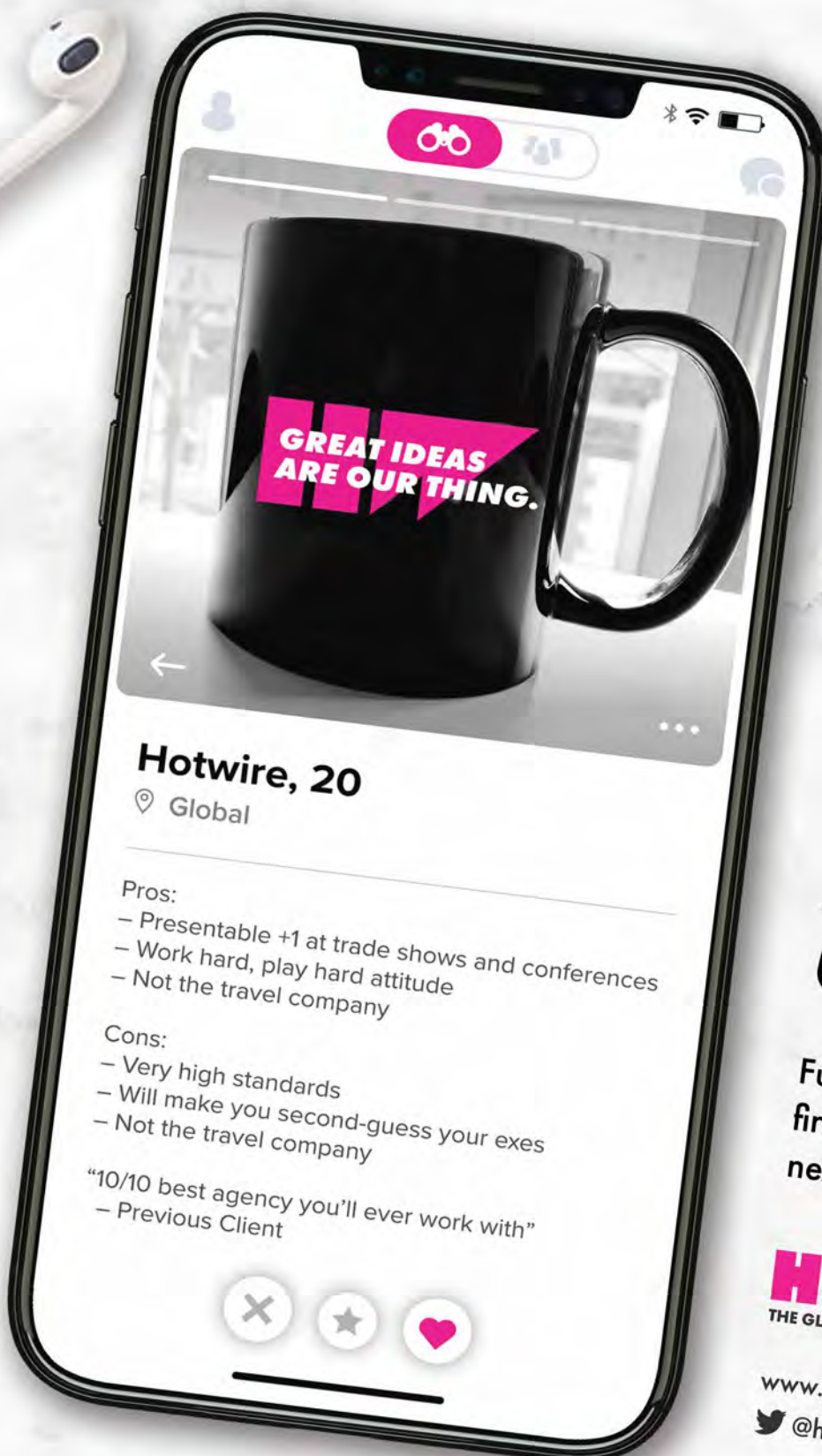
Park cited multiple factors at play in the agency's tech growth last year, including an increase in non-tech companies across industrial, retail, financial services and healthcare sectors now seeking to reinvent themselves as technology-driven enterprises. According to Park, companies sought ICR's expertise to uncover their areas of



Bo Park

Continued on page 34





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# RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN TECHNOLOGY

Firm	2018 Net Fees	Firm	2018 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$280,260,000	38. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	\$2,012,737
2. Hotwire, New York, NY	36,879,576	39. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	1,804,510
3. Zeno Group, New York, NY	25,303,770	40. Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	1,501,330
4. Finn Partners, New York, NY	22,476,000	41. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	1,450,000
5. ICR, New York, NY	18,291,753	42. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	1,416,000
6. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	17,901,420	43. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	1,213,316
7. PAN Communications, Boston, MA	17,307,546	44. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,212,060
8. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	16,712,708	45. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	1,165,032
9. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	16,273,000	46. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	1,063,518
10. Bateman Group, San Francisco, CA	14,499,420	47. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	995,796
11. Walker Sands Communications, Chicago, IL	14,116,410	48. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	984,452
12. The Hoffman Agency, San Jose, CA	13,665,000	49. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	810,529
13. MWWPR, New York, NY	13,253,751	50. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	607,455
14. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	10,889,600	51. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	601,490
15. Fahlgren Mortine, Columbus, OH	10,809,347	52. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	600,682
16. W2O Group, San Francisco, CA	9,398,000	53. 360PR+, Boston, MA	486,947
17. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	9,084,293	54. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	356,100
18. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	8,900,000	55. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	340,000
19. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	8,290,343	56. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	337,669
20. Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	8,229,872	57. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	336,025
21. Merritt Group, McLean, VA	7,569,251	58. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	298,104
22. Havas Formula, New York, NY	5,060,125	59. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	295,750
23. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	4,856,039	60. The Bradford Group, Nashville, TN	285,197
24. March Communications, Boston, MA	4,168,379	61. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	264,893
25. MP&F Strategic Comms, Nashville, TN	4,145,326	62. Weiss PR, Inc., Baltimore, MD	235,128
26. Touchdown PR, Austin, TX	4,100,995	63. Kohnstamm Communications, Inc., St. Paul, MN	198,363
27. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	3,870,596	64. Hollywood Agency, Hingham, MA	167,000
28. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	3,444,452	65. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	100,000
29. North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	3,145,851	66. Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	98,891
30. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms, Seattle, WA	2,915,484	67. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	82,846
31. Idea Grove, Dallas, TX	2,901,468	68. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	74,618
32. Hunter PR, New York, NY	2,800,000	69. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	70,000
33. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,500,000	70. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	58,208
34. Crenshaw Communications, New York, NY	2,280,188	71. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	54,840
35. ARPR, Atlanta, GA	2,262,442	72. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	27,000
36. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	2,100,000	73. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	13,318
37. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	2,059,544	74. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	11,715



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# Financial firms navigate Wall Street's choppy waters

PR firms working in the finance sector managed to drive growth with new account wins and agency offerings in a year characterized by market volatility.

By Kevin McCauley

Financial PR firms weathered a rough 2018, which was Wall Street's worst performance in a decade. The S&P 500 tumbled 6.2 percent. The Dow fell 5.6 percent. The NASDAQ declined 4.0.

In its December 31 financial wrap-up, CNN cited volatility driven by signs of an economic slowdown, worries over monetary policy, political dysfunction, inflation fears and potential regulation of the technology sector among reasons for Wall Street's 2018 blues.

## APCO rides out storm

The public affairs mindset of Washington-based APCO Worldwide helped it make the most out of a down year in the financial category as its fee income slipped 9.2 percent to \$10.8 million.



Jeff Zerkowicz

Jeff Zerkowicz, head of APCO's Global Financial Practice, said the firm's PA orientation was most evident in its support for public sector financial oversight and economic development agencies, government ministries and central banks.

APCO handled projects "to ensure strong and transparent management of public sector finances, restructure debt, attract investment, strengthen public markets, and promote policies and reforms to create the foundations for sustainable economic growth," according to Zerkowicz.

He views fintech as a growing category for both startups and established financial companies. "Data-fueled innovation is changing financial services, creating new benefits for consumers and markets but also requiring agile communications and public affairs strategies," said Zerkowicz.

He believes APCO's integrated approach to communications, combining "financial subject matter expertise with an understanding of client strategies, stakeholder, policy and media landscape and data-driven insights on what impacts target audiences" is what differentiates the firm from its competitors.

## It's the media that matters

Richard Dukas of Dukas Linden PR, No. 7 on *O'Dwyer's* rankings of financial firms, said his broadcast media team chalked up a solid 2018 with bookings on CNBC's "Squawk Box" and "Closing Bell," Fox Busi-

ness Network's "Mornings with Maria" and PBS' "Nightly Business Report."

On behalf of Ark Invest, DLPR cashed in on the media and investment community's intense interest in Tesla boss Elon Musk. Ark Invest is the ETF industry's second biggest shareholder of Tesla. Following Musk's claim in August that he had a deal to take Tesla private for \$460 per-share, Cathie Wood, Ark's Chief Investment Officer, tweeted an open letter to Musk urging him against the go-private deal.

The Tesla chief responded to Wood directly, setting the tone for significant coverage speculating on the wisdom—or lack thereof—of such action.

"Wood appeared on the major financial broadcast cable networks 16 times in August, to offer expert commentary on Tesla," said Dukas. "Her unwavering support likely was key to the strength of Tesla's stock, despite Musk's antics."

DLPR notched a 1.9 percent gain in 2018 financial fees to \$5.4 million.

## New faces, accounts at Vested

Vested, No. 5 on the financial list, chalked up a 17.7 percent rise in 2018 fees to \$7.3 million.

Binna Kim, President, said recruitment and client wins highlighted the performance.

In January, Vested opened its London office and hired Elspeth Rothwell as CEO and Katie Spreadbury as Director.

In the U.S., the firm added PR veteran Amber Roberts to its team as CEO of professional services, and Kevin Trowbridge as Chief Technology Officer and the lead developer of the firm's proprietary tech platform Qwoted.



Binna Kim

In early 2019, Vested brought on Christina Bertinelli, formerly of Lumentus, as Managing Director to help further the agency's digital capabilities.

On the client front, Vested picked up Boston Private, which provides wealth management, trust, and private banking to clients.

Kim said Vested helped Boston Private receive top-tier coverage for its "Why of Wealth" campaign, including a feature in the *New York Times* money column and coverage on Business Insider and CNBC.

The firm also added digital assets leader DCG/Grayscale/Genesis; real estate investment tech platform Roofstock; and the wealth management firm Bailard.

## Finn names first financial head

Finn Partners, which posted a 19.1 percent jump in financial income to \$2.5 million, named Ryan Barr its first global financial services head.

His mission is to drive "successful business outcomes for its clients through purposeful storytelling and integrated communications programs."

Finn's financial unit, which recently acquired Moorgate Communications in London, added a roster of financial pros including Robert Kelsey, Athanasia Sfikas, Pete Johnson, Beth Weine, Liz Nardoza and Rachel Neff to its team.

They serve long-standing clients such as Commerzbank, Deutsche Bank, Regions Bank and S&P Global as well as new engagements with BNY Mellon, Cetera Financial Group and First Interstate Bank.

"Technological advancements have turned every consumer, partner and employee into a real-time brand advocate and influencer," said Barr. "We work with our clients to identify the most meaningful way to engage key audiences and inspire action."

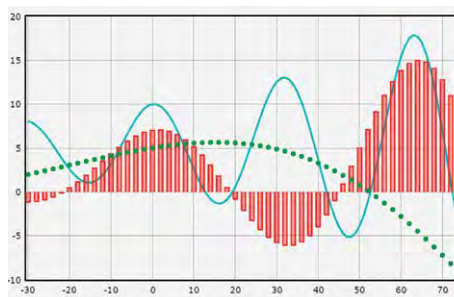
## Bliss packages complex ideas into integrated PR

Financial PR, which accounts for 36 percent of overall revenues, is the No. 1 practice at Bliss Integrated Communications.

"We work with some of the biggest names in asset management, insurance, wealth



Ryan Barr



O'Dwyer's financial PR rankings, pg. 30

Continued on page 34



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# RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN FINANCE

Firm	2018 Net Fees	Firm	2018 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$79,857,000	25. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	\$759,000
2. ICR, New York, NY	47,469,335	26. Havas Formula, New York, NY	746,130
3. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	41,492,456	27. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	608,769
4. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	10,739,700	28. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	417,840
5. Vested, New York, NY	7,268,000	29. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	360,626
6. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	6,000,000	30. The Bradford Group, Nashville, TN	358,489
7. Dukas Linden Public Relations, New York, NY	5,409,338	31. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	319,000
8. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	4,039,000	32. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	271,234
9. Bliss Integrated Communication, New York, NY	3,948,000	33. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	270,205
10. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	2,995,865	34. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	267,017
11. BackBay Communications, Boston, MA	2,984,508	35. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	254,420
12. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	2,694,202	36. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	245,000
13. Finn Partners, New York, NY	2,500,000	37. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	200,000
14. Zeno Group, New York, NY	2,237,698	38. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	193,297
15. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	1,719,664	39. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	145,969
16. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	1,600,000	40. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	105,286
17. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	1,362,728	41. North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	100,075
18. Buttonwood Comms Group, New York, NY	1,311,200	42. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	92,400
19. Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	1,228,360	43. The Hoyt Organization Inc., Torrance, CA	65,000
20. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,153,662	44. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	60,777
21. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,060,553	45. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	60,554
22. KCD Public Relations, Inc., San Diego, CA	1,057,583	46. Weiss PR, Inc., Baltimore, MD	58,782
23. 360PR+, Boston, MA	973,895	47. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	11,970
24. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	781,100	48. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	5,000

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# Constant change is new normal in healthcare

A series of recent technological innovations and the rise of a consumer-driven healthcare ecosystem has transformed the health and life sciences communications landscape, introducing a host of new possibilities for professionals working in the field, and new challenges as well.

By Steve Barnes

Keeping up with the constantly shifting goalposts in the healthcare industry over the past year has required communications firms working in the sector to stay abreast of seemingly constant social and technological change.

Those social changes are primarily a result of the growing role patients are now playing in how healthcare is delivered.



Jennifer Paganelli

“Empowered patients are no longer outliers—they’re here to stay,” said W2O Practice Leader, Earned and Social Media Jennifer Paganelli. “Patients bring a unique, authentic ability to connect and inspire that a traditional press release will never rival.”

Paganelli noted that healthcare firms are bringing patient groups into the process at a much earlier point than they once did, making patient points of view a central part of their communications efforts. She said this trend will grow in the years to come, eventually becoming standard practice for healthcare communications practitioners.

Michael Roth, who leads of Bliss Integrated Communication’s healthcare practice, added that “patients are transforming business and getting what they want, and healthcare businesses are getting smarter about delivering what patients need.”

Roth cited the rare disease space as a prime example of how patient activism is having a big effect. “Many rare diseases have small but mighty advocates who testify at FDA hearings to ensure regulators consider not just the scientific innovation of a new treatment option but the full patient experience too,” he said.

Roth also pointed to another factor in the equation: the emergence of the “empathetic client,” or healthcare practitioners who are beginning to listen to what patients have to say.

Spectrum President Michelle Gross said this trend is part of a move away from “seeing healthcare providers as the sole decision maker when it comes to treatment and prescription decisions.”

The increasing importance of patient concerns has opened up new avenues for healthcare communicators in a few ways. “We’re seeing direct-to-consumer market-

ing in categories and topics we never would have imagined 10 years ago,” Gross said. Among those categories: advertising for cancer treatments, which she said have become mainstream over the past few years. “There’s even discussion about including drug prices in DTC ads,” she said.

In addition, these conversations are leading communicators toward channels that consumer audiences use—most importantly social media. “Convincing healthcare executives to responsibly engage on social media channels” is a challenge for many communication pros, according to W2O’s Paganelli. “Companies that stand out are utilizing these channels to their advantage.”

The expanding audience of consumers for healthcare communications efforts is also resulting in a bigger pool of “non-traditional players,” such as vision insurance companies that also focus on clinical outcomes, who Roth said are “crossing over and demonstrating real value in the space.”

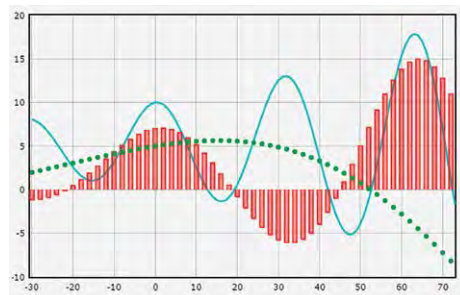


Michael Roth

With the emergence of those players, Roth said, “the health and life sciences ecosystem is being turned on its head and it takes subject matter expertise in insurance, technology, therapeutics and even financial services to help these clients succeed.”

It’s not only the entry of patients and non-traditional providers in the healthcare communications environment that’s a factor. The efforts toward diversity and inclusion that have characterized the communications industry as a whole are also on the radar for healthcare communications companies.

“Positive changes in diversity and inclu-



O'Dwyer's healthcare PR rankings, pg. 36

sion efforts at major companies are moving the needle for the better,” said Paganelli. “These efforts were happening behind the scenes in many instances, but now are front and center.”

When it comes to technological change, artificial intelligence, telemedicine and electronic health records are all drivers of a changing relationship between healthcare communications providers and audiences, according to Roth.

He noted that each generation of healthcare consumers requires its own set of communications priorities. “While a Millennial may go to extensive lengths to avoid an in-person doctor’s visit in favor of a virtual check-in,” he said that Boomers may be more hesitant about putting their trust in technology and senior citizens may see the human-to-human contact of a doctor’s visit as a way to stave off loneliness.

Spectrum Chief Innovation Officer Rob Oquendo also pointed out the role technology is playing the tailoring of messages to a range of audiences. “Technology is enabling a paradigm shift from sharing content to establishing one-on-one conversations,” he said. “Healthcare communicators need to start thinking about how to leverage messaging platforms to reach audiences, whether it’s text, voice or bots leveraging AI.”

Paganelli said that “technology is democratizing access to data.” Using machine learning and AI to “make sense of the massive amounts of public social data,” Paganelli believes communicators can uncover consumer concerns and nuances of opinion to produce more targeted, insightful communications.

In addition, possible regulatory and legislative developments could provide a boost.

“If certain proposals to update HIPAA and current innovation-first programs at the FDA remain, I see greater opportunity



Michelle Gross



Rob Oquendo

— Continued on page 34





## Financial roundup

— Continued from page 28

management, banking and private equity and have expertise in reaching niche audiences, including regulators, advisors, intermediaries, institutional investors, business owners, consumers, millennials, women, mass affluent, and high-net-worth investors,” said Meg Wildrick, Managing



Meg Wildrick

Partner. Bliss, which ranked No. 9 on *O'Dwyer's* financial list with \$3.9 million in fees, takes pride in its ability to break down complex ideas and packaging them into integrated communications campaigns.

Wildrick said the

firm's 25 financial staffers “know the issues, audiences, influencers and media that matter to B2B and B2C financial services clients — and push themselves to stay ahead of emerging trends in fintech, regtech, financial wellness, wealth management, payments and cybersecurity.”

### Become tech-wise or capsize

In the aftermath of the economic crisis a decade ago, the most resilient companies learned they would either become tech-wise or capsize, according to Steve Halsey, managing director, business consulting at G&S Business Communications.

G&S collaborated with financial services and fintech clients on a significant number of tech-driven business transformations that prompted the need for



Steve Halsey

strategic brand repositionings, new brand architectures and visual assets, and stakeholder engagement across paid, earned, owned and shared media.

Halsey said the firm is poised to detect and address changes in consumer and business relationships with financial institutions—many of which are the result of new generational preferences and the rapid adoption of technology in decision making.

G&S, which ranked No. 12 on *O'Dwyer's* financial list with \$2.9 million in fees, strives to unlock value for fledgling fintech companies as they achieve scale, seek new routes to market, and encounter pressure from competitors, regulators, legislators or suppliers.

“It's an exciting time to be a business communications agency because our action-inspiring strategies can be tailored for a wide range of organizations, from global businesses to emerging ventures,” he said. ○

## Technology roundup

— Continued from page 24

innovation, build compelling storylines and amplify those key messages in a bid to reposition their corporate brands.

Park said her agency has also noticed “furious” development in areas such as AI and blockchain disrupting segments in supply chains, infrastructure and enterprise, with emerging brands now seeking to incorporate PR into their marketing mix in an effort to showcase their solutions to prospects, while simultaneously seeking IR guidance as they enter the next stage.

Finally, Park said ICR expanded its focus in autonomous driving and connected cars, particularly in global markets, and saw an increase in alternative IPO activities, including RegA+ offerings and Special Purpose Acquisition Corp.

“We expect to see these trends continuing to grow and taking even bigger shape this year and next,” she said.

### PAN puts emphasis on ‘X-tech’

Boston-based PAN took the number-seven position in *O'Dwyer's* tech rankings this year, clearing more than \$17.3 million in 2018 tech-related net fees, an uptick of more than \$2.2 million that reveals an ongoing climb from the agency's number-eight spot last year (or \$15 million in 2017 billings) and number-nine position in 2017, or \$11.7 million.

Philip A. Nardone Jr., President and CEO of the tech and healthcare specialists, told *O'Dwyer's* that no single factor could be attributed to the firm's forward mobility and instead cited a combined effort across the board from its PR, marketing, HR and finance teams, as well as a recent expansion of PAN's executive team which resulted in



Philip Nardone, Jr.

the firm's highest retention rates to date, allowing the agency to focus its time and energy on meeting customer demands.

“Our growth in the technology sector specifically was two-fold. We have a strong pipeline of emerging and enterprise tech brands looking for integrated offerings, and they're leaning on mid-sized agencies like PAN because of our ability to meet their needs on a global scale, while continuing to deliver personalized service,” Nardone said.

Nardone noted that the second factor contributing to its growth comes from what he referred to as “X-tech,” industry disruptors currently causing headwinds in today's tech market. “We're seeing more and more inbound requests from AI-tech, insurance tech, real estate tech, etc., brands that are earning attention from investors and need PR and marketing services to support. That's an area we look forward to expanding in 2019,” he said. ○

## Healthcare roundup

— Continued from page 32

in healthcare for companies—and their investors—that can address priority and unmet patient needs through these pathways,” said Roth.

“With the 2018 FDA guidance on patient-focused drug development,” said Spectrum's Gross, “we'll see clinical trials—and what is said about the drugs resulting from them—

become more reflective of the patient experience and more attuned with what the patient is looking for.”

However, in a sector marked by mergers and focused on new technologies, audiences and suppliers, communications basics—and a firm knowledge of what your firm can and can't do—is still seen as fundamental to success in the sector.

“Massive integration means that everyone does everything,” said Roth. “Clients

may be confused by agency offerings and assume you have experience in areas where you simply don't have experience.”

W2O's Paganelli emphasizes that practitioners still need “well-rounded, 360-degree understanding of the paid, earned and shared tools in our arsenal and how to deploy them appropriately to reach our key audience where they are going for information in the format they want to receive it in.” ○

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**Let's chat.**

Maryellen Royle, *president PR & Influence*

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# RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN HEALTHCARE

Firm	2018 Net Fees	Firm	2018 Net Fees
1. <b>W2O Group</b> , San Francisco, CA	\$168,171,000	39. <b>Lambert</b> , Grand Rapids, MI	\$1,325,000
2. <b>Edelman</b> , New York, NY	154,202,000	40. <b>Jackson Spalding</b> , Atlanta, GA	1,238,933
3. <b>Spectrum</b> , Washington, DC	32,900,000	41. <b>Gregory FCA</b> , Ardmore, PA	1,100,000
4. <b>APCO Worldwide</b> , Washington, DC	25,087,900	42. <b>L.C. Williams &amp; Associates</b> , Chicago, IL	1,029,935
5. <b>Health Unlimited</b> , New York, NY	24,267,133	43. <b>Standing Partnership</b> , St. Louis, MO	1,025,535
6. <b>Finn Partners</b> , New York, NY	21,182,000	44. <b>Inkhouse</b> , Waltham, MA	880,519
7. <b>Crosby</b> , Annapolis, MD	19,204,310	45. <b>Trevelino/Keller</b> , Atlanta, GA	875,000
8. <b>Zeno Group</b> , New York, NY	12,300,659	46. <b>Havas Formula</b> , New York, NY	825,596
9. <b>Evoke PR &amp; Influence</b> , Philadelphia, PA	12,000,000	47. <b>Rosica Communications</b> , Paramus, NJ	645,075
10. <b>Jarrard Phillips Cate &amp; Hancock</b> , Brentwood, TN	11,591,239	48. <b>G&amp;S Business Communications</b> , New York, NY	633,845
11. <b>IMRE, LLC</b> , Baltimore, MD	11,450,000	49. <b>Pierpont Communications</b> , Houston, TX	606,030
12. <b>KYNE</b> , New York, NY	10,405,888	50. <b>Landis Communications</b> , San Francisco, CA	555,000
13. <b>Padilla</b> , Minneapolis, MN	9,630,245	51. <b>Bellmont Partners</b> , Minneapolis, MN	545,376
14. <b>JPA Health Communications</b> , Washington, DC	9,264,490	52. <b>Buchanan Public Relations</b> , Bryn Mawr, PA	501,240
15. <b>Coyne PR</b> , Parsippany, NJ	9,000,000	53. <b>French   West   Vaughan</b> , Raleigh, NC	495,445
16. <b>Sam Brown Inc.</b> , Wayne, PA	5,621,644	54. <b>LaunchSquad</b> , San Francisco, CA	484,000
17. <b>The SPI Group LLC</b> , Fairfield, NJ	4,956,674	55. <b>Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms</b> , Seattle, WA	475,969
18. <b>Lazar Partners</b> , New York, NY	4,878,125	56. <b>Greentarget Global LLC</b> , Chicago, IL	474,000
19. <b>5W Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	4,500,000	57. <b>North 6th Agency, Inc.</b> , New York, NY	423,000
20. <b>Citizen Relations</b> , Los Angeles, CA	4,235,437	58. <b>Marketing Maven PR</b> , Camarillo, CA	413,108
21. <b>MCS Healthcare PR</b> , Bedminster, NJ	4,194,507	59. <b>Singer Associates, Inc.</b> , San Francisco, CA	362,529
22. <b>MWWPR</b> , New York, NY	3,168,922	60. <b>Merritt Group</b> , McLean, VA	335,057
23. <b>Lovell Communications</b> , Nashville, TN	2,976,067	61. <b>Maccabee</b> , Minneapolis, MN	273,633
24. <b>Public Communications Inc.</b> , Chicago, IL	2,900,420	62. <b>IW Group, Inc.</b> , West Hollywood, CA	240,000
25. <b>rbb Communications</b> , Miami, FL	2,876,163	63. <b>Perry Comms Group, Inc.</b> , Sacramento, CA	238,058
26. <b>Hunter PR</b> , New York, NY	2,600,000	64. <b>Judge Public Relations, LLC</b> , Tampa, FL	221,747
27. <b>PAN Communications</b> , Boston, MA	2,586,184	65. <b>Schneider Associates</b> , Boston, MA	195,395
28. <b>Bliss Integrated Comm</b> , New York, NY	2,494,000	66. <b>WordWrite Communications LLC</b> , Pittsburgh, PA	190,500
29. <b>LaVoie Health Science</b> , Boston, MA	2,489,984	67. <b>Fish Consulting</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	143,000
30. <b>Matter Communications</b> , Newburyport, MA	2,483,498	68. <b>BLAZE</b> , Santa Monica, CA	125,500
31. <b>MP&amp;F Strategic Comms</b> , Nashville, TN	2,329,335	69. <b>Weiss PR, Inc.</b> , Baltimore, MD	117,564
32. <b>SevenTwenty Strategies, LLC</b> , Washington, DC	2,328,195	70. <b>Brownstein Group</b> , Philadelphia, PA	113,894
33. <b>360PR+</b> , Boston, MA	1,947,790	71. <b>Kohnstamm Communications, Inc.</b> , St. Paul, MN	110,932
34. <b>Racepoint Global</b> , Boston, MA	1,907,544	72. <b>BoardroomPR</b> , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	100,000
35. <b>Beehive Strategic Comm</b> , St. Paul, MN	1,675,677	73. <b>Hollywood Agency</b> , Hingham, MA	90,000
36. <b>Rasky Partners, Inc.</b> , Boston, MA	1,579,425	74. <b>O'Malley Hansen Communications</b> , Chicago, IL	52,000
37. <b>Tunheim</b> , Minneapolis, MN	1,516,094	75. <b>SPM Communications</b> , Dallas, TX	18,441
38. <b>Kivvit</b> , Chicago, IL	1,483,874		



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RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **AGRICULTURE**

1. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	\$17,938,881
2. Edelman, New York, NY	8,529,000
3. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	2,128,039
4. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	1,418,219
5. Zeno Group, New York, NY	929,289
6. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	896,620
7. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	596,578
8. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	308,574
9. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	215,706
10. North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	102,000
11. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	50,000
12. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	12,000
13. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	2,500

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **BEAUTY & FASHION**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$83,455,000
2. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	6,311,286
3. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	5,624,181
4. Zeno Group, New York, NY	4,941,933
5. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	4,500,000
6. Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company, New York, NY	3,274,784
7. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	3,000,000
8. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	1,382,000
9. Havas Formula, New York, NY	884,399
10. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	725,399
11. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	647,519
12. 360PR+, Boston, MA	486,947
13. Hunter PR, New York, NY	400,000
14. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	355,251
15. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	318,550
16. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	304,250
17. Hollywood Agency, Hingham, MA	248,000
18. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	175,000
19. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	146,810
20. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	113,818
21. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	105,000
22. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	51,658
23. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	50,000
24. J Public Relations, New York, NY	22,934
25. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	22,038
26. Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	9,587

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **ENTERTAINMENT**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$31,657,000
2. Finn Partners, New York, NY	6,650,000
3. Zeno Group, New York, NY	6,584,933
4. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	2,422,430
5. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	616,991
6. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	614,928
7. 360PR+, Boston, MA	486,947

## Entertainment cont.

8. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	\$408,653
9. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	341,706
10. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	285,498
11. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	269,300
12. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	217,426
13. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	166,992
14. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	150,000
15. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	100,000
16. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	100,000
17. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	87,500
18. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	65,292
19. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	50,000
20. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	47,131
21. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	43,138
22. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	31,660
23. Hunter PR, New York, NY	25,000
24. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	16,977
25. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	11,000
26. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	9,812
27. Rosica Communications, Paramus, NJ	6,750
28. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	5,927

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **HOME FURNISHINGS**

1. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	\$4,357,033
2. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	3,463,603
3. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	3,300,000
4. Edelman, New York, NY	3,274,000
5. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	3,219,357
6. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	3,000,000
7. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	2,713,319
8. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	2,000,000
9. Havas Formula, New York, NY	1,859,450
10. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,628,120
11. Hunter PR, New York, NY	1,500,000
12. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,212,060
13. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	640,796
14. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	507,853
15. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	372,200
16. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	300,000
17. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	295,750
18. Rosica Communications, Paramus, NJ	239,055
19. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	229,939
20. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	222,870
21. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	152,250
22. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	151,484
23. Schneider Associates, Boston, MA	127,950
24. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	120,000
25. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	75,000
26. Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	66,840
27. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	39,737
28. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	16,500
29. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	10,000

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN **SPORTS & LEISURE**

1. MWWPR, New York, NY	\$8,747,651
2. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	6,336,500
3. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	2,800,000
4. Havas Formula, New York, NY	2,288,794
5. Edelman, New York, NY	1,592,000
6. Berk Communications, New York, NY	1,370,500
7. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	1,078,100
8. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	760,850
9. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	679,200
10. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	555,000
11. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	521,350
12. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	513,000
13. 360PR+, Boston, MA	486,947
14. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	430,737
15. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	269,737
16. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	200,000
17. Kohnstamm Communications, Inc., St. Paul, MN	190,019
18. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	120,000
19. BLAZE., Santa Monica, CA	85,100
20. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	81,750
21. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	77,891
22. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	66,234
23. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	65,000
24. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	35,597
25. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	28,000
26. Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	17,084
27. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	16,238
28. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	11,000
29. Zeno Group, New York, NY	10,523

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN  
**TRAVEL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$39,843,000
2. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	15,022,400
3. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	11,800,000
4. Finn Partners, New York, NY	11,125,000
5. J Public Relations, New York, NY	10,441,381
6. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI), New York, NY	10,050,306
7. Turner, a Fahlgren Mortine company, New York, NY	9,809,261
8. NJE, an MMGY Global company, New York, NY	9,376,703
9. Lou Hammond Group, New York, NY	7,800,243
10. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	5,095,114
11. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations, New York, NY	5,000,000
12. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	3,798,010
13. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	3,300,000
14. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	3,257,863
15. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	2,300,000
16. Zeno Group, New York, NY	2,239,657
17. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	1,681,271
18. Hemsworth Communications, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,625,562
19. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	1,262,421
20. 360PR+, Boston, MA	973,895

## Travel &amp; Economic Development cont.

21. Berk Communications, New York, NY	\$827,850
22. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	523,000
23. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	497,354
24. North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	321,000
25. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	312,112
26. Hunter PR, New York, NY	300,000
27. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	293,428
28. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	259,000
29. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	226,603
30. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	192,493
31. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	177,165
32. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	107,000
33. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	75,087
34. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	60,000
35. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	55,000
36. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	44,329
37. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	43,082
38. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	40,000
39. Havas Formula, New York, NY	31,452
40. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	11,106

RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN  
**ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

1. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	\$45,548,900
2. Edelman, New York, NY	12,922,000
3. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,119,160
4. Finn Partners, New York, NY	6,331,000
5. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	5,238,460
6. Cerrell Associates, Los Angeles, CA	3,751,386
7. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,463,238
8. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,893,844
9. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	1,830,000
10. SevenTwenty Strategies, LLC, Washington, DC	1,687,033
11. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	1,609,710
12. Zeno Group, New York, NY	1,539,416
13. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	1,350,569
14. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	1,015,930
15. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	878,383
16. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	621,095
17. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	606,995
18. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	509,989
19. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	430,000
20. Schneider Associates, Boston, MA	414,225
21. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	377,494
22. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	215,009
23. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	184,000
24. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	118,789
25. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	117,000
26. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	85,593
27. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	50,000
28. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	50,000
29. Weiss PR, Inc., Baltimore, MD	29,391

# RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Firm	2018 Net Fees	Firm	2018 Net Fees
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$81,394,000	28. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	\$848,999
2. MWWPR, New York, NY	8,909,509	29. The Bradford Group, Nashville, TN	701,579
3. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	7,643,752	30. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	688,764
4. Finn Partners, New York, NY	6,900,000	31. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	562,482
5. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	6,745,000	32. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	525,000
6. Infinite Global, New York, NY	5,440,960	33. The Hoyt Organization Inc., Torrance, CA	496,000
7. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	4,894,449	34. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	470,375
8. Bliss Integrated Comm, New York, NY	4,589,000	35. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	447,825
9. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	4,183,936	36. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	421,861
10. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	4,100,000	37. WordWrite Comms LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	401,900
11. Schneider Associates, Boston, MA	3,009,710	38. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	372,500
12. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	2,808,132	39. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	360,300
13. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	2,689,782	40. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	351,589
14. Zeno Group, New York, NY	2,303,655	41. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	323,000
15. Ripp Media/PR, Inc., New York, NY	2,201,786	42. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	268,198
16. MP&F Strategic Comms, Nashville, TN	2,012,466	43. Akrete, Evanston, IL	257,231
17. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	2,010,503	44. Hollywood Agency, Hingham, MA	251,000
18. North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	2,001,025	45. Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	178,896
19. BoardroomPR, Fort Lauderdale, FL	2,000,000	46. Hunter PR, New York, NY	175,000
20. Havas Formula, New York, NY	1,963,648	47. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	175,000
21. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	1,825,411	48. Rosica Communications, Paramus, NJ	170,289
22. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	1,590,829	49. Weiss PR, Inc., Baltimore, MD	146,955
23. Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	1,179,121	50. Kohnstamm Communications, Inc., St. Paul, MN	144,000
24. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,089,000	51. The SPI Group LLC, Fairfield, NJ	143,326
25. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	1,024,839	52. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	89,903
26. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	995,205	53. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	16,875
27. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	973,626	54. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	8,200



## RANKINGS OF FIRMS SPECIALIZING IN FOOD & BEVERAGE

Firm	2018 Net Fees	Firm	2018 Net Fees
<b>1. Edelman</b> , New York, NY	\$111,419,000	<b>26. The Dana Agency</b> , Miami, FL	\$900,000
<b>2. Hunter PR</b> , New York, NY	16,200,000	<b>27. LaunchSquad</b> , San Francisco, CA	622,000
<b>3. Padilla</b> , Minneapolis, MN	15,737,186	<b>28. O'Malley Hansen Communications</b> , Chicago, IL	557,200
<b>4. APCO Worldwide</b> , Washington, DC	15,736,400	<b>29. Maccabee</b> , Minneapolis, MN	531,062
<b>5. Zeno Group</b> , New York, NY	13,353,365	<b>30. L.C. Williams &amp; Associates</b> , Chicago, IL	455,515
<b>6. Citizen Relations</b> , Los Angeles, CA	10,927,316	<b>31. Stuntman PR</b> , New York, NY	403,267
<b>7. Havas Formula</b> , New York, NY	8,664,470	<b>32. IW Group, Inc.</b> , West Hollywood, CA	369,000
<b>8. MWWPR</b> , New York, NY	8,504,187	<b>33. rbb Communications</b> , Miami, FL	342,755
<b>9. Coyne PR</b> , Parsippany, NJ	6,400,000	<b>34. Zapwater Communications</b> , Chicago, IL	283,200
<b>10. Finn Partners</b> , New York, NY	5,950,000	<b>35. Brownstein Group</b> , Philadelphia, PA	246,812
<b>11. Jackson Spalding</b> , Atlanta, GA	5,038,021	<b>36. BizCom Associates</b> , Plano, TX	216,000
<b>12. 5W Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	4,500,000	<b>37. Rosica Communications</b> , Paramus, NJ	205,915
<b>13. 360PR+</b> , Boston, MA	3,895,581	<b>38. Buchanan Public Relations</b> , Bryn Mawr, PA	198,828
<b>14. French   West   Vaughan</b> , Raleigh, NC	3,619,775	<b>39. J Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	167,820
<b>15. Konnect Agency</b> , Los Angeles, CA	3,566,914	<b>40. Judge Public Relations, LLC</b> , Tampa, FL	162,791
<b>16. Champion Management Group</b> , Dallas, TX	2,850,000	<b>41. Trelvelino/Keller</b> , Atlanta, GA	150,000
<b>17. Lambert</b> , Grand Rapids, MI	1,671,000	<b>42. Hemsworth Communications</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	125,411
<b>18. Kohnstamm Comms, Inc.</b> , St. Paul, MN	1,638,823	<b>43. Inkhouse</b> , Waltham, MA	93,467
<b>19. Fish Consulting</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,262,000	<b>44. Hollywood Agency</b> , Hingham, MA	61,500
<b>20. Berk Communications</b> , New York, NY	1,257,250	<b>45. MP&amp;F Strategic Communications</b> , Nashville, TN	53,005
<b>21. Kivvit</b> , Chicago, IL	1,214,967	<b>46. BoardroomPR</b> , Fort Lauderdale, FL	50,000
<b>22. SPM Communications</b> , Dallas, TX	1,189,590	<b>47. Beehive Strategic Communication</b> , St. Paul, MN	36,295
<b>23. Tunheim</b> , Minneapolis, MN	1,091,660	<b>48. Public Communications Inc.</b> , Chicago, IL	30,451
<b>24. Matter Communications</b> , Newburyport, MA	1,068,721	<b>49. WordWrite Comms LLC</b> , Pittsburgh, PA	16,400
<b>25. BLAZE</b> , Santa Monica, CA	950,100		

# Data reigns as PR faces future market volatility

The challenge to provide definitive metrics that measure the reach, target and value of campaign efforts increasingly scattered across audiences and media channels arises as an overarching theme for the top-ranked firms in *O'Dwyer's 2019 Rankings of PR Firms*.

By Jon Gingerich and Kevin McCauley

**S**pectrum, Imre and W2O Group powered *O'Dwyer's* top 25 independent PR firms this year to a 12.9 percent rise in combined 2018 fee income to \$2.1 billion and a 10.7 percent jump in employment to 11,702, according to *O'Dwyer's Rankings of PR Firms*.

W2O (+23.1 percent to \$177.6 million) paced the gains among the Top 10 firms. Prosek Partners (+15.1 percent to \$47 million), Zeno Group (+13.6 percent to \$73.4 million), ICR (+9.0 percent to \$69.2 million) and Finn Partners (+8.0 percent to \$88.1 million) ranked as the other big gainers in the top grouping. Number-one PR giant Edelman topped the list of independent firms again this year with income of \$888.4 million, revealing a .6 percent decline from last year's \$893.5 million.

## No categories, just solutions at W2O

W2O CEO Jim Weiss credited his firm's robust performance to an effort to redefine the communications and marketing landscape "with no lines between and among categories, just solutions to an ever-changing market complete with an expanded ecosystem of influence."



Jim Weiss

Launched by Weiss in 2001, the firm has invested heavily in data analytics/insights, digital/ social media, content creation/activation and strategic consulting.

He said the tech-focused independent network's client-centric approach has attracted more than 24 of the top 25 pharmaceutical companies to its roster and a growing number of *Fortune* 500 clients.

"W2O prides itself on always working hard to punch above its weight because it's on a mission to improve healthcare and the patient experience through strategic marketing and communications by achieving clarity, understanding and engagement," said Weiss. "It's about never resting on our laurels and continually challenging ourselves and our clients to do better, to see what's not in front of us, to dig deeper for the best approach, and to ignore labels and descriptions."

## Uncertainty drive APCO's bottom line

Number-three firm APCO Worldwide took in \$134.1 million, revealing a four-per-

cent gain from last year's \$128.2 million.

As President and Managing Director of Operations Evan Krause explained, the unusually high level of political uncertainty in the world today places undue pressure on boardrooms and C-suites to address enterprise risk and reputation, which bodes well for firms with skin in the public affairs game.



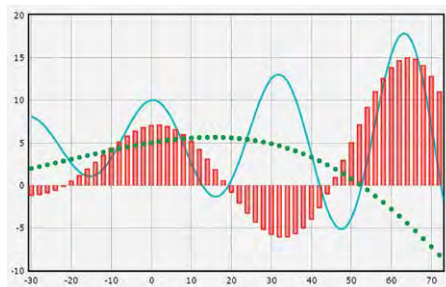
Evan Krause

"The world is continuing to transform itself rapidly, and the amount of change happening only seems to be accelerating," Krause said. "When change breeds uncertainty in the market, people tend to want to work with us more, as public affairs remains at the root of our heritage."

Krause said the D.C.-based government relations giant has experienced healthy growth in Europe and Asia, but has noticed particular activity in the Middle East, where some countries in that region are now trying to communicate more aggressively about what they're doing for the first time in an effort to diversify their economies, which has resulted in a great deal of market-entry work.

Finally, Krause said APCO recently partnered with other agencies to launch a new research model that addresses corporate agility in the market and the factors that drive agility, services for which the agency has seen increased demand.

"As the traditional ad marketplace starts to transform and evolve, in some cases devolve, the rise of digital and data to develop insights and micro-targeted messages has become very important to our clients and is another space where we're making a big investment and doing a lot of work," Krause said.



*O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms, p. 50*

## Business wins, acquisitions boost Finn

During 2018, Finn Partners acquired MFA, a New York sports marketing, travel, lifestyle and consumer firm and later, picked up CatchOn, a PR and digital marketing agency that brought new offices in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and added depth in travel, lifestyle and health and wellness.

That acquisition drive continued into 2019 with the purchase of Small Army, a Boston-based digital storytelling agency and the addition of Moorgate Communications in London, a financial services specialist firm. The firm also stepped up its hiring, adding 34 staffers during the past 13 months.

"Our commitment to be a world class, best-place-to-work global agency, with a heart and a conscience, was core to our growth in 2018," said Founding Partner Peter Finn. "Our growth during the first quarter of 2019 has been unprecedented, especially in terms of new business as we have won significant accounts in health, technology, sustainability, education, travel and other sectors. When combined with our two acquisitions this year, we're on a path that will deliver stronger growth this year than in 2018."

## Zeno keeps rolling along

Zeno CEO Barby Siegel noted that 2018 marked the ninth consecutive year of double-digit growth for the firm. It was up 17 percent in the U.S. and 13.6 percent overseas.

More than half (54 percent) of Zeno's revenues stemmed from multinational sources, up from 46 percent in 2017.

She said Zeno increasingly works at the intersection of communications and business impact with purposeful work that generates real and measurable business outcomes.

"While innovation is at the heart of the firm, we continue to invest in our core competency of earned media relations



Peter Finn



Barby Siegel

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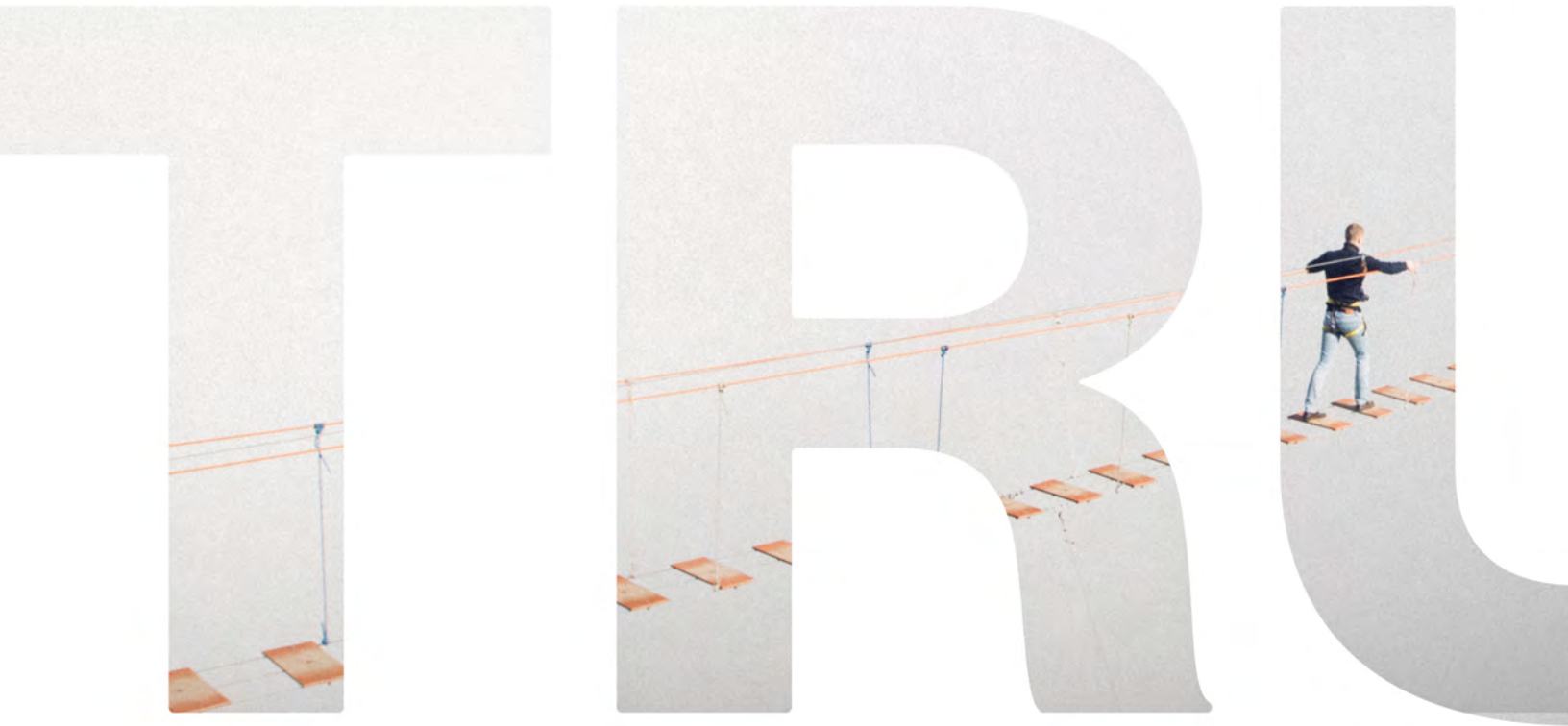
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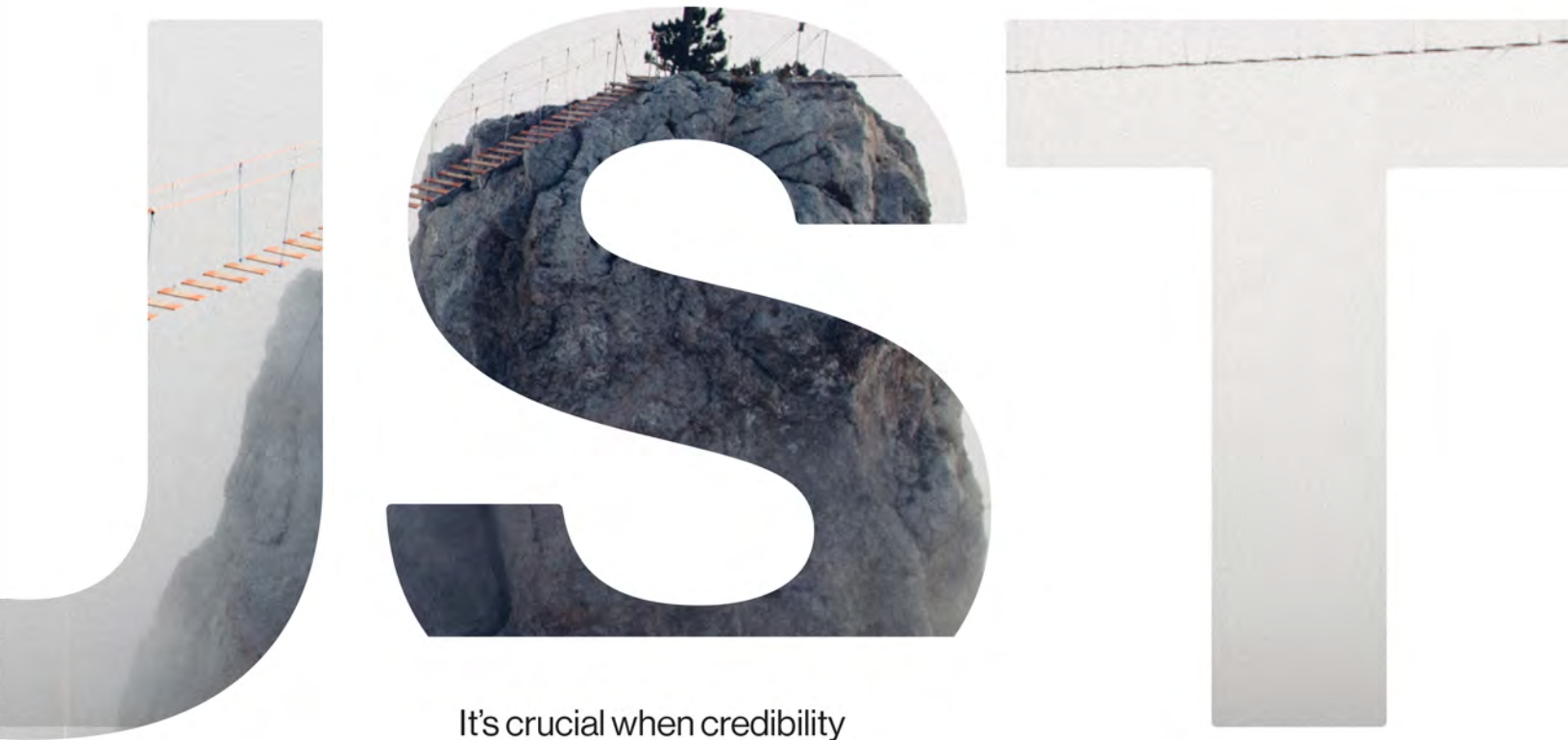
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## O'Dwyer's rankings

—Continued from page 42

while pushing forward into new and rapidly-evolving spaces such as paid social, owned newsrooms, data-driven story-telling and content developed specifically to optimize search,” said Siegel.

As Zeno grows and evolves, it strives to keep its soul, according to Siegel. “We continually reinforce core values that are non-negotiable—fearless, collaborative, committed, true to our word and human,” she said.

### Ruder Finn returns

After not appearing in *O'Dwyer's* rankings for several years, **Ruder Finn** was one of the firms—along with fellow Top 10 agency **MWWPR**—to return this year for the #7 spot, at \$69.1 million.

CEO Kathy Bloomgarden said 2018 was a year of immense investment and growth for the agency. RF furthered efforts to reinvent its business while sustaining its creative underpinnings and reinforcing its technological capabilities with new digital, social and analytics offerings. In the process, the agency won more than 30 new clients across consumer, corporate, healthcare and technology and partnered with existing clients to grow assignments into campaigns that magnified impact. RF also added senior talent, including four executive vice presidents in its New York office.

Finally, RF acquired RLA Collective in the U.S. to expand its integrated marketing and analytics expertise.

“We are proud of the excellent momentum we achieved last year and in the first quarter of this year and are excited to continue our journey as a leader in leveraging new tools and capabilities to further our activities on behalf of our clients,” Bloomgarden said.

### Prosek picks up pace

New York-based **Prosek Partners** revealed another year of solid growth, following 2017's big 33 percent gains with 15.1 percent additional growth in 2018 to take *O'Dwyer's* #8 spot with \$46.9 million.

Jennifer Prosek, Managing Partner of the financial, healthcare and professional services shop, told *O'Dwyer's* that she predicted years ago that the financial services sector would one day “wake up and smell the marketing.” Prosek announced that day has finally come.

Prosek also said the agency's special situations work has been a particular source of

growth, and will inevitably increase as markets get more volatile. She expects PR and marketing spends to slow naturally a bit alongside a slower growth economy, but sees promising emerging growth opportunities in the areas of culture, recruiting, D&I, employee engagement and special situations work.

“I believe the industry will continue to benefit as companies seek to grow and protect their corporate brands, prioritize their employees and corporate culture, and grapple with change.”

### 5W PR posts 17.7% across-the-board gain

**5W Public Relations** CEO Ronn Torossian said his New York-based firm's 17.7 percent gain in fee income to \$32.4 million came from across its practice areas.

As a PR innovator, 5W launched a CBD (cannabidiol) specialty team, a practice focused on providing strategy and media relations services in the gaming and sports gambling industry, and expanded its fintech specialty.

The firm added staff to its corporate, technology, consumer and digital teams.

“We won consumer, corporate and fast-growing technology companies and do great work for them,” said Torossian.

### Big agency sales mark 2018

Minneapolis-based **Padilla** grew three percent to round out *O'Dwyer's* top 10 with \$41.2 million in 2018 net fees.

But the most significant change to affect the agency last year involved its acquisition by Avenir Global, a Montreal-based holding company of PR and communication firms.

Padilla President Matt Kucharski told *O'Dwyer's* that move provided the agency's clients and staff with access to global resources while allowing it to remain inde-



Jennifer Prosek



Ronn Torossian



Matt Kucharski

pendently operated. Throughout the transition, Padilla remained focused on delivering strategic work for new and existing clients, which Kucharski said is reflected in the agency's top-line growth.

“We are energized by that in 2019, with efforts underway to help clients reach their objectives through content and connection strategy, engagement and thought leadership, and much more.”

Health, life sciences and public affairs firm **Spectrum** (#13) gained more than any other agency in *O'Dwyer's* top 25, up 37.1 percent to \$32.9 million.

President Michelle Gross said Spectrum earned its top gainer spot because “we renewed our focus on clients and increased capabilities in key areas to ensure we are delivering best-in-class interwoven programs in the evolving communications landscape.”

In 2018, Spectrum saw the ahead-of-schedule completion of its sale to CEO Jonathan Wilson and established a new framework around four key pillars: strategy, engagement, innovation and creative. The firm reorganized leadership into a new strategy council consisting of Wilson, Gross, Rob Oquendo (Chief Innovation Officer), Michelle Strier (Chief Strategy Officer), Scott Chesson (COO) and Jon Higgins (Chief Engagement Officer).

Gross said Spectrum is positioned to take on the future of health and science communications—a space where it sees the overlap between marketing and communications disciplines expanding and the importance of taking a science-first perspective.

“As we move beyond simply integrated teams to interwoven client-centric teams—with our scientists, creatives, media specialists and account teams working in lockstep to deliver for clients every day and setting the agency model of the future—our uncompromising focus on client service and strategy rooted in science and innovation remain unchanged,” she said.

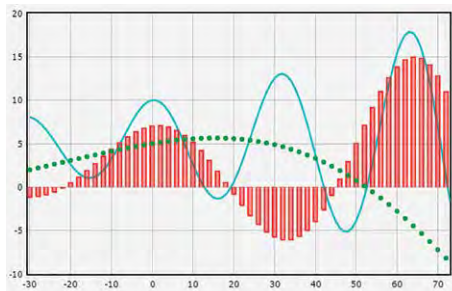
**G&S Business Communications** grew 11.8 percent in 2018 to \$30.4 million, taking *O'Dwyer's* #15 spot. Notably, the business communications firm more than doubled



Kathy Bloomgarden



Michelle Gross



O'Dwyer's rankings by PR specialty, pg. 38

—Continued on page 48

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## O'Dwyer's rankings

— Continued from page 46

its New York fee income and broadened its roster of accounts last year when it acquired CooperKatz & Co.

G&S CEO Luke Lambert told *O'Dwyer's* that the agency owes its success to the relationships it has nurtured within the agency as well as its long-standing client engagements, many of which have spanned decades and multiple generations of communication teams.



Luke Lambert

"G&S also leverages a unique business communications approach that helps clients address their evolving markets—ones in which more decisions are made within tech-disrupted workplaces and homes—by shaping strategies in-

formed by insights and enhanced by creativity," Lambert said.

Columbus, OH's **Fahlgren Mortine** gained 8.9 percent last year to nearly \$30 million in 2018 billings, taking *O'Dwyer's* #17 position.

President and CEO Neil Mortine told *O'Dwyer's* that FM saw record revenue in 2018 after implementing the fastest and largest volume of change in the company's 57-year history. The agency transitioned ownership when it was acquired by Memphis, TN-based holding company Eastport Holdings, LLC and, several months later, consolidated staff and clients when it merged with fellow Eastport property and Columbus-based ad shop SBC Advertising.

The agency also strengthened its vertical industry expertise as a top-five ranked travel and tourism firm through an affiliation with tourism research consultancy Longwoods International and entrenched its position as one of the nation's leading business-to-business firms by winning several blue-chip clients and hosting a B2B Peer Summit.

"Despite starting the year without our largest client of 40 years in McDonald's following a consolidation of U.S. agencies, Fahlgren Mortine not only replaced that lost revenue, but achieved double-digit growth in revenue and operating profit. In addition to our financial performance, Fahlgren Mortine maintained high satis-



Neil Mortine

faction and net promoter scores among clients and low voluntary attrition among our associates," he said.

Mortine said both the near- and long-term future of PR rests on growth in the use of performance analytics and an ongoing blurring of the lines between traditional marketing and communications. Clients today demand more definitive metrics that go beyond the traditional measures of reach, frequency, target impressions and key messaging delivery, Mortine said, and want measured the relative value and ROI of engaging the right target with the right media mix.

"For an integrated communications company like Fahlgren Mortine, clients are seeking holistic solutions to their business problems. Clients understand that achieving their business goals depends on the right mix of PR, advertising, digital and social strategies. There's an overwhelming choice in communications vehicles, and clients simply don't know where to invest and how it all works seamlessly together. The best agencies connect the dots for their clients to optimize success."

**Imre**, the number-two leading gainer in *O'Dwyer's* top 25 (up 34.3 percent to #24), attributed a portion of its 34.3 percent gains to a "fiercely independent business model that clients find attractive when seeking an agency partner."

In 2018, Imre acquired Los Angeles-based JMPR, which has more than 40 years of experience in the automotive sector. That deal "helped us bolster our integrated approach for clients and we expect to see that addition continue to support our growth in 2019 and beyond," said agency Founder and CEO Dave Imre.

Noting that the shop has hired people with diverse backgrounds, Imre also said, "We've especially doubled down on strategy to bring more true human insights to the table. And we've also seen the industry renew its creative focus on leading with ideas, followed by technology, which we've always done. The best ideas resonate with people and we've often seen them attract a lot of earned media as a result."

**Lambert** grew by a whopping 32.1 percent in 2018 to \$10 million in net fees (up from 2017's \$7.6 million), taking *O'Dwyer's* #45 position this year and surging from their #54 spot in last year's rankings. The Detroit-based firm gained noticeable size in 2018 when it acquired financial PR powerhouse Owen Blicksilver PR in a move into the New York market.



Dave Imre

CEO Jeffrey Lambert said the firm, formerly known as Lambert, Edwards & Assocs., attributed its double-digit increase to "a cocktail of organic and acquisition growth mixed with integrated marketing and multimedia expansion," adding that Lambert's current goal is to make another acquisition this year and launch a new practice area "to keep the momentum rolling."

"We are moving into the age of accountability and from being professional communicators to business consultants as our work impacts not just awareness and influence, but outcomes and sales," Lambert said. "This requires new talent on our teams, a wholistic approach to marketing with PR as the lead but not the only silver-bullet strategy, deeper analytics expertise and boardroom acumen. Unfortunately, this will only widen the gap between the smaller agencies and the mid-sized and larger firms who are willing and able to invest in the human and technology capital to compete. We believe the best way to accomplish this is through a combination of organic practice start-ups and adjacent service acquisitions and believe the scale and agility mix of mid-sized firms like ours will be a competitive advantage."

**Health Unlimited, Racepoint plan for rebound**

Following a 6.6 percent dip in fee income to \$24.3 million last year, **Health Unlimited** CEO Tim Bird said his firm entered 2019 with a solid base of growing clients and is positioned for growth with expansion or capabilities and presence.

"We are extremely proud that two of our signature campaigns, Myhealthysexual Story and Speak Your Migraine, were recognized by our peers and shortlisted by several industry awards for creativity and impact," said Bird.

The global health consultancy and communications agency strengthened creative and digital engagement capabilities with senior leadership hires. HealthUnlimited has also embraced the philosophy of being Fluent in HUMAN, aligned with our core purpose to create a meaningful change in health, said Bird. "We have renewed our commitment to training and development



Jeffrey Lambert



Tim Bird

— Continued on page 52





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# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS WITH MAJOR U.S. OPERATIONS

Firm	2018 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2017
1. Edelman, New York, NY	\$888,405,000	5,616	-0.6
2. W2O Group, San Francisco, CA	177,569,000	718	23.1
3. APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	134,136,700	783	4
4. Finn Partners, New York, NY	88,114,000	617	8
5. Zeno Group, New York, NY	73,373,239	481	13.6
6. ICR, New York, NY	69,166,880	188	9
7. Ruder Finn Inc., New York, NY	69,100,000	603	NA
8. Prosek Partners, New York, NY	46,994,360	163	15.1
9. MWWPR, New York, NY	42,584,020	189	6.5
10. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	41,233,936	226	3
11. Hotwire, New York, NY	36,879,576	264	10.9
12. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	34,084,343	202	10.7
13. Spectrum, Washington, DC	32,900,000	116	37.1
14. 5W Public Relations, New York, NY	32,410,427	146	17.7
15. G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	30,480,000	182	11.8
16. Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	30,000,000	133	7
17. Fahlgren Mortine, Columbus, OH	29,632,896	208	8.9
18. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	29,280,490	113	16
19. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	25,300,426	138	8
20. Health Unlimited, New York, NY	24,267,133	102	-6.6
21. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	24,220,353	74	8.4
22. Hunter PR, New York, NY	24,000,000	116	7
23. Havas Formula, New York, NY	22,324,063	130	11.6
24. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	21,940,000	133	34.3
25. Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	20,876,000	117	-16.8
26. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	20,693,661	80	36.5
27. PAN Communications, Boston, MA	19,893,730	130	12.1
28. Matter Communications, Newburyport, MA	19,732,255	157	15
29. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	19,284,304	116	1.5
30. Regan Communications Group, Boston, MA	18,543,132	104	13.6
31. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	17,901,420	74	5.2
32. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	17,696,102	109	9.1
33. Bravo Group, Inc., Harrisburg, PA	16,458,558	83	14.6
34. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	15,200,000	52	1
35. Bateman Group, San Francisco, CA	14,499,420	68	16.5
36. Walker Sands Communications, Chicago, IL	14,116,410	115	62.3
37. The Hoffman Agency, San Jose, CA	13,665,000	35	7.4
38. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	13,552,882	74	18.8
39. Evoke PR & Influence, Philadelphia, PA	12,000,000	55	0
40. Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock, Brentwood, TN	11,591,239	36	17.5
41. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,119,160	35	6
42. Bliss Integrated Communication, New York, NY	11,031,000	55	15.7
43. J Public Relations, New York, NY	10,632,135	71	17.1
44. KYNE, New York, NY	10,405,888	48	7.3
45. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	10,055,000	55	32.1
46. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI), New York, NY	10,050,306	50	1
47. JeffreyGroup, Miami, FL	9,975,712	157	22.4
48. Gregory FCA, Ardmore, PA	9,860,000	74	8.9
49. 360PR+, Boston, MA	9,738,953	54	16.7
50. MP&F Strategic Communications, Nashville, TN	9,541,632	65	17.5
51. NJE, an MMGY Global company, New York, NY	9,376,703	55	10.5
52. JPA Health Communications, Washington, DC	9,264,490	34	1
53. Rasky Partners, Inc., Boston, MA	8,582,259	32	-18.1
54. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	8,467,310	42	4.1
55. Infinite Global, New York, NY	8,055,189	40	18.6
56. Merritt Group, McLean, VA	7,904,308	37	6.1
57. Lou Hammond Group, New York, NY	7,800,243	40	4
58. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	7,690,997	18	47.9
59. Vested, New York, NY	7,268,000	31	22.9
60. North 6th Agency, Inc., New York, NY	7,010,951	43	16.5
61. Pierpont Communications, Houston, TX	6,763,557	31	1
62. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	5,739,951	33	6
63. Sam Brown Inc., Wayne, PA	5,621,644	40	17.1
64. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	5,581,000	33	2
65. Dukas Linden Public Relations, New York, NY	5,409,338	22	2.3

# O'DWYER'S RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS WITH MAJOR U.S. OPERATIONS

Firm	2018 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2017
66. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations, New York, NY	\$5,180,581	36	3.5
67. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	5,110,141	42	-3
68. The SPI Group LLC, Fairfield, NJ	5,100,000	31	-5.7
69. Lazar Partners, New York, NY	4,878,125	22	-10.6
70. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	4,705,032	23	2.4
71. MCS Healthcare Public Relations, Bedminster, NJ	4,194,507	18	9.7
72. March Communications, Boston, MA	4,168,379	31	2.2
73. Touchdown PR, Austin, TX	4,100,995	38	-2.5
74. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	4,043,027	24	18.2
75. SevenTwenty Strategies, LLC, Washington, DC	4,015,229	31	21.5
76. Cerrell Associates, Los Angeles, CA	3,751,386	19	-3.6
77. Schneider Associates, Boston, MA	3,747,280	15	15.5
78. Berk Communications, New York, NY	3,455,600	16	30.9
79. Raffetto Herman Strategic Communications, Seattle, WA	3,395,648	20	8.2
80. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale, FL	3,301,775	20	2.1
81. Champion Management Group, Dallas, TX	3,011,783	22	4.4
82. BackBay Communications, Boston, MA	2,984,508	20	6.6
83. Lovell Communications, Nashville, TN	2,976,067	20	15.6
84. Beehive Strategic Communication, St. Paul, MN	2,973,951	13	-15.9
85. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	2,925,757	16	-17.9
86. Idea Grove, Dallas, TX	2,901,468	34	-9.5
87. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	2,900,000	17	6
88. CashmanKatz, Glastonbury, CT	2,865,000	27	-4
89. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	2,805,000	22	14.3
90. Caliber Corporate Advisers, New York, NY	2,729,690	14	72
91. Perry Communications Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,701,296	10	43
92. Gatesman, Pittsburgh, PA	2,634,274	67	15.4
93. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia, PA	2,537,214	9	-5.6
94. LaVoie Health Science, Boston, MA	2,489,984	11	17.6
95. O'Malley Hansen Communications, Chicago, IL	2,413,000	13	-8.6
96. Kohnstamm Communications, Inc., St. Paul, MN	2,311,630	12	11
97. Crenshaw Communications, New York, NY	2,280,188	14	23
98. ARPR, Atlanta, GA	2,262,442	17	43.5
99. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc., New York, NY	2,201,786	8	16.3
100. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,170,000	11	-19.5
101. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,110,618	12	9.6
102. SPM Communications, Dallas, TX	2,103,020	14	-4.1
103. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,012,737	17	43.6
104. Stanton Communications, Washington, DC	1,955,838	11	-10.4
105. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	1,826,828	13	18.4
106. Hollywood Agency, Hingham, MA	1,752,509	7	-14.2
107. Hemsworth Communications, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1,750,973	22	11.3
108. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	1,738,547	8	1
109. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr, PA	1,586,150	8	3.4
110. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,410,893	4	6.6
111. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh, PA	1,368,300	10	10.4
112. The Bradford Group, Nashville, TN	1,345,265	12	36.6
113. Marketing Maven Public Relations, Camarillo, CA	1,335,565	9	-42.7
114. Buttonwood Communications Group, New York, NY	1,311,200	8	48.8
115. Rosica Communications, Paramus, NJ	1,282,705	5	-1.4
116. Butler Associates, LLC, New York, NY	1,256,507	9	43.1
117. The Hoyt Organization Inc., Torrance, CA	1,200,000	9	0
118. Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	1,190,839	8	0
119. KCD Public Relations, Inc., San Diego, CA	1,057,583	8	40.7
120. The Dana Agency, Miami, FL	1,031,037	9	7.8
121. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	995,796	6	11
122. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	910,137	7	-3.9
123. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	900,432	3	-8
124. Feintuch Communications, New York, NY	888,523	3	4.9
125. BizCom Associates, Plano, TX	708,907	8	5.9
126. AMP3 Public Relations, New York, NY	665,497	6	33.1
127. TransMedia Group, Boca Raton, FL	650,676	6	1.3
128. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	629,654	6	76.1
129. Weiss PR, Inc., Baltimore, MD	587,820	3	2.6
130. Stuntman PR, New York, NY	481,585	3	1
131. Novitas Communications, Denver, CO	383,441	4	2.4

## O'Dwyer's rankings

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initiatives, as well as our commitment to diversity and inclusion, which has already resulted in a significant increase in a more diverse and aware workforce," he added.

Boston's **Racepoint Global** experienced key client losses in 2018, including its long-standing relationships of seven and nine years with AT&T and IBM, respectively. Fee income for the technology, B2B and healthcare shop dropped 16.8 percent to \$20.9 million.



Larry Weber

Chairman Larry Weber stepped into the CEO role in the second half of 2018 to help reposition the agency and double down on its focus on earned media for

B2B, technology and healthcare brands.

"Racepoint has started 2019 off strong, exceeding Q1 growth targets, and we are optimistic about the year ahead," Weber told *O'Dwyer's*.

### Double-digit gains exceed expectations

The top 50 firms in *O'Dwyer's* rankings this year registered a total 14.1 percent gain in income to \$2.4 billion and a 13.3 percent rise in employment to 12,048.

Chicago-based tech and professional services firm **Walker Sands Communications** grew more than any agency in *O'Dwyer's* top 50 this year, surging an unbelievable 62.3 percent to \$14.1 million in net fees and now taking our #36 slot, a major leap from the firm's #49 position last year.

"Walker Sands has achieved incredible growth over the last several years because of our focus in the growing niche of B2B tech and effectively integrating public relations and digital marketing," said President Mike Santoro. "But more than anything, it's our reputation for achieving



Mike Santoro

real, measurable results for our clients that has compounded our momentum. We've been fortunate to work with some of the biggest players in the industry, and it's been incredibly rewarding to grow alongside them as they continue to rely on Walker Sands for smart

programs with impact that matters."

Crisis and professional services specialist **Infinite Global** (#55) posted an 18.6 percent surge in fee income to \$8.1 million last year.

CEO Jamie Diaferia reported that the agency "exceeded our ambitious expectations by hitting three key metrics: at least 15 percent growth (with a cap of 20 percent to make sure we don't exceed our ability to hire responsibly); a minimum of 20 percent profit margin; and 50-55 percent staff costs," he explained.

Diaferia focused on four primary drivers: diversifying services, investing in marketing generating more revenue from existing clients, and limiting staff and client turnover.

He said Infinite Global has hit every goal in the seven-year growth plan that it established in 2015. "It's gratifying to watch the company hitting on all cylinders across the U.S. and U.K.," he said.

San Francisco-based **Singer Associates** grew by an impressive 47.9 percent in 2018 to nearly \$7.7 million in net fees, taking *O'Dwyer's* #58 spot this year, a sizeable jump from their #66 position last year (\$5.2 million).

President Sam Singer cited two factors as responsible for driving the agency's growth: a senior staff with deep experience and growing markets in sectors for which the agency specializes.

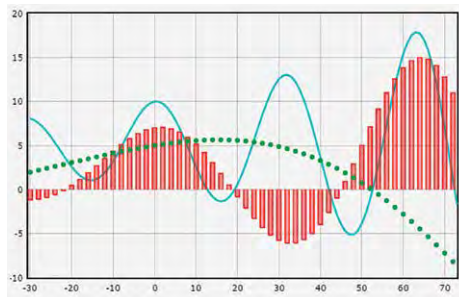
"Clients are willing to pay a premium to get senior, experienced communications consultants. They are seeking out agencies that possess strategic thinking and have senior players who can implement those strategies," Singer told *O'Dwyer's*. "Clients, now more than ever, desire and demand local, regional and state knowledge and in-the-trenches experience. The future of public relations and communications is bright for agencies that possess experienced staff with strong local connections and knowledge of issues, regulatory agencies, elected and business and community groups."



Jamie Diaferia



Sam Singer



O'Dwyer's rankings of firms by region, pg. 54

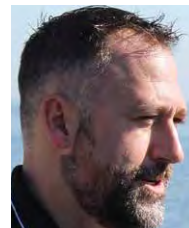
### 22 firms join O'Dwyer rankings

Nearly two-dozen firms joined *O'Dwyer's* rankings this year. Among the new additions were **Berk Communications** (#78, \$3.4 million, up 30.9 percent), **Buchanan Public Relations** (#109, \$1.5 million, up 3.4 percent), **Buttonwood Communications Group** (#114, \$1.3 million, up 48.8 percent), **Caliber Corporate Advisers** (#90, \$2.7 million, up 72 percent), **Citizen Relations** (#12, \$34 million, up 10.7 percent), **CommCentric Solutions** (#121, \$995,000, up 11 percent), **Crenshaw Communications** (#97, \$2.2 million, up 23 percent), **The Dana Agency** (#120, \$1 million, up 7.8 percent), **Havas Formula** (#23, \$22.3 million, up 11.6 percent), **KCD PR** (#119, \$1 million, up 40.7 percent), **Kohnstamm Communications** (#96, \$2.3 million, up 11 percent), **Regan Communications Group** (#30, \$18.5 million, up 13.6 percent), **Ripp Media/Public Relations** (#99, \$2.2 million, up 16.3 percent), **Sam Brown Inc.** (#63, \$5.6 million, up 17.1 percent), **SevenTwenty Strategies** (#75, \$4 million, up 21.5 percent), **SPI Group** (#68, \$5.1 million, down 5.7 percent), **Touchdown PR** (#73, \$4.1 million, down 2.5 percent) and **Zapwater Communications** (#89, \$2.8 million, up 14.3 percent), among others.

One such newcomer, Tampa's **Judge Public Relations** (#128, \$629,654), entered *O'Dwyer's* rankings to reveal 2018 growth of 76.1 percent, the largest single gains counted among any of the 130 firms listed this year.

President James P. Judge posited that as an industry, the PR profession is uniquely poised to educate the public regarding the importance of communications and shifting the mindset that PR is a practice reserved solely for crises. While most businesses today understand the need for accountants and attorneys, Judge noted that many don't consider reputation to carry the same importance, and said it's the job of professionals working within the field to change that.

"As demand for media increases at a staggering rate and attention spans continue to grow shorter, audiences have become immune to the trite talking points and key messages, which are spit out by many PR and marketing professionals," Judge said. "As a result, we have to be more creative than ever to break through the noise and grab attention, while ensuring we continue to fact-check and maintain our credibility. I see the demand for PR professionals continuing to increase, as technology makes communication faster." ○



James P. Judge

# LEADING GAINERS AMONG PR FIRMS

Firm	2018 Net Fees	FT Employees	% Change from 2017
<b>Firms in the top 25</b> (representing fees from \$20.8M to \$888M)			
1. <b>Spectrum</b> , Washington, D.C.	\$32,900,000	116	+37.1
2. <b>IMRE</b> , Baltimore, MD	\$21,940,000	133	+34.3
3. <b>W2O Group</b> , San Francisco	\$177,569,000	718	+23.1
4. <b>5W PR</b> , New York, NY	\$32,410,427	146	+17.7
5. <b>French   West   Vaughan</b> , Raleigh, NC	\$29,280,490	113	+16
6. <b>Prosek Partners</b> , New York, NY	\$46,994,360	163	+15.1
7. <b>Zeno Group</b> , New York, NY	\$73,373,239	481	+13.6
8. <b>G&amp;S Business Comms.</b> , New York, NY	\$30,480,000	182	+11.8
9. <b>Havas Formula</b> , New York, NY	\$22,324,063	130	+11.6
10. <b>Hotwire</b> , New York, NY	\$36,879,576	264	+10.9
<b>Firms ranked 26 through 50</b> (representing fees from \$9.5M to \$20.6M)			
1. <b>Walker Sands Communications</b> , Chicago, IL	\$14,116,410	115	+62.3
2. <b>Crosby</b> , Annapolis, MD	\$20,693,661	80	+36.5
3. <b>Lambert</b> , Grand Rapids, MI	\$10,055,000	55	+32.1
4. <b>JeffreyGroup</b> , Miami, FL	\$9,975,712	157	+22.4
5. <b>rbb Communications</b> , Miami, FL	\$13,552,882	74	+18.8
6. <b>Jarrard Phillips Cate &amp; 6. Hancock</b> , Brentwood, TN	\$11,591,239	36	+17.5
6. <b>MP&amp;F Strategic Communications</b> , Nashville, TN	\$9,541,632	65	+17.5
7. <b>J Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	\$10,632,135	71	+17.1
8. <b>360PR+</b> , Boston, MA	\$9,738,953	54	+16.7
9. <b>Bateman Group</b> , San Francisco, CA	\$14,499,420	68	+16.5
10. <b>Bliss Integrated Communication</b> , New York, NY	\$11,031,000	55	+15.7
<b>Firms ranked 51 through 100</b> (representing fees from \$2.1M to \$9.3M)			
1. <b>Caliber Corporate Advisers</b> , New York, NY	\$2,729,690	14	+72
2. <b>Singer Associates, Inc.</b> , San Francisco, CA	\$7,690,997	18	+47.9
3. <b>ARPR</b> , Atlanta, GA	\$2,262,442	17	+43.5
4. <b>Perry Communications Group, Inc.</b> , Sacramento, CA	\$2,701,296	10	+43
5. <b>Berk Communications</b> , New York, NY	\$3,455,600	16	+30.9
6. <b>Crenshaw Communications</b> , New York, NY	\$2,280,188	14	+23
7. <b>Vested</b> , New York, NY	\$7,268,000	31	+22.9
8. <b>SevenTwenty Strategies</b> , Washington, DC	\$4,015,229	31	+21.5
9. <b>Infinite Global</b> , New York, NY	\$8,055,189	40	+18.6
10. <b>Trevelino/Keller</b> , Atlanta, GA	\$4,043,027	24	+18.2
<b>Firms ranked 101 through 131</b> (representing fees from \$383K to \$2.1M)			
1. <b>Judge Public Relations</b> , Tampa, FL	\$629,654	6	+76.1
2. <b>Buttonwood Communications Group</b> , New York, NY	\$1,311,200	8	+48.8
3. <b>Karbo Communications</b> , San Francisco, CA	\$2,012,737	17	+43.6
4. <b>Butler Associates</b> , New York, NY	\$1,256,507	9	+43.1
5. <b>KCD Public Relations, Inc.</b> , San Diego, CA	\$1,057,583	8	+40.7
6. <b>The Bradford Group</b> , Nashville, TN	\$1,345,265	12	+36.6
7. <b>AMP3 Public Relations</b> , New York, NY	\$665,497	6	+33.1
8. <b>Bellmont Partners</b> , Minneapolis, MN	\$1,826,828	13	+18.4
9. <b>Hemsworth Communications</b> , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	\$1,750,973	22	+11.3
10. <b>CommCentric Solutions, Inc.</b> , Tampa, FL	\$995,796	6	+11

# RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS BY CITY/GEOGRAPHY

Firm	2018 Net Fees	FT Empl.	Firm	2018 Net Fees	FT Empl.
<b>CONNECTICUT</b>			<b>NEW YORK &amp; NEW JERSEY</b>		
1. ICR, Norwalk, CT	\$30,192,576	70	1. Edelman (includes Rochester)	\$197,147,000	909
2. CashmanKatz, Glastonbury, CT	2,865,000	27	2. Zeno Group	73,373,239	481
<b>CHICAGO</b>			3. Ruder Finn Inc.	69,100,000	603
1. Edelman (includes Detroit)	\$99,833,000	557	4. Prosek Partners	46,994,360	163
2. Walker Sands Communications	14,116,410	115	5. Hotwire	36,879,576	264
3. Finn Partners (includes Detroit)	8,702,000	53	6. 5W Public Relations	32,410,427	146
4. Greentarget Global LLC	8,467,310	42	7. MWWRP (includes NJ offices)	31,851,949	128
5. Kivvit	6,985,725	20	8. Finn Partners	29,279,000	211
6. G&S Business Communications	5,959,330	34	9. Health Unlimited	24,267,133	102
7. Public Communications Inc.	5,110,141	42	10. ICR	24,259,824	88
8. L.C. Williams & Associates	4,705,032	23	11. Hunter PR	24,000,000	116
9. Padilla	4,258,904	22	12. Havas Formula	22,324,063	130
10. APCO Worldwide	4,117,600	17	13. APCO Worldwide	13,947,500	60
11. Zapwater Communications	2,805,000	22	14. Kivvit (includes Asbury Park, NJ)	11,613,425	36
12. O'Malley Hansen Communications	2,413,000	13	15. Citizen Relations	11,474,688	0
13. MWWRP	1,952,515	10	16. Bliss Integrated Communication	11,031,000	55
14. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,410,893	4	17. Padilla	10,867,851	30
15. Infinite Global	259,093	1	18. J Public Relations	10,632,135	71
<b>FLORIDA</b>			19. KYNE	10,405,888	48
1. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee	\$15,200,000	52	20. Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI)	10,050,306	50
2. rbb Communications, Miami	13,552,882	74	21. NJE, an MMGY Global company	9,376,703	55
3. JeffreyGroup, Miami	9,975,712	157	22. Lou Hammond Group	7,800,243	40
4. Fish Consulting, Fort Lauderdale	3,301,775	20	23. G&S Business Communications	7,375,696	66
5. BoardroomPR, Fort. Lauderdale	2,900,000	17	24. Vested	7,268,000	31
6. Edelman, Orlando	2,779,000	11	25. North 6th Agency, Inc.	7,010,951	43
7. Hemsworth Comms., Fort Lauderdale	1,750,973	22	26. Dukas Linden Public Relations	5,409,338	22
8. The Dana Agency, Miami	1,031,037	9	27. Hawkins Int'l Public Relations	5,180,581	36
9. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa	995,796	6	28. The SPI Group LLC, Fairfield, NJ	5,100,000	31
10. Kivvit, Miami	747,719	4	29. Lazar Partners	4,878,125	22
11. TransMedia Group, Boca Raton	650,676	6	30. MCS Healthcare PR, Bedminster, NJ	4,194,507	18
12. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa	629,654	6	31. Berk Communications	3,455,600	16
<b>BOSTON</b>			32. Caliber Corporate Advisers	2,729,690	14
1. Racepoint Global	\$20,876,000	117	33. Infinite Global	2,590,933	10
2. PAN Communications	19,893,730	130	34. Crenshaw Communications	2,280,188	14
3. Regan Communications Group	18,543,132	104	35. Ripp Media/Public Relations, Inc.	2,201,786	8
4. Inkhouse, Waltham, MA	17,696,102	61	36. Inkhouse	1,723,843	14
5. Matter Communications	15,976,074	132	37. Buttonwood Communications Group	1,311,200	8
6. 360PR+	9,738,953	54	38. Rosica Communications, Paramus, NJ	1,282,705	5
7. Rasky Partners, Inc.	8,582,259	32	39. Butler Associates, LLC	1,256,507	9
8. ICR	5,409,612	12	40. Feintuch Communications	888,523	3
9. March Communications	4,168,379	31	41. AMP3 Public Relations	665,497	6
10. Schneider Associates	3,747,280	15	42. Stuntman PR	481,585	3
11. BackBay Communications	2,984,508	20	<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>		
12. LaVoie Health Science	2,489,984	11	1. Bravo Group, Inc., Harrisburg	\$16,458,558	83
13. Hollywood Agency, Hingham, MA	1,752,509	7	2. Evoke PR & Influence, Philadelphia	12,000,000	55
<b>WASHINGTON, D.C.</b>			3. Gregory FCA, Ardmore	9,860,000	74
1. Edelman	\$72,096,000	275	4. Sam Brown Inc., Wayne	5,621,644	40
2. APCO Worldwide	41,817,000	165	5. Gatesman, Pittsburgh	2,634,274	67
3. Spectrum	32,900,000	116	6. Brownstein Group, Philadelphia	2,537,214	9
4. IMRE, LLC, Baltimore, MD	21,940,000	133	7. Buchanan Public Relations, Bryn Mawr	1,586,150	8
5. Crosby, Annapolis, MD	20,693,661	80	8. WordWrite Communications LLC, Pittsburgh	1,368,300	10
6. Finn Partners	12,538,000	60	<b>MIDWEST CITIES</b>		
7. JPA Health Communications	9,264,490	34	1. Edelman (includes Detroit), Chicago, IL	\$99,833,000	557
8. Merritt Group, McLean, VA	7,904,308	37	2. Fahlgren Mortine, Columbus, OH	29,632,896	208
9. Kivvit	4,873,484	14	3. Walker Sands Comms., Chicago, IL	14,116,410	115
10. SevenTwenty Strategies, LLC	4,015,229	31	4. Padilla, Minneapolis, MN	13,993,737	87
11. Padilla	2,216,003	12	5. Lambert, Grand Rapids, MI	10,055,000	55
12. Stanton Communications	1,955,838	11	6. Finn Partners (includes Detroit), Chicago, IL	8,702,000	53
13. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms.	1,685,316	10	7. Greentarget Global LLC, Chicago, IL	8,467,310	42
14. MWWRP	1,145,255	12	8. Kivvit, Chicago, IL	6,985,725	20
15. Weiss PR, Inc., Baltimore, MD	587,820	3	9. G&S Business Comms., Chicago, IL	5,959,330	34
			10. Tunheim, Minneapolis, MN	5,581,000	33
			11. Public Communications Inc., Chicago, IL	5,110,141	42
			12. L.C. Williams & Associates, Chicago, IL	4,705,032	23
			13. Padilla, Chicago, IL	4,258,904	22

# RANKINGS OF PR FIRMS BY CITY/GEOGRAPHY

Firm	2018 Net Fees	FT Empl.	Firm	2018 Net Fees	FT Empl.
14. APCO Worldwide, Chicago, IL	\$4,117,600	17	6. The Hoffman Agency, San Jose, CA	\$13,665,000	35
15. Beehive Strategic Comm., St. Paul, MN	2,973,951	13	7. Hotwire	9,503,203	32
16. Standing Partnership, St. Louis, MO	2,925,757	16	8. ICR	9,304,869	18
17. Zapwater Communications, Chicago, IL	2,805,000	22	9. Singer Associates, Inc.	7,690,997	18
18. O'Malley Hansen Comms., Chicago, IL	2,413,000	13	10. Inkhouse	5,885,662	42
19. Kohnstamm Comms., Inc., St. Paul, MN	2,311,630	12	11. Finn Partners	5,324,000	25
20. MWWPR, Chicago, IL	1,952,515	10	12. Edelman	3,264,000	15
21. Belmont Partners, Minneapolis, MN	1,826,828	13	13. Perry Comms Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,701,296	10
22. Akrete, Evanston, IL	1,410,893	4	14. Infinite Global	2,590,933	10
23. Maccabee, Minneapolis, MN	1,190,839	8	15. Padilla	2,516,625	13
24. Bianchi Public Relations, Troy, MI	900,432	3	16. Karbo Communications	2,012,737	17
25. Infinite Global, Chicago, IL	259,093	1	17. MWWPR	1,816,674	8
			18. Landis Communications	1,738,547	8

## TEXAS

1. Edelman (includes Dallas & Houston), Austin	\$23,100,000	108
2. Pierpont Communications, Houston	6,763,557	31
3. Touchdown PR, Austin	4,100,995	38
4. Champion Management Group, Dallas	3,011,783	22
5. Idea Grove, Dallas	2,901,468	34
6. SPM Communications, Dallas	2,103,020	14
7. BizCom Associates, Plano	708,907	8

## SOUTHEAST

1. French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	\$29,280,490	113
2. Jackson Spalding, Atlanta, GA	25,300,426	138
3. Edelman, Atlanta, GA	23,212,000	120
4. G&S Business Communications, Raleigh, NC	17,144,974	83
5. Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, FL	15,200,000	52
6. rbb Communications, Miami, FL	13,552,882	74
7. Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock, Brentwood, TN	11,591,239	36
8. Jeffrey Group, Miami, FL	9,975,712	157
9. Finn Partners, Nashville, TN	9,909,000	62
10. MP&F Strategic Comms., Nashville, TN	9,541,632	65
11. Padilla, Richmond, VA	7,380,816	49
12. Trevelino/Keller, Atlanta, GA	4,043,027	24
13. APCO Worldwide, Raleigh, NC	3,844,000	19
14. Lovell Communications, Nashville, TN	2,976,067	20
15. BoardroomPR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	2,900,000	17
16. Edelman, Orlando, FL	2,779,000	11
17. ARPR, Atlanta, GA	2,262,442	17
18. Hemsworth Comms., Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,750,973	22
19. The Bradford Group, Nashville, TN	1,345,265	12
20. The Dana Agency, Miami, FL	1,004,717	9
21. CommCentric Solutions, Inc., Tampa, FL	995,796	6
22. Kivvit, Miami, FL	747,719	4
23. TransMedia Group, Boca Raton, FL	650,676	6
24. Judge Public Relations, LLC, Tampa, FL	629,654	6

## LOS ANGELES

1. Edelman (includes Beverly Hills)	\$30,354,000	143
2. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,119,160	35
3. Citizen Relations (includes Irvine)	7,649,779	0
4. Konnect Agency	5,739,951	33
5. Finn Partners	4,504,000	38
6. MWWPR	3,774,259	16
7. Cerrell Associates	3,751,386	19
8. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,170,000	11
9. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,110,618	12
10. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	1,335,565	9
11. The Hoyt Organization Inc., Torrance, CA	1,200,000	9
12. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	910,137	7

## SAN FRANCISCO & NORTH CALIFORNIA

1. W2O Group	\$177,569,000	718
2. Edelman (includes Silicon Valley)	47,847,000	203
3. LaunchSquad	19,284,304	116
4. Highwire PR	17,901,420	74
5. Bateman Group	14,499,420	68

## WESTERN CITIES

1. W2O Group, San Francisco, CA	\$177,569,000	718
2. Edelman (incl. Silicon Valley), San Francisco, CA	47,847,000	203
3. Edelman, Seattle, WA	37,490,000	194
4. Edelman (incl. Beverly Hills), Los Angeles, CA	30,354,000	143
5. LaunchSquad, San Francisco, CA	19,284,304	116
6. Highwire PR, San Francisco, CA	17,901,420	74
7. Bateman Group, San Francisco, CA	14,499,420	68
8. The Hoffman Agency, San Jose, CA	13,665,000	35
9. Davies, Santa Barbara, CA	11,119,160	35
10. Hotwire, San Francisco, CA	9,503,203	32
11. ICR, San Francisco, CA	9,304,869	18
12. Edelman, Portland, OR	8,207,000	44
13. Singer Associates, Inc., San Francisco, CA	7,690,997	18
14. Citizen Relations, Los Angeles, CA	7,649,779	0
15. Inkhouse, San Francisco, CA	5,885,662	42
16. Konnect Agency, Los Angeles, CA	5,739,951	33
17. Finn Partners, San Francisco, CA	5,324,000	25
18. Finn Partners, Los Angeles, CA	4,504,000	38
19. MWWPR, Los Angeles, CA	3,774,259	16
20. Cerrell Associates, Los Angeles, CA	3,751,386	19
21. Edelman, Sacramento, CA	3,264,000	15
22. Finn Partners, Portland, OR	2,844,000	21
23. Perry Comms. Group, Inc., Sacramento, CA	2,701,296	10
24. Infinite Global, San Francisco, CA	2,590,933	10
25. Padilla, San Francisco, CA	2,516,625	13
26. IW Group, Inc., West Hollywood, CA	2,170,000	11
27. BLAZE, Santa Monica, CA	2,110,618	12
28. Karbo Communications, San Francisco, CA	2,012,737	17
29. APCO Worldwide (includes employee presence from CA to CO), Seattle, WA	2,003,400	11
30. MWWPR, San Francisco, CA	1,816,674	8
31. Landis Communications, San Francisco, CA	1,738,547	8
32. Raffetto Herman Strategic Comms., Seattle, WA	1,706,137	10
33. Marketing Maven PR, Camarillo, CA	1,335,565	9
34. The Hoyt Organization Inc., Torrance, CA	1,200,000	9
35. KCD Public Relations, Inc., San Diego, CA	1,057,583	8
36. Bob Gold & Associates, Redondo Beach, CA	910,137	7
37. Novitas Communications, Denver, CO	383,441	4

The firms ranked in the O'Dwyer Co. rankings of PR firms have satisfied O'Dwyer's ranking rules, supporting fee and employee totals with income tax and W-3 forms and providing a current account list. The O'Dwyer rankings should be regarded as an expression of our judgment of a firm's standing within the industry, and are not warranted to comply with any specific objective standards.

Firms are added to O'Dwyer's rankings throughout the year. Go to [odwyerpr.com](http://odwyerpr.com) for an up-to-date version of the rankings.

# Lessons learned after an agency acquisition

Insights to ensure a seamless transition before, during and after a PR agency sale.

By Art Stevens

If your PR or digital marketing agency is considering an acquisition, you likely know how crucial it is to incorporate careful, strategic planning and collaboration across both entities to ensure a smooth transition and happy, motivated employees.

Effectively communicating the changes throughout the process — both internally and externally — is also important, if not vital. Unfortunately, in cases where communications were handled poorly during an acquisition, management ends up with dissatisfied employees, skeptical clients, and a baffling brand message, among other issues. These effects can create long-term—sometimes permanent—damage.

Whether your acquisition experience is a seamless one depends on numerous factors surrounding company culture, chemistry and collaboration, as well as the blending of best practices of each firm.

Dave Imre, CEO of NYC/LA/Baltimore digital marketing agency imre, knew what he was doing when his agency acquired Los Angeles-based, boutique PR firm, JMPR, last October. I had the pleasure of working with both agencies to help consummate the deal.

Imre's operations were previously comprised of the imre Health brand alongside its consumer practice, and top brand clients including PepsiCo, Dickies, AstraZeneca, T. Rowe Price, Under Armour Inc. and John Deere. JMPR is known for specializing in the luxury, lifestyle and transportation industries, and works with numerous *Fortune* 500 companies including Infiniti, Airstream and Bugatti.

According to Dave, the acquisition process has progressed rather seamlessly since planning and negotiations began almost a year ago. As part of the deal, imre has added JMPR's staff of 13 to its West Coast operations, doubling the size of the firm's L.A. office. Imre's total staff size is now 150 across the combined company.

From a staff and client retention standpoint, Dave said the acquisition has been a positive experience. He attributes the success thus far to numerous crucial factors, including strategic planning. "This meant gaming out every possible scenario ahead of time, and learning as much as possible about the people we were going to inherit ahead of time," he said.

For those executives considering an agen-

cy acquisition, he recommends:

## Get all leaders involved

Change can be difficult for employees, and it's important to understand that they'll need time and support to adapt to the new "normal." For a change as significant as an acquisition, all senior executives in each firm should be active, communicative participants before, during and after the process. Senior management must commit to roll up their sleeves and engage with staff members at all levels to keep operations seamless, especially during the transitional period.

"We didn't want to leave anything to chance during the [acquisition] process," he said. "We were extremely high-touch with our employees, especially post-sale. In fact, on day one, our two partners and five other senior leaders were on-site in L.A. to welcome new employees and to show them our serious commitment ... the goal throughout the process has been to show our dedication to our employees personally."

## Make communication and culture top priorities

The importance of integrating two different cultures can sometimes be overlooked during an acquisition. However, nuances must be considered early on to avoid hindering morale. For instance, imre invested ample time carefully evaluating any potential cultural differences between the two agencies to mitigate potential challenges and circumvent any surprises. Dave said this approach helps avoid hurling new employees into an unfamiliar environment.

"We were very honest from the start, and we outlined the anticipated changes to allay any fears. We also communicated that new systems would be put in place, new career path opportunities, but there also would be plenty of training to eliminate any surprises."

Dave stressed the importance of laying out the groundwork and addressing employee concerns immediately, including keeping communication lines open about the state and security of jobs, roles and responsibilities, growth plans and more. With this approach, he noted, not a single employee skips a beat after a deal is completed.

imre's management team intentionally "hand-held" each employee along the way,

from helping individuals decide on benefit and healthcare options to providing one-on-one counseling for those interested in personal growth and development opportunities.

## Focus on your client retention strategy

In general, many clients are supportive of acquisitions, provided that an organization is open and honest about the motivation behind the sale. They also want to be assured that they'll continue to receive the same level of service they've come to expect.

In imre's case, management dedicated time to communicate the reasoning behind the new direction to all clients. "This has been key to keeping everyone engaged and informed both on JMPR's side and on our side," he said.

Just prior to announcing the acquisition publicly, Dave said both agencies personally called top clients on each side to clearly spell out the benefits to them of the deal. Also, within four weeks post-sale, these same clients received in-person, follow-up meetings. "We attribute our client retention rates to this constant, clear communication," he said.

## The bottom line

The process of successfully acquiring or merging companies can take months or even years, and depends, in part, on aspects like culture and size. And both organizations will no doubt experience change as a result. Yet it's an outstanding opportunity to innovate and open doors.

The takeaway here is to continuously keep communication lines open and keep updating employees, letting them know their place and how they can help make the acquisition process more seamless.

Dave stressed that if both the buyer and seller are fully committed to transparency and constant communication to all stakeholders from the start, the integration period can be a genuine growth opportunity.

"Be sure you talk the talk and walk the walk," he said. "Your employees and clients will be looking at everything you do to make sure you keep your word throughout the process."

*Art Stevens is Managing Partner of The Stevens Group, comprised of consultants to the PR agency profession and focusing on mergers, acquisitions and management consulting.* ○



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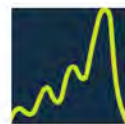
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# A crisis primer for the social media era

The old crisis management protocols of controlling the narrative while communicating the brand story doesn't work in a digital age where every action is misconstrued as a misstep and anything you say can and will be used against you.

By Peter Burger

**Y**ou never want a serious crisis to go to waste." These words from President Obama's Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel have been taken out of context for cynical opportunism. Try making that declaration to Boeing, as its stock price drops in the wake of the 737 Max Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines crashes or any organization fighting to maintain its reputation during a public conflagration. Even if a crisis doesn't involve the tragic loss of life, far from seeking to capitalize on it, leadership simply wants it to go away.

In the digital-social media age, scandals are spread and remain memorialized a few clicks away. Recent examples include H&M selling a racist t-shirt; Oxfam's workers paying for sex while working in Haiti; and Tesla CEO Elon Musk running afoul of the SEC with his tweets and smoking weed during a video podcast. Not to mention the post-2016 U.S. presidential election revelation that Facebook had harvested customer data for client Cambridge Analytica without their permission, a contravention of its mission to make the world a "more connected place."

These debacles metastasized across the web as memes, acquiring a life of their own that companies could do little to stop. Indeed, today every crisis is digital, moving at a velocity that could tarnish even the most pristine brand halo, despite an organization's best efforts to respond. Social platforms have turned the print media's 24-hour news cycle into a relic. Yet the average PR team clings to the old mission of "controlling the narrative" by communicating the corporate story early and often.

This approach doesn't work. According to Eric Dezenhall, CEO of Washington, D.C.-based crisis management firm Dezenhall Resources, during a full-blown crisis it doesn't matter how melliflously a company's spokesperson talks and how precise its tweets are. "No matter what they do, for a while every action will be considered a misstep," Dezenhall said. Anything you utter orally or digitally can and will be used against you. It's time to take a tough look at the PR crisis communications rulebook and write a new one.

## Shattering the PR crystal ball

Let's start by examining a tenet of public relations: the crisis communications plan. However well-intentioned, it's based on the

naïve belief that PR professionals can see the future. Peering into their crystal balls, PR chiefs devise plans for their potential crises. When a predicament occurs, the company implements the corresponding plan to blunt public outcry, avoid product recalls, arrest a plummeting stock price and preserve brand equity. All in a good few months' work. Theoretically.

Such a PR plan likely includes anticipating issues and preparing responses to each; building a team with roles including a spokesperson that can execute a response to whichever issue arises; developing a holding pattern statement to issue to the media when the crisis happens; being ready to respond immediately after the crisis hits; showing compassion for the people harmed; have the capability to monitor the situation as it occurs; and conduct an analysis when it's over to assess the effectiveness of the plan.

No PR director ever got fired for developing a crisis plan. But that doesn't constitute evidence that plans work. "The PR industry over-emphasizes preparation because they get to bill for it," according to Dezenhall. "Most preparation — not all — is worthless because nothing is predictable. Companies desperately want to be told they can prepare because it gives them the illusion of control." Accordingly, Dezenhall is adamant that "There is no one 'approach' that works. The flaw is that my industry sells an 'approach.' Every case is different."

In short, you can't plan for a crisis you can't predict.

## Less conversation, more action

While a big crisis plan might make you feel confident today, it likely won't help you cure an actual future crisis. "It's more useful to have a response apparatus and strong leadership than a good plan," Dezenhall said. "The focus should be on making sure you've got a strong leader with the authority to act, not in developing a thorough plan that will never be used."

To stem a crisis, you need to be able to solve problems with the business rather than engage in the thankless and usually futile efforts of trying to take control of a narrative through words. "If your client doesn't have the power to authorize a product recall, you don't have a team leader," Dezenhall said. "A company's PR chief almost never has that power." Like it or not,

the de facto crisis leader is the chief executive, not the PR chief, and only executive actions that solve operational and business issues will make a measurable difference.

## Going (anti)social

A highly-accepted way of communicating is social media, and you need to stay away from it during a true viral crisis. These days, social isn't only the preferred channel for issuing apologies. Marketing gurus extol the virtues of upping your social "quotient" by "engaging" your constituents with dialogue and sticky content they can't get enough of. But when it comes to large corporations, social media doesn't stem the tide of haters. Quite often, just the opposite results when you "go social."

According to Dezenhall, "Social media is a vehicle for dispersion. Crisis management is a discipline of containment." As a result, "More often than not social media exacerbates crises because people over-respond and believe in the old cliché of 'respond immediately.' That ethic came from another era when there weren't cascading technologies magnifying everything."

In certain situations, social media can be effective. It's a useful marketing tool and brand positioning channel. But when it comes to getting out your message during turmoil, one need only examine the snarky comments filling up Twitter feeds to see how social can be misused. "I find social media useful for monitoring the state of play on a subject and for communicating discreet, specific information," Dezenhall said. "It is no forum for engaging in a debate with parties that have a vested interest in keeping hostilities alive."

## Friends, foes, "stakeholders"

Crises aren't orderly affairs in which everyone speaks when it's their turn and plays by preset rules. That's why "you have to run certain crisis campaigns like political campaigns because you need friends," Dezenhall said. "The first thing I look at when I take on a new client is who their adversaries are. If they have serious enemies, they'll need se-



Peter Burger

Continued on next page

## Crisis primer

— Continued from last page

rious friends and that's one of the first challenges we have to work our way through."

Whether you're a bank, consumer products company or an energy conglomerate, you must not hesitate from enlisting your most powerful constituencies. "Your adversaries will declare your efforts to find friends of your own to be unfair but that shouldn't stop you." Presently, it's not politically correct to conceive of conflict as a zero-sum game. But a crisis isn't a marketing scenario where everyone wins.

### Who're you going to call?

"Make love not war" isn't a strategy that works when you're in a war of ideas. Accordingly, "There are peacetime advisors and wartime advisors," Dezenhall said, which is why "the skill set and temperament it takes to run a PR campaign to promote a product is different from the skill set required to do battle." Which experts are you going to hire to weather a crisis?

The people you want on your side are individuals who've been subpoenaed, sued and fired — not merely those who've been at companies under siege, but people who've been through the eye of the storm. Dezenhall recommends people who've been in politics rather than the corporate world. "Political types tend to understand

it's a battle, a conflict. Corporate people tend to think everything is a misunderstanding that can be addressed by better communications," he said.

### Beware the glass jaw

It doesn't matter how beloved an organization is, how strong its brand, how lofty its market valuation. During a crisis, the company can do no right. Gone is your aura of invincibility. Dezenhall used boxing terms to describe the phenomenon. "All companies have 'glass jaws' under the wrong set of circumstances."

An aerospace company with an excellent safety record was recently described by the following *New York Times* headline: "As Boeing Confronted a Swelling Crisis, It Had Little to Say." Fair enough. The article says that with the crisis unfolding on social media, Boeing's customers are not just the airlines but also the airlines' customers, suggesting it owes them a conversation. But facing an environment in which every word is being digitally parsed, the airline has studiously resisted overcommunicating.

A more trenchant take came from *PR Week*, which named Boeing's response its "Flop of the month" for the aircraft manufacturer delaying grounding the 737 Max only after the UK, China, India and Australia — and finally President Trump in the U.S. — grounded the plane.

Boeing is now handling the crisis in a clinical manner, with its CEO claiming the

problem is a technical one, searching for a software remedy while emphasizing that the company itself is the proper authority to arrive at the solution and cutting production of the jet. Notably, while the first Boeing 737 took to the skies in 1967 and has a sterling safety record overall, the current crisis seems to involve not only a software problem but also a training issue that lies with both airline and manufacturer to solve.

No words can change the post-crash situation. Better to take the measured, analytical approach of a management consultant to identify the problem, fix it, compensate victims, regain confidence from airlines and regulators and demonstrate over time that the aircraft and software function.

"The solution isn't a better CEO interview," Dezenhall said. Crisis management isn't the same as PR. It's not about building the brand but rather preserving it by navigating through the thorny situation at hand — not letting a "serious crisis go to waste" but rather knowing when "a win is losing by less."

*Peter Burger is an omnichannel content consultant and communications writer who brings narrative life to brands, products and services, organizational cultures and people. He's worked with the likes of EY, Deloitte, JPMorgan Chase, Towers Watson, New York Life and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. View his portfolio at [aislewpeter.com](http://aislewpeter.com).*



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## Microsoft co-founders' PR rep joins Facebook

**J**ohn Pinette, who worked for Microsoft Co-Founders Paul Allen and Bill Gates, has joined Facebook as VP-Global Communications.

He takes over for Caryn Marooney, who announced plans to quit in February.

Most recently, Pinette was VP-Marketing and Communications at Vulcan Inc, the philanthropic, technology and business platform of Allen.

Earlier, he headed communications for Gates Ventures, served as Asia-Pacific PR lead for Google, worked in various PR jobs at Microsoft and handled external PR for Pershing Square Capital Management hedge fund. ○



John Pinette

## Wells Fargo's ex-PR chief joins Zeno

**O**scar Suris, the former PR chief at Wells Fargo who exited amid its fake accounts scandal, has joined Zeno Group as Executive VP for Corporate and Crisis Strategy.

At his departure from the embattled bank last August, Suris was Executive VP and head of corporate relations and PR counsel to top management.

The nine-year veteran of the bank was charged with "communicating the company's vision & values, goals and achievements to key stakeholders—team members, customers, communities and shareholders," according to his LinkedIn bio.

Earlier, Suris was Director of Corporate Communications at Ford Motor and AutoNation.

The latest Wells Fargo CEO, Tim Sloan, quit March 28 after a three-year run. He had replaced John Stumpf. Allen Parker, general counsel of the bank, is Interim CEO.

Zeno Group, #5 on *O'Dwyer's* rankings,



Oscar Suris

is a Daniel J. Edelman Co. Edelman represents Wells Fargo. It promoted the January launch of the new image campaign tagged "This is Wells Fargo" to highlight its commitment to customer service. ○

## Levick's Deschauer moves to Markstein

**M**arkstein has hired Jack Deschauer as a strategic consultant in its Washington, D.C. office. Deschauer joins Markstein from LEVICK, where he was a Senior Vice President, co-managing the corporate affairs practice and leading crisis teams.

At LEVICK, Deschauer worked across numerous industries with such clients as CITGO Petroleum Corporation, Pratt & Whitney, the United States Olympic Committee, World TeamTennis and Carnival Cruise Lines.

He previously was a Senior Director at Qorvis Communications, where he worked on national communications programs for defense contractors; nutritional, health and wellness groups; and GQ and *Scientific American* magazines.

Markstein represents clients including Walmart, Encompass Health, Colonial Pipeline, Diversified Gas & Oil, the International Women's Media Foundation and The World Games 2021 Birmingham. ○



Jack Deschauer

## Goldman Sachs' Wells goes to Prosek

**P**rosek Partners has recruited David Wells, who was Chief Marketing and Communications Officer in Goldman Sachs' consumer and investment management division, as Partner. Earlier, he headed communications for Goldman's Americas unit.

Wells has also served as Head of Marketing and Communication, EMEA at J.P. Morgan and has worked as an editor and reporter at the *Financial Times* and *Bloomberg*. He has



David Wells

also been a commentator for National Public Radio and was a frequent contributor to programs on CNBC, CNN, the BBC and other networks. ○

## MSL recruits Edelman's Long

**M**SL has named Isabel Long Senior Vice President, U.S. Business Development, effective May 1. Long comes to MSL from Edelman's Chicago office, where she served as SVP, Director of Growth and Development. She has also worked in business development for Deutsch NY and DDB Chicago.

In her new post, Long will lead strategic growth across MSL's U.S. network, reporting to Chief Integration Officer Amy Cheronis.

MSL, which is part of the Publicis Groupe, has 100 offices in 40 countries. ○



Isabel Long

## Brown becomes Cookerly president

**C**ookerly Public Relations has promoted Stephen Brown to the role of President.

He succeeds agency founder Carol Cookerly, who will remain with the company as CEO.

Brown joined the Atlanta-based communications firm in 2015 as Senior Vice President and Chief Innovation Officer, and was responsible for agency business development and marketing initiatives. He arrived at Cookerly from Cohn & Wolfe, where he was Executive VP and Managing Director of the WPP unit's Atlanta office.

Prior to that he was a Senior VP in MSL-GROUP's consumer practice and a Director in Ketchum's Technology Influencer Relations practice.

Atlanta-based Cookerly, which focuses on crisis and issues management, was founded in 1991. ○



Stephen Brown

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BackBay Communications is an integrated public relations and content marketing firm focused on the financial services sector, with special expertise in the private equity, asset management and fintech industries. With offices in Boston and London, BackBay is a specialty agency serving companies across the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, leveraging global partners.

BackBay takes a brand-centric, content-driven approach to developing and executing market positioning and integrated commu-

nications programs for financial services firms including marketing strategy, content development, media relations, brand research and message development, creative design and multi-channel distribution of company news and perspectives to build brand awareness, credibility and drive new business for our clients.

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BackBay was recently ranked #1 in Boston for financial services PR by *O'Dwyers* for the third year in a row and was recognized as Communications Firm of the Year by M&A Advisor. BackBay also consistently ranks as a top ten global PR Agency in The Deal's private equity league tables.

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**Jeff Bradford, CEO of the Bradford Group.**

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**Marc Brownstein**, President and CEO  
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Recognized by *Ad Age* as a "Small Agency of the Year," Brownstein Group (BG) is the longest-running independent marketing communications agency in Philadelphia. Founded at the height of the Creative Revolution in 1964, BG is a full-service agency with expertise across all disciplines, including: brand strategy, advertising, public relations, social media, and digital services. BG specializes in crafting memorable campaigns that generate positive brand awareness, increased sales/leads and measurable impact for clients like IKEA, Comcast Xfinity, Wawa, GIANT Food Stores, Western Union, NJM Insurance, and DuPont™ Sorona®. Ranked as an *O'Dwyer's* Top 100 National PR Agency and *Fortune* Magazine's Top 100 Best Places to Work for Women, BG is relentless in the pursuit of breakthrough ideas, but dedicated to its clients and people.

## BUCHANAN PUBLIC RELATIONS LLC

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**Anne A. Buchanan**, APR, President ([anne.buchanan@buchananpr.com](mailto:anne.buchanan@buchananpr.com))  
**Nancy Page**, EVP ([nancy.page@buchananpr.com](mailto:nancy.page@buchananpr.com))

Founded in 1998, Buchanan Public Relations LLC is an award-winning, dog-friendly, national communications agency based in Philadelphia. We specialize in media relations, digital, and crisis communications, with expertise in healthcare, life sciences, financial services, professional services, not-for-profit, real estate and consumer goods.

With excellence and integrity as guiding principles, we help brands find and share stories that matter. Our storytelling tools include graphics and video, in addition to

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**Buchanan Public Relations' three canine employees – Shiloh, Katie and Lacey.**

**BUCHANAN PR**

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writing. We pride ourselves on solid, long-term relationships with our clients.

Our amazing client roster includes: Anthony & Sylvan, AtlantiCare, Bimbo Bakeries USA, Barsz Gowie Amon & Fultz, LLC, Blaschak Coal Corp., Chester Up-land School District, Foundation to Abolish Child Sex Abuse, Pennsylvania Trust, Pepper Hamilton LLP, Philadelphia Insurance Companies, Ramboll, Salvesson Stetson Group, Willow Valley and World Affairs Council of Philadelphia

A founding member of the Public Relations Global Network (PRGN), we offer clients access to 50 top-tier, independent PR firms around the world.

**BUTLER ASSOCIATES, LLC**

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Thomas P. Butler, President

Butler Associates is winner of the PRSA-NY's 2018 Best Legal & Communications Campaign award and likewise in 2016 was honored with the PRSA-NY's Best Business Campaign and Best Public Affairs Campaign achievement. Serving clients since 1996, our

firm provides strong, effective corporate, financial, legal, crisis and public affairs strategies that have positive, lasting impacts.

Whether a client's need is a shareholder campaign, CEO-level messaging, brand awareness, or long-range strategic planning, Butler Associates prides itself on developing and nurturing key issues as well as relationships that effectively build and sustain our client's reputation and brand.

Butler Associates continually achieves significant visibility, spotlights corporate and financial leaders, leads or supports winning campaigns, delivers clear and crisp messaging for a diverse range of clients. Our team includes seasoned professionals who are committed to their clients and deliver consistent, measurable results.

The industries we advocate for include the finance, banking, real estate, construction, legal, medical, telecommunications, high-tech, travel, hospitality and food sectors.

**CASHMANKATZ**

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Additional locations: Boston, New York City

**Tony Cashman**, President and CEO  
**Eric Cavoli**, Partner, SVP, Group Creative Director  
**Amanda Mueller**, Partner, SVP, Client Services

CashmanKatz has been producing unexpected ideas and delivering unexpected results for clients since 1992. A full-service integrated marketing agency, CashmanKatz offers multiple disciplines under one roof, including advertising, public relations, social media, media planning and buying, research and branding, content creation and video/audio production services. CashmanKatz houses three separate operating companies — InFocus (www.ctinfocus.com), Dsign Digital (www.dsigndigital.com), and Octagon Strategy Group (www.octagonstrategy.com) — which offer market research, content creation, and public affairs, respectively. CashmanKatz boasts a broad set of capabilities and three Northeast offices but still maintains a nimble team that generates solutions to clients' toughest challenges.

We have built an agency that most clients don't expect. A multi-service enterprise that feels like a creative boutique. An unassuming shop with the game-changing idea and the resources to see it

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**Among its clients, Butler Associates represents the Great New York Automobile Dealers Association, which owns and produces the New York International Auto Show.**



# Judgment. Empathy. Experience. Results.

In 2019, global companies and institutions will confront unforeseen events that could alter their future, pose unprecedented challenges, and potentially set them on a new course that will redefine their organization and significantly impact their key stakeholders.

With nearly five decades of experience, Kekst CNC is one of the world's leaders in counseling clients on special situations including: corporate and financial communications, mergers & acquisitions, shareholder activism and governance, crisis communications, regulatory investigations/resolutions, litigation support, IPO communications, restructurings, issues and reputation management, as well as change management and employee engagement. In most every instance, our proven experience, sound judgment, and results are supported by data-driven insights, based on proprietary research and analysis capabilities.

That's why more than 600 clients around the world rely on Kekst CNC as their strategic communications partner. With 250 professionals located in 12 offices in key global markets, we create and implement communications strategies to support every aspect of our clients' business objectives to: help them grow organically or through acquisition; help them to undertake transformative initiatives; or help them protect themselves against specific or unforeseen threats and high stakes reputational issues.

## **Kekst CNC: a Leading Global Strategic Communications Consultancy.**

New York, London, Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt, Brussels, Tokyo,  
Seoul, Hong Kong, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Stockholm (JKL)

## CASHMANKATZ

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through. Our smaller feel and full capabilities mean smart, defensible solutions delivered quickly and without the expected time and cost casualties of big agency process.

Clients Include: AVANGRID, BIC North America, Bouvier Insurance, Cirque Du Soleil, Click It or Ticket, CT Catholic Conference, CT Dept. of Motor Vehicles, CT Dept. of Public Health, CT Dept. of Revenue Services, CT Dept. of Transportation, CT Natural Gas, CT Science Center, Eastern CT Health Network, Energize CT, Farmington Bank, Frontier Communications, Gaylord Hospital, General Dynamics, Ion Bank, Iron Mountain, Kiehl's, Kingswood Oxford, Lincoln Financial Group, Mahoney Sabol LLP, Mass Mutual, Mohegan Sun Holdings, MS Society, National Grid, National Progressive Plastic Bag Assn., Quinnipiac Athletics, Saint Mary's Hospital, School Nutrition Association of CT, See Something Say Something, Shriners Hospitals for Children, The Lighting Quotient, Trinity Health New England, United Illuminating, University of Connecticut Genomics, and WTNH - ABC.

## COYNE PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**Thomas F. Coyne, CEO**  
**Rich Lukis, John Gogarty,**  
Presidents  
**Kelly Dencker, Jennifer**  
**Kamienski, Tim Schramm,**  
**Lisa Wolleon,** Executive Vice  
Presidents

As one of the Top Independent PR Firms in the U.S., Coyne PR delivers programs built on a foundation of stand-out creative, integrated thinking and activation capabilities to effectively convey messages across paid, earned, shared and owned channels for its clients. These programs have been recognized with more than 1,000 industry awards since the agency's inception in 1991 and led to the agency being named the Best Agency to Work For Globally by *The Holmes Report*.

Spanning nearly 20 industry verticals, Coyne's client roster includes many of the most respected companies in the world and those who want to be, including Hard Rock International, Shell Oil, Chrysler, Pfizer, Hilton, VTech and IMAX, among others.

## CRENSHAW COMMUNICATIONS

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**Dorothy Crenshaw, CEO/Founder**  
**Chris Harihar, Partner**

At Crenshaw Communications our mission is to help turn high-growth tech companies into powerhouse brands. For startup companies and established businesses alike, we shape and communicate compelling brand stories that bring meaningful innovation to life. Our campaigns translate product and service attributes into real brand equity. They're designed not just to generate positive visibility, but to engage prospects and build connections with influencers and end users. As the partner to many new technology companies, we have a high-energy, entrepreneurial culture that rewards action and accountability, with outcomes that are transformational for clients.

Crenshaw Communications. Come for the insights and ideas. Stay for the results.

## CROSBY

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**Raymond Crosby, President**  
**Joel Machak, Executive Creative Director**  
**Denise Aube, Healthcare Practice Leader**  
**Meredith Williams, Government Practice Co-Leader**  
**Anna Zawislanski, Government Practice Co-Leader**  
**Pam Atkinson, Director of Connection Planning**  
**Suresh John, Director of Digital Strategy & Analytics**

The Crosby team is passionate about helping clients Inspire Actions That Matter™ — actions that positively impact people's lives and contribute to the greater good.

Crosby helps clients make powerful connections with their customers, constituents and communities to shape attitudes, inspire behavior change, and motivate action. The firm's award-winning campaigns, which integrate paid, earned, shared and owned media, have touched the lives of virtually every American.

The firm has specialized practices in Healthcare, Government, Nonprofits & Causes, and Military & Veterans. Clients include the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), Dept. of Defense/Military OneSource, ENERGY STAR,

Kaiser Permanente, OrganDonor.gov, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Social Security Administration, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, U.S. Dept. Of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, Veterans Health Administration and The Wallace Foundation.

Crosby is #26 on *O'Dwyer's* national ranking of PR firms, #7 for healthcare PR, and is a member of the PR Council and American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As). The firm has offices in Maryland's state capital of Annapolis and in Washington, D.C. To see case studies and capabilities, visit [www.crosbymarketing.com](http://www.crosbymarketing.com).

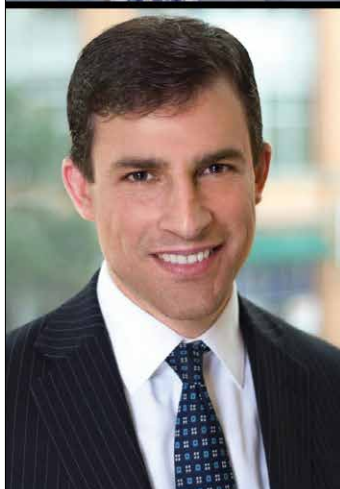
## THE DANA AGENCY PR

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www.thedanaagency.com

Founded in 2003, The Dana Agency is recognized as a leading boutique public relations agency founded by award-winning publicist Dana Rhoden. With offices in NYC, LA and Miami, The Dana Agency specializes in national, regional and trade public relations outreach, marketing, creative special events, brand management and product placement for lifestyle brands. The Dana Agency's team of trusted communication con-



Crosby staff members support the company's mission of "Inspiring Actions That Matter" by donating time and money to worthy charities and nonprofits.



**Richard Dukas, Chairman and CEO, and Seth Linden, President, Dukas Linden Public Relations.**

sultants, many former journalists, work to maximize the client's media exposure through strategic and creative PR campaigns, partnerships and events that successfully drive revenue.

The agency specializes in creative strategy for a wide array of national brands spanning food and beverage, hospitality, real estate, health/wellness, beauty, fashion, entertainment, arts and culture and consumer products. Clients benefit from the reach of a larger, more expensive firm but with the media expertise, responsiveness and nimbleness of a specialized boutique agency.

## DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLORS INTERNATIONAL (DCI)

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Regional Offices: Denver; Los Angeles; Toronto

**Karyl Leigh Barnes**, President, Tourism Practice  
**Julie Curtin**, President, Economic Development Practice  
**Andrew Levine**, Chairman

One Agency. Two Specialized Practice Areas. Established in 1960, Development Counsellors International (DCI) focuses exclusively on economic development and travel marketing. We have worked with more than 500 cities, regions, states, provinces and countries to help them attract business investment, visitors and talent. Experts in economic development marketing, DCI knows how to elevate a community's image, increase project inquiries and help create new investment opportunities and quality jobs. We then help attract skilled talent to fill those jobs. Our travel marketing team partners with destinations to increase leisure, corporate and association visitor arrivals and spending. How? By winning the support of key influencers — media, digital influencers, meeting planners and the travel trade. Our goal always? Combine smart strategy with the right tactics to deliver powerful results.

DCI is globally connected through TAAN Worldwide, a network of 46 agencies in 29 countries.

## DUKAS LINDEN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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www.dlpr.com

**Richard Dukas**, Chairman & CEO  
**Seth Linden**, President  
**Zach Leibowitz**, Exec. VP

Dukas Linden Public Relations (DLPR) is a communications partner for leaders in finance, asset management, professional services, fintech and B2B technology. We create compelling narratives that expand our clients' share of voice, enhance their brand value and—most important—engage key audiences in a global marketplace.

Ranked #7 on *O'Dwyer's* list of top financial PR firms, we're driven by a passion to deliver targeted strategies and creative solutions that provide measurable benefits to clients—and help their businesses grow and succeed. Our full suite of integrated communications services includes: comprehensive messaging and media relations

across multiple platforms, content creation, media and presentation coaching, crisis and special situations communications, online reputation management and internal communications.

DLPR's clients include well-known, large and middle-market companies in key areas of finance, including: institutional investing, mutual funds, ETFs, wealth management, alternatives and private equity, and investment and community banking. DLPR has proven professional services experience within accounting, business consulting, compliance, cybersecurity, economics, risk management, management consulting and law. DLPR also has strong experience in fintech and B2B technology.

DLPR has an exceptionally strong broadcast group that, on average, secures approximately 50 bookings per month, primarily on CNBC, Bloomberg, Fox Business and Yahoo! Finance.

## EDELMAN

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Edelman is a global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations. Our 6,000 people in more than 60 offices deliver communications strategies that give our clients the confidence to lead and act with certainty, earning the trust of their stakeholders. Since our founding in 1952, we have remained an independent, family-run business. Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle). For more information please visit: [www.edelman.com](http://www.edelman.com)

## EVOKE PR & INFLUENCE

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**Maryellen Royle**, President, PR & Influence

Evoke PR & Influence is the global, award-winning public relations and stakeholder engagement division of Evoke, a leading marketing, media and communications agency that is bound by a common

purpose of making "Health More Human™. Evoke PR & Influence uses its knowledge, influencer relationships, and proven experience to connect leading industry organizations with the audiences that matter most. We translate the science behind health and wellness companies, products and services into meaningful stories that get heard, always striving to achieve our clients' objectives on time and within budget.

Clients include: Adaptimmune; Almirall; Ferring Pharmaceuticals; Harmony Biosciences; Idera Pharmaceuticals; Incyte Corporation; Janssen, the Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson; Life Sciences Pennsylvania; Nutricia; Reckitt Benckiser (RB); Teva Pharmaceuticals and Zynherba Pharmaceuticals.

## FAHLGREN MORTINE

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Fahlgren Mortine is an integrated marketing and communications company headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, with locations in Cleveland and Dayton, Ohio; Charleston, W. Va.; Boise, Idaho; Denver, Colo.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Miami; Chicago and New York City. The agency is a member of the global IPREX network.

Key industries include B2B, CPG, economic development, healthcare, higher education, manufacturing, logistics, retail, technology, and travel and tourism.

Our integrated model differentiates the Fahlgren Mortine experience by allowing us to pursue the best solution to our clients' challenges regardless of the medium. We consistently achieve a Net Promoter Score placing us in what the metric creator deems the "world-class" range, and it means clients enthusiastically recommend us to their peers.

The agency consistently earns Best Place to Work and Agency of the Year honors from various trade

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## FAHLGREN MORTINE

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organizations.

TURNER, a travel, tourism and active lifestyle public relations agency, is a Fahlgren Mortine company.

## FEINTUCH COMMUNICATIONS

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**Henry Feintuch**, President  
**Richard Roher**, Managing Partner  
**Rick Anderson**, Senior Managing Director  
**Doug Wright**, Senior Account Director

Feintuch Communications is an award-winning technology and financial services firm offering senior counsel, experience and tactical support to a broad range of organizations — from the *Fortune* 500 to emerging companies, non-profits and associations.

Key market segments include AV, adtech/martech, cleantech, consumer electronics, e-commerce, fintech and financial services, professional services and start-ups.

Our focus is on business results — helping our clients build distribution, sell more products or services, improve their corporate or brand image and achieve other business outcomes. Every client engagement is managed — hands-on — by a senior practitioner responsible for results.

We provide clients with an integrated blend of public relations, social media, advertising/marketing, investor relations, web/digital marketing and other services. Our firm serves on the board of PR World Alliance (www.PRWorldAlliance.com), a global partnership of premier independent communications consultancies.

Our goal is to provide the expert service, experienced counsel and hands-on support that our clients need to meet their business objectives. Our commitment is to be a superior business partner in each and every client engagement.

Clients include: BasisCode Compliance, HDMI Licensing Administrator, Leclanché, Silicon Line and ZeeVee.



**Henry Feintuch**, President, Feintuch Communications and 2014 past President, PRSA-NY.

## FINN PARTNERS

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**Philippa Polskin** (Arts and Culture) polskinp@finnpartners.com

**Scott Widmeyer** (Education) scott@finnpartners.com

**Alicia Young** (Consumer and Technology)

Finn Partners' success as one of the leading independent public relations agencies in the world is a result of organic growth, the integration of strategic acquired companies and new talent united

through shared values and a common philosophy of “working hard and playing nice.” Our 700 strategists across 18 offices in the US, Europe and Asia, provide deep expertise in key sectors: technology, health, consumer, travel + lifestyle, food + beverage, CSR, sustainability, corporate, financial services, crisis, education, public + government affairs and manufacturing and trade.

Our full-service marketing and communications services deliver break-through campaigns rooted in analytics and insights, powered by strategy and creativity, and awarded for results that positively impact our clients' revenues and reputation. Our global integrated digital team, which expanded in 2018, creates the social conversations that engage stakeholders, stimulate emotionality and elevate brands.

We are proud of our multiple agency awards including being honored as a “Best Place to Work” several times by leading PR trades and our recent Diversity Distinction Award, a testament to our commitment to diversity and inclusion across our worldwide network.

## FISH CONSULTING

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**Lorne Fisher**, CEO/Managing Partner

**Jenna Kantrowitz**, COO/SVP  
**Lauren Simo**, VP

Fish's in-depth experience in franchising helps us customize national and local programs for our clients that drive both consumer engagement and franchise sales. Our services range from national and local media relations, franchisee recruitment, grand openings, influencer relations and cause marketing to crisis communications. Our focus is to meet and exceed our clients' business goals by providing strategic counsel and marketing support that goes beyond traditional public relations.

We're proud to serve systems of all sizes, from emerging brands to some of the industry's leading concepts and pride ourselves on becoming your PR partner. Clients include Dunkin', Denny's, Neighborly, FOCUS Brands, Massage Heights, Captain D's, Fleet Feet, Chicken Salad Chick, Tropical Smoothie Café, Blo Blow Dry Bar and more.

## FRENCH/WEST/ VAUGHAN

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**Rick French**, Chairman & CEO  
**David Gwyn**, President / Principal  
**Natalie Best**, Chief Operating Officer / Principal

French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency. Firmly entrenched among the country's 20 largest PR firms (2019 *O'Dwyer's* Ranking of Top U.S. PR Firms), FWV was winner of *The Holmes Report* 2016 Consumer Agency of the Year and the *Bulldog Reporter* 2017 Consumer, Midsize and North American Communications Agency of the Year. It has captured 15 National Agency of the Year honors over the past two decades and is a 2019 *Holmes Report* Consumer Agency of the Year Finalist for the fifth time.

Founded in April 1997, the firm is led by Chairman & CEO Rick French, President David Gwyn and Chief Operating Officer Natalie Best. FWV employs 113 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C. headquarters and New York City, Los Angeles and Tampa offices. Among its operating divisions are: FWV Fetching, a pet and veterinary PR and marketing agency based in Tampa; AMP3 PR, a fashion, beauty, luxury and lifestyle PR firm based in New York City; and Prix Productions, the company's longform content feature and documentary film division, with offices in Raleigh and L.A.

FWV is also a partner in IPREX, a \$380 million + network of global communication agencies, with 1,600 staff and 110 offices worldwide.

In addition to ranking FWV 18th nationally in audited annual fee billings, *O'Dwyer's* ranks FWV #1 in the Southeast, a position it has occupied for more than 15 years. Among the top agencies, FWV ranks second in Sports Marketing, third in both Beauty & Fashion and Agriculture, fourth in Entertainment Marketing, and 10th in Travel & Economic Development. The agency's work in Food & Beverage, Home Furnishings, Professional Services, and Environmental & Public Affairs also earned category rankings in the top 20.

FWV has been recognized over 900 times with awards on behalf of clients such as Wrangler, Coca-Cola, Jack Daniels, Slim Jim, Justin Boots, Pendleton Whisky, the Greater Raleigh Convention & Visitors Bureau, Bassett Furniture, Saft, ABB, Teen Cancer America and countless other industry leading companies and brands.

It has also become one of the nation's go-to agencies for issues management and crisis counseling work, having defended the reputation of dozens of high-profile individuals, institutions, companies and associations.

## GATESMAN

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**Susan English**, SVP, PR & Social Media

**John Gatesman**, CEO  
**Shannon Baker**, Partner, President

We are writers, researchers and news hounds.

Gatesman PR tackles your toughest business and communications challenges — whether it's to stand out in a competitive environment, change perception, protect your reputation or navigate the rapidly evolving digital world.

Our strategic consumer-centric model puts your target audiences at the forefront to motivate action and influence behavior that increases sales, market share and brand affinity.

We combine critical and creative thinking to produce ideas and content that stem from research and insights to disrupt, educate and engage consumers, media and the industry. We believe in research, so much so that we invest more than \$200,000 annually in tools and resources to benefit your business.

Founded in 2006, Gatesman is a privately held corporation owned by partners John Gatesman and Shannon Baker. Gatesman is an award-winning, full-service public relations practice that ranks nationally within the top 100 independent PR firms, and is a partner in IPREX, a global communication network. Most recently, Gatesman PR was named a Top Place to Work by *PR News* and earned Best In Show at the 2018 PRSA East Central District Diamond Awards and the 2019 PRSA Renaissance Awards.

## HAVAS FORMULA

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**Michael Olguin**, President & CEO

Founded in 1992, Havas Formula is an award-winning, national public relations agency headquartered in New York, with offices

in Los Angeles, Chicago, San Diego, and Miami. Part of Havas, the agency is committed to making a meaningful difference to brands, businesses and people. Havas Formula specializes in general market and Hispanic PR, social/digital and experiential marketing. Its corporate philosophy — Be Brave — stems from the belief that for a brand to truly differentiate itself in the marketplace it must exhibit bravery. The agency's core practice areas include consumer, lifestyle, consumer technology, high-tech, B-to-B, travel/hospitality and entertainment, with category expertise in food and beverage, retail and restaurants, beer/wine/spirits, sports/leisure, consumer packaged goods, home, and beauty/fashion.

Clients include: Jaguar Land Rover, Panda Express, Mike's Hard Lemonade, Hefty, Maui Jim, Wholly Guacamole, Schlage, Justin's, Shure, Wonderful Pistachios and RE/MAX

## HEALTH UNLIMITED

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**Tim Bird**, CEO  
**Jon Watson**, Executive Creative Director  
**Karen O'Malley**, Global Practice Chair, Public Health and Policy  
**Julia Jackson**, Practice Leader, US Public Relations and Marketing

Communications  
**Susan Duffy**, Chief Strategy Officer, US

Health Unlimited is a global health consultancy and communications agency built by specialists with unmatched experience, perspective and expertise. For more than 25 years we have been driving results for companies solving the world's most complex and challenging health issues. We have a legacy of advancing landmark developments in global health and challenging, hard to treat health conditions such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, rare diseases, infectious diseases and vaccine preventable diseases. We drive results for a diverse group of companies and organizations invested in solving the world's most complex and challenging health issues in these areas. Clients include medical device, pharmaceuticals, government agencies, medical societies, advocacy organizations and consumer health.

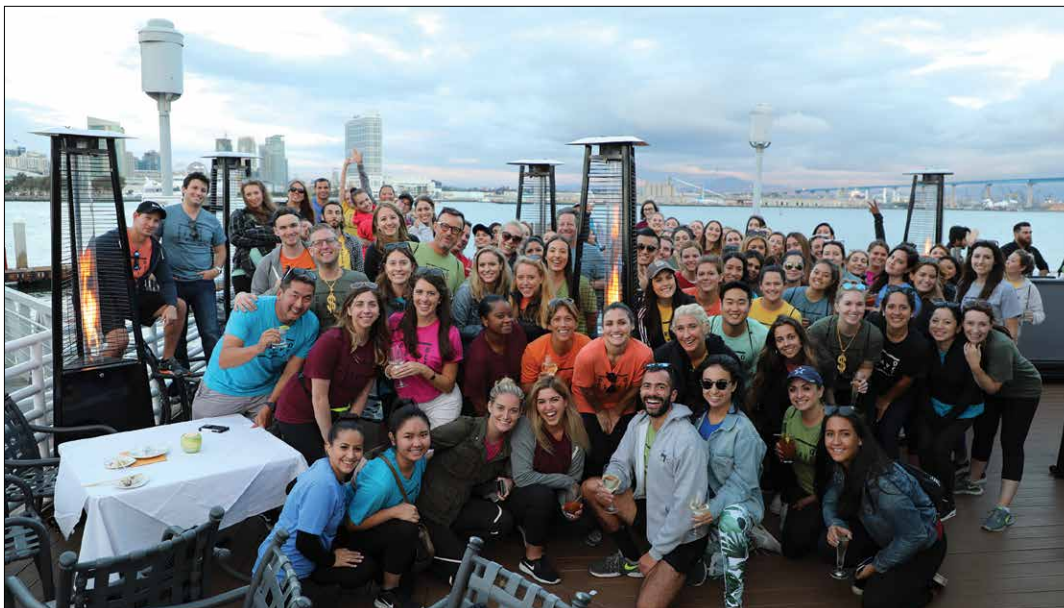
## HEMSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS

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**Lacey Outten**, Director, Food/Wine/Spirits  
**Rachel Tabacnic**, Director, Franchise/Business Services  
**Carter Long**, Director, Travel/Hospitality (Atlanta)  
**Lindsey Wiegmann**, Director, Travel/Hospitality (Fort Lauderdale)

Hemsworth is a full-service PR and communications agency that specializes in three core areas — travel/tourism/hospitality; food/

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Staff from all five of Havas Formula's offices converge in San Diego during the agency's annual summit.

The July issue of *O'Dwyer's* will profile Travel PR firms, as well as Multicultural PR firms. If you would like to be profiled, contact Editor Steve Barnes at 646/843-2089 or steve@odwyerpr.com

## HEMSWORTH COMMS.

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wine/spirits, and franchise/business services. Capabilities and services range from brand strategy, promotions, media relations and events to guerilla marketing, social media, CSR programming and thought leadership.

With headquarters in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and offices in Atlanta and Charleston — as well as a network of expert freelance PR professionals in markets like NYC and Northern California — the Hemsworth team features unparalleled global connections. The agency prides itself on delivering outstanding results with a distinctively personal touch and offering a unique combination of passion, insight and connections to surpass client expectations at every turn.

Hemsworth has won numerous awards for its work within the PR and communications industry, as well as the national business community, and is consistently ranked one of the fastest-growing firms in the United States. In addition, Hemsworth's unique internal culture and extensive employee benefits have earned the agency a coveted spot on several "Best Places to Work" lists.

Clients include: Air Partner, AmaWaterways; Amicalola Falls State Park & Lodge; Best Western Hotels & Resorts; Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa; Driftwood Hospitality Management; First American Bank; Gatsby's Joint; HSMIA Foundation; I Heart Mac & Cheese; Lake Blackshear Resort; Massanutten, Virginia; Margaritaville Holdings; Margaritaville Hollywood Beach Resort; Margaritaville Lake Resort, Lake of the Ozarks; Medieval Times; Oasis Travel Network; Orion Span's Aurora Station (Luxury Space Hotel); SmartCruiser.com; Sonesta Fort Lauderdale Beach; Steelpan; Stems & Skins; Taste of Buckhead; Unicoi State Park & Lodge; PuroClean; Walgreens Gridiron Grill-Off Food, Wine & Music Festival

## THE HOFFMAN AGENCY

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Lou Hoffman, CEO



The Hoyt Org team takes a well-deserved night out on the town to attend the LA PRSA PRism Awards.

**Stephen Burkhart**, General Manager., North America  
**Caroline Hsu**, Managing Director, Asia Pacific  
**Mark Pinsent**, Managing Director, Europe  
**Lydia Lau**, VP of Global Operations

Defining communications broadly to include digital, content marketing, thought leadership as well as traditional PR, The Hoffman Agency knows how to differentiate brands and deliver air cover for sales. With heritage in the technology sector, the firm's work today cuts across a range of industries.

While campaigns vary by client and industry, all share one theme: the creation of content that reflects the tenets of storytelling. This means developing narratives that prompt journalists to write and target audiences to read — a far cry from the "corporate speak" that satisfies internal stakeholders. Toward this end, the firm conducts storytelling workshops for internal communicators, executives and employees.

For clients with global needs, the company operates in Asia Pacific, Europe and the United States. Unlike traditional agencies handicapped by their silo structure, The Hoffman Agency applies a collaborative approach to implementing multi-country campaigns. This leverage of content and thinking across geographies ultimately generates better results.

Sample Clients: Axis Communications, B-Secur, Baidu, BlackBerry, Cypress, City of Fremont, Corning, Crypto.com, Flex, KaiOS, Lam Research, Lenova, Lumileds, Nautilus, NextFlex, Nokia, Nutanix, OSISOft, Revation, SpinTrans-fer, and SuperMicro.

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**Heather Kernahan**, President, North America  
**Adrian Talbot**, Chief Finance Officer  
**Andy West**, Chief Development Officer  
**Chris Paxton**, Chief Strategy Officer  
**Fiona Chilcott**, Chief People & Culture Officer

Hotwire is a global communications agency that helps businesses better engage and connect with their customers. From Sydney to San Francisco, we operate with a borderless mind-set across 33 locations including the UK, US, Mexico, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Australia, together with exclusive partners Yellow Communications in the Netherlands and Belgium, Active DMC in the Middle East, The Hoffman Agency in Asia and VIANEWS in Brazil, as well as other affiliate partners.

## HOYT ORGANIZATION

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**Leeza L. Hoyt**, President  
**Dan Minkoff**, Associate VP

With offices in greater Los Angeles and partners worldwide, The Hoyt Organization, Inc., knows a thing or two about reaching the right audience. In fact, as one of the continuously top-ranked independent PR firms by the Los Angeles Business Journal, THO reaches markets all across the country with clients based in New York, Virginia, New Jersey, Phoenix, Kansas City, Dallas, Seattle and more. As the Los Angeles area agency for the Public Relations Global Network (PRGN), we have 53 partner agencies around the globe which allows us to also offer international boots-on-the-ground capabilities.

Our full-service, integrated communications campaigns have made a tangible difference for hundreds of start-ups, public and private companies, nonprofits, and more. Today, the firm serves real estate, finance, technology, healthcare and luxury/lifestyle clients on a nationwide basis.

THO's greatest strength is our growth-oriented strategies. Our media relations, communications and digital media programs feature thoughtful, laser-focused game plans that use the right tactical tools to break through the bland in your market. With a deep understanding of everything from traditional earned media to emerging social and digital platforms to crisis communications, we'll strengthen your voice and amplify your brand.

THO. Because your voice matters.

## HUNTER

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**Grace Leong**, CEO  
**Jonathan Lyon**, **Mark Newman**, **Donetta Allen**, **Gigi Russo**, **Erin Hanson**, Partners

Hunter is an award-winning consumer marketing communications firm with primary offices in New York and London and a footprint across North America. Beginning with research-driven consumer insights, Hunter executes strategic, integrated programs that build brand equity, increase engagement and drive measurable business results for consumer products and

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# SLOANE & COMPANY

*Strategic Communications at the Intersection of  
Valuation and Reputation*

Integrated Corporate Communications and Positioning



Crisis Communications and Issue Management



Investor Relations



Transaction Support



Public Affairs



Social Media and Digital Communications



Shareholder Activism and Proxy Contests



Strategic Insights

## HUNTER

Continued from page 70

services. The 120-person firm employs a powerful blend of marketing solutions including strategic planning, social and digital media, talent and influencer engagement, media relations, experiential, multicultural, and content creation and distribution for all platforms and channels to earn consumer attention on behalf of some of the world's best known and most beloved brands.

Founded in 1989 with a specialization in food and nutrition, Hunter has grown into one of the most respected and awarded mid-size marketing communications firms in the country, proudly serving a broad range of esteemed companies and brands across Food + Beverage, Wine + Spirits, Home + Lifestyle, Health + Beauty, Retail + Ecommerce, Travel + Restaurants, Education, Fashion, and Toys + Games.

Our motto is "we earn it," and at Hunter we focus on doing so in three key areas: earning consumer attention, earning client relationships and earning staff dedication. Our creative approach and client service-orientation has led to some of the most enduring client relationships in the business including TABASCO® Pepper Sauce (30 years), 3M (22 years), Diageo (15 years), Church & Dwight (13 years), and Johnson & Johnson Consumer Inc. (12 years).



On the occasion of the firm's 30th anniversary, to better reflect its diverse roster of marketing communications services for earning consumer attention, the leading consumer agency known since 2000 as Hunter Public Relations updated its landmark and simplified its name to Hunter.

## ICR

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Established in 1998, ICR partners with companies to execute strategic communications and advisory programs that achieve business goals, build awareness and credibility, and enhance long-term enterprise value. The firm's highly-differentiated service model, which pairs capital markets veterans with senior communications professionals, brings deep sector knowledge and relationships to more than 650 clients in approximately 20 industries. ICR's healthcare practice operates under the Westwicke brand (www.westwicke.com). Today, ICR is one of the largest and most experienced independent communications and advisory firms in North America, maintaining offices in New York, Norwalk, Boston, Baltimore, San Francisco, San Diego and Beijing. ICR also advises on capital markets transactions through ICR Capital, LLC. Learn more at www.icrinc.com. Follow us on Twitter at @ICRPR.

Clients: B&G Foods, Black Bear Diner, Boot Barn, CV Sciences, Chunghwa Telecom Co. Ltd., Cobalt Int'l Energy, Darden Restaurants, GNC Holdings, FleetCor Technologies, Inc., Fossil, Inc., Freshpet, Genuine Parts Co., Gildan Activewear, Greenlane, Harman, Herbalife Ltd., Hostess, HubSpot, IAC, Jarden Corp.,



Jamie Sigler O'Grady and Sarah Evans, Partners at J Public Relations.

Lazard Freres & Co. LLC, La Quinta Holdings, Inc., Legg Mason & Co. LLC, Limoneira, lululemon athletica, Mobileye, Michaels, Michael Kors, New Relic, Nomad Foods, Nutrisystem, Ocwen Financial Corp., Paramount Group Inc., Planet Fitness Inc., Red Hat Inc., Shake Shack, Starwood Property Trust, Texas Roadhouse, Tilray, VF Corp., Williams-Sonoma, Inc., Workiva.

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Jamie Diaferia, Founder & CEO  
Zach Olsen, President

Infinite Global is an award-winning communications firm providing PR, Branding and Content services. Led by seasoned media professionals and top creative directors, we help professional services firms and other complex businesses demonstrate their expertise to sophisticated audiences.

Our roots are in the legal sector, where our unrivaled depth of knowledge allows us to provide counsel to the world's largest, most profitable and most specialized law firms. Other professional services firms look to us for a nuanced understanding of their businesses, a

clear sense of the kinds of stories that make news, and tested knowledge of when and how to engage the media.

Our unwavering client focus sets us apart. Our approach and success earns accolades from our clients and peers, including winning The *National Law Journal's* "Best PR Firm" award seven years running. But the most flattering honor we receive is the vote of confidence from our clients who retain us year after year, including many that have worked with us for a decade or more.

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Jamie Sigler O'Grady and Sarah Evans, Partners

J Public Relations (JPR) is an international luxury PR, influencer management and social media agency specializing in hospitality, travel and luxury lifestyle brands. With 80 team members across four offices in New York City, London, Los Angeles and San Diego, plus a presence in Denver and Arizona, JPR is a trusted leader in media relations and brand strategy, trend forecasting, brand partnerships, influencer relations, and social media strategy. Always evolving, JPR is an innovator in all things travel and was the first travel PR agency to



launch a podcast in 2018, Priority Status.

Established in 2005, JPR has consistently risen to become the world's fastest growing agency in the travel and hospitality spaces. JPR's global roster includes more than 150+ hotels in the U.S., U.K. and throughout Europe, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai, New Zealand, Asia and more. The agency represents destinations such as North Carolina and Utah as well as brands including Marriott, Relais & Châteaux, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Vail Resorts Hospitality, Vail Mountains and multiple Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts.

JPR is listed on the *Observer's* annual "PR Power 50" as one of the country's most powerful PR firms and *Crain's* "Best Places to Work in New York City." The agency also garnered "Top Places to Work" by PR News and "Agency of the Year" by *Bulldog Reporter* in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success. JPR's client campaigns have won multiple HSMIA Adrian Awards and named a finalist in The Shorty Awards.

Sampling of clients: Adare Manor, Adventures by Disney (project work), Aulani, a Disney Spa & Resort (project work), Hotel Chateau du Grand-Lucé, Chewton Glen, Cliveden House, Discover Baja California, Dream Hotel Hollywood, Four Seasons Resort Lana'i, Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Great Wolf Lodge, Helena Bay, Hotel del Coronado, Iconic Luxury Hotels, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, InterContinental, Washington DC — The Wharf, L'Auberge de Sedona, Perry Lane Hotel, Rancho La Puerta, Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa, The Palms and The Shore Club, The Resort at Pedregal.

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**David Jarrard, Kevin Phillips, Molly Cate, Anne Hancock Toomey, Magi Curtis, Jana**

### Atwell, Kim Fox, Partners

Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock, Inc. is a top-10 strategic communications consulting firm devoted to helping the nation's health systems and health services companies navigate confidently through change, challenge and opportunity. With offices in Nashville and Chicago, Jarrard Inc. has guided leaders at more than 400 healthcare organizations across the country through high-stakes moments, including leading communications and political strategy for more than \$60 billion in announced M&A. Our team of former journalists, political operatives and healthcare executives works alongside every client to build a custom strategy that delivers measurable results in the areas of M&A, issues and crisis management, strategic positioning opportunities and systemic change management. For more information, visit jarrardinc.com.

## JEFFREYGROUP

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**Mauricio Gutiérrez**, Managing Director, Mexico  
**Rodrigo Pinotti**, Managing Director, Brazil  
**Diego Campal**, Managing Director, Argentina

Latin America is Our Business, Our Only Business. As the only agency dedicated exclusively to working with multinational clients and brands in this part of the world, JeffreyGroup has been an industry leader in the fast-growing markets of Latin America since 1993. Our specialization and expertise have attracted some of the world's largest companies and best-known brands. We're proud that our current retainer clients include Airbus, Amazon, American Airlines, Bayer, BlackRock, Citibank, Facebook, GE, HBO, Mastercard, Marriott, PepsiCo, Salesforce and Samsung, among others. JeffreyGroup has continually evolved to provide a full range of marketing, corporate communication and public affairs services. With owned offices in the largest markets of

Latin America and nationwide capabilities, our teams of local market experts provide unique insights and generate results in alignment with global strategies and international standards of excellence.

## JPA HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS

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**Carrie Jones**, Principal  
**Michael O'Brien, Stephen Piotrowski and Diane Wass**, Managing Directors

JPA Health is an award-winning public relations, marketing and advocacy firm known for sharing our clients' commitment to making people healthier. With deep expertise in these core services, JPA offers a truly integrated model that delivers sustained business results. The agency works across the health sector, including biopharma, medical, and non-profit organizations.

JPA has built a proprietary tool, Gretel™, which segments audiences and provides unparalleled insights for reaching and engaging influencers in health and healthcare.

JPA's exclusive focus on health means that clients can count on a team with the experience and perspective to provide sound, strategic health, medical and science communications counsel, rooted in the

realities of this dynamic landscape.

The agency is recognized for its ability to deliver results quickly. As partners with our clients, we drive meaningful relationships, stimulate intellectual curiosity, combine data and intuition to go deeper and see beyond the obvious and creatively solve complex problems.

JPA is a woman-owned agency with offices in Washington, DC, Boston and London, and is a member of IPRN, the world's leading independent public relations agency network.

## KARBO COMMUNICATIONS

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**Julie Karbo**, Founder & CEO

Are you looking for a respected and inventive PR and digital marketing agency with a track record of delivering revenues, industry leading stature, partners and funding? Karbo Com's services combine successful and inventive PR programs with the newest digital marketing services. Startups to *Fortune* 500 enterprises trust Karbo Communications for our industry knowledge, strategic thinking, creativity and the tech industry's entrepreneurial spirit to create and amplify market leadership and out-perform competitors.

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JeffreyGroup has more than 200 staff across the region.

## KARBO COMMUNICATIONS

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Karbo Com offers an extensive array of innovative services, including branding, corporate and product PR, social media, creative services, digital marketing campaigns plus content creation.

Unlike most other agencies, Karbo Com ensures client teams are always led by senior people on a day-to-day basis. You won't get bench players. A varied and multi-talented team synthesizes the worlds of PR, journalism and digital marketing—with a Silicon Valley ethos. Our teams have ushered in technologies such as the cloud, SaaS, AI, the Internet of Things, data analytics, mobile, security, networking, augmented reality and wearables.

We've worked extensively with both B2B and consumer tech companies ranging from small startups to global, billion dollar brands, including: Apple, Cisco, Digg, eBay, Equinix, Fog World Congress, GoDaddy, Intel, the IoT World Conference, The National Geographic, NerdWallet, and Oracle.

Current Clients: TIBCO, TDK, Logitech, 8th Wall, Pigeon, Project Text, The Tylt, OnScale, Megaport, Penguin Computing, RTI (Real-Time Innovations), Harmony Helper, iamond Pro

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Kivvit is a nationally recognized strategic communications and public affairs firm with offices in Chicago, New York, New Jersey, Miami, Boston, and Washington, D.C.. Kivvit prides itself on being a strategic advisor to organizations with big ideas and complex challenges.

Kivvit is defining the agency of the future. We don't have silos. We integrate our full suite of data-driven advertising and strategic communications capabilities across teams. Our holistic approach combines analytics, technology, and



From left: Konnect CEO Sabina Gault, Managing Director Carmen Hernandez, CCO Monica Guzman Escobar and Executive VP Amanda Bialek.

content to produce hyper-targeted campaign plans that shape public opinion, impact public policy, and enhance business outcomes. Our relentless focus on measurement means that our work maximizes results and achieves tangible goals for our clients.

Kivvit's culture is marked by an entrepreneurial spirit as well as an insatiable curiosity to master our client sectors and constantly find innovative solutions. We start from scratch every time we develop a campaign plan. No campaign is exactly the same; each is tailored to our clients' needs. That's what sets Kivvit apart.

Our client roster includes: Airbnb, Allstate, Anheuser-Busch, Aon, BAE Systems, BlueCross BlueShield, Citadel LLC, Delta Airlines, Exelon, Ford, General Dynamics, Google, Lyft, PSEG, Tesla, United States Olympic Committee, University of Chicago

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Konnect Agency (www.konnectagency.com) is a strategic business partner for food & beverage, lifestyle, family, and franchise

brands. The team of almost 40 professionals provides public relations, social media, influencer, content and marketing services focused on garnering measurable results that positively impact brand growth. Konnect Agency represents both national and international companies via offices in Los Angeles, New York, Denver and Austin, Texas. Clients include Fatburger, Lyft, KRAVE Jerky, Sky Zone, Mrs. Fields and ONE Brands, to name a few. Using an integrated-approach and with a desire to add incremental value, Konnect is a true partner that promotes client-agency transparency, the use of technology to better client relationships, and a thoughtful approach to media and influencer relations.

## KYNE

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**Julie O'Donnell**, Global Head of Digital

KYNE is an award-winning specialty health communications agen-

cy dedicated to helping improve and save lives. We were founded on the belief that communication is a powerful health intervention. Our team are alumni of global communications firms, non-profit organizations, foundations and biopharmaceutical companies, united by a passion for making a real difference in health. We approach our work with compassion, enthusiasm and optimism. But our greatest strength isn't just our ability to connect the dots. It's in creating programs that achieve real change, leveraging our skills, expertise and passion to break down barriers. We develop and deliver tailored programs to meet each clients' goals and objectives. We love what we do, we live what we do, and we truly believe in what we do.

Key Clients: Alnylam, AstraZeneca, The Carter Center, Parkinson's Foundation, World Federation of Hemophilia

## LANDIS COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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**Sean Dowdall**, GM  
**Brianne Miller**, Business Development Manager  
**David Cumpston**, Senior Director

Named America's #1 PR Agen-

cy (Small Firm) (Ragan's) and #1 Healthcare PR Agency in America (Ragan's) and called "the Bay Area's consumer/B2B PR and marketing communications experts," San Francisco-based Landis Communications Inc. (LCI) is celebrating nearly 30 years in business. LCI also is a Bulldog Award winner for social media and media relations and has been named the #1 Social Media Agency in the U.S. by TopPRAgencies.com.

LCI is a full-service public relations, digital/social media and marketing communications agency that specializes in healthcare, real estate, environmental, consumer, consumer technology, B2B, corporate and institutional public relations campaigns that help support each business' identified goals. Through its Promised Results<sup>®</sup> return-on-investment program, LCI provides tangible metrics for your PR dollars. Clients include: Velodyne Lidar, Sutter Health, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, UCSF, Global Alzheimer's Platform, Walmart, Match.com, California Bank & Trust, Brain Health Registry, Carrington College, Save the Redwoods League, Peninsula Open Space Trust, MetLife, Whole Foods Market and more. LCI is a proud member of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, is an official Corporate Diversity Supplier and is certified as a Small Business Enterprise by the City of San Francisco. LCI is the San Francisco member agency of the Public Relations Global Network, with 50 affiliate agencies worldwide. Call us at: 415/561-0888, email us at: info@landispr.com or visit LCI online at: www.landispr.com.



The LCI Team Celebrates.

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LaunchSquad is an award-winning public relations and creative communications agency with offices in San Francisco, New York, Boston and Chicago. They are a group of dynamic storytellers who build meaningful brands by creating and spreading the stories of

change-the-world companies.

LaunchSquad takes a customized, holistic approach to storytelling. Over the past 19 years, they have built long-lasting, powerhouse brands. Much like the disruptors they represent, they like to do things differently. LaunchSquad's expertise spans both consumer-facing and B2B clients in a variety of industries including consumer technology, enterprise technology, fashion, retail, entertainment, media, e-commerce, education, gaming, finance, energy and more.

## LAVOIEHEALTH-SCIENCE

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**Paul Sagan**, AVP, IR & Corporate Communications  
**Lisa DeScenza**, AVP, Integrated Communications  
**Ella Deych**, VP, Finance & Operations

LaVoieHealthScience is a health science focused, award winning integrated communications agency providing IR and PR bringing



The KYNE team.

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## LAVOIEHEALTHSCIENCE

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18 years of industry-tested counsel to more than 375 clients. Our specialized expertise in biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, medical technology and devices, and digital and public health uniquely positions us to help clients make their health and science innovations known, understandable, and approachable to target stakeholders through carefully executed strategies and plans.

The agency has received over 50 awards in recognition of the work it has done for emerging and established industry leaders helping our clients from development to launch to commercialization. We help advance health and science innovations by providing specialized thinking to clients throughout the company and product life cycle building innovation and value for human kind. We offer direct connections to media, investors, partners, advocacy groups, and KOLs. We are focused on building trust and long-term relationships based on the quality of the work that we deliver. Many of our client relationships go back over a decade.

Select Clients: AC Immune SA, Bioharmony Therapeutics, Biotechnology Innovation Organization, Carmell Therapeutics, Genosco, Landos Biopharma, LEO Science & Tech Hub, Life Sciences Corridor, NewLink Genetics, Newron Pharmaceuticals SpA, Origenis GmbH, Pathmaker Neurosystems, Scioto Biosciences, SIRION Biotech GmbH, Symbiotix Biotherapies, Inc., Torrey Partners, Triumvera Immunologics, Xontogeny LLC

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At Lazar Partners, we don't just deliver your message - we catalyze the connections that drive business results and enhance your reputation. Our clients count on us to deliver proactive strategic recommendations as well as flawless execution. For the last 18 years, private and public companies have benefited from our proven approaches to strengthening relationships with



**LaVoie executive team members (left to right) Lisa DeScenza, AVP, Integrated Communications; Douglas Russell, SVP & General Manager; Donna LaVoie, President & CEO; Paul Sagan, AVP, Investor Relations & Corporate Communications; Ella Deych, VP, Finance & Operations; and Sharon Correia, SVP, Integrated Communications.**

healthcare professionals, patients, third-party organizations, the financial community, the media, and business partners. Our commitment to clients is to forge trusting connections that build brand equity, increase goodwill and grow shareholder value.

Yet even companies with great reputations sometimes find themselves facing challenging situations that can harm their brand and we stand with you to manage and overcome crisis situations.

## LOU HAMMOND GROUP

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**Lou Rena Hammond, Founder**  
**Stephen Hammond, CEO**

Lou Hammond Group (LHG) is an award-winning firm specializing in the key industries of travel, economic development, destinations, culinary/spirits, real estate, lifestyle, and technology. With offices in New York, Charleston, Houston, Miami and Los Angeles, the agency has 40 employees offering brand development, public relations, digital strategy, social media management and analysis, creative programming, and marketing strategy.

For over three decades, LHG has been an industry leader providing superior, results-driven services to clients around the globe. Founded by industry trailblazer Lou Hammond, the agency takes pride in remaining fiercely independent and departing from busi-

ness-as-usual. LHG continues to grow with an emphasis on digital, social, design, advertising and branding in an ever-evolving media landscape. With quality and trust as guiding principles, LHG has developed a proven yet agile and strategic approach earning it recognition as one of the nation's most award-winning marketing and communications firms.

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**Martin Jones, CEO**  
**Cheryl Gale, President**

March Communications is a Boston PR agency — with an office in Chicago — that partners with innovative B2B and consumer technology companies to bring their stories to life. Our insights-first approach fuels integrated PR programs that influence key targets and drive business value. Companies searching for a top consumer tech PR agency or a firm with deep expertise in AI, security, healthcare, martech or fintech should place March Communications at the top of their agency shortlist. Recent clients include Drift, Affectiva, Zix, Sophos, Notarize, Noodle.ai and many more.

It doesn't matter if you're a consumer tech startup or an established security, robotics, AI or healthcare company, all programs with March Communications are rooted in solid strategy and a commitment to achieve measurable outcomes.

Award-winning PR. Killer Content. Insights-rich digital. All tied together to tell your story of innovation across all key platforms.

## MWWPR

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**Michael Kempner, Founder & CEO**  
**Bret Werner, President**  
**Will Starace, CFO**  
**Gina Cherwin, Chief People Officer**  
**Parker Ray, Chief Digital Strategist**  
**Carl Sorvino, Exec. Creative Dir.**  
**Carreen Winters, Chief Strategy Officer**  
**Dawn Lauer, Tara Naughton, Karen Clyne, Ryan Mucatel, Joe Flores and Michelle Rios, Exec. VPs**

32 years young, MWWPR is an independent full-service agency with nine offices across the US and the UK. MWWPR is a "people-first" agency, committed to investing in best-in-class recruitment, employee development and retention, and overall agency morale. MWWPR continues to develop its proprietary research of the CorpSumer™, a growing segment of the population (nearly 100 million Americans — more than Millennials and Moms!) that exists at the intersection of Consumer Marketing, Corporate Reputation and Public Affairs. MWWPR is driven by the philosophy that the CorpSumer is the evolution of public relations in that these components

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The logo for WebTalkRadio.net features a stylized 'W' and 'R' intertwined within a circular graphic that resembles a radio dial or a lens. The background is a solid blue color.

# WebTalkRadio.net

Business Podcast Solutions  
Since 2008

**Be the Voice of Your Industry, Brand or Cause**

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Content Creation  
Award-Winning Production Team  
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Co-host or Professional Talent Hosting  
Optimization for Search  
Distribution & Syndication

---

MaryLou Davidson | (941) 228-4061 | [MaryLou@WebTalkRadio.net](mailto:MaryLou@WebTalkRadio.net)

MWWPR

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can no longer operate in silos, as CorpSumers increasingly value corporate reputation to determine consumer behaviors such as the companies they purchase from, invest in, do business with, and work for. In 2018, MWWPR was named as the Best PR Agency by NJBIZ where the firm was founded, as well as the Top Independent Consultancy by the International Communications Consultancy Organization (ICCO) for the third consecutive year.

**O'MALLEY HANSEN COMMUNICATIONS**

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O'Malley Hansen Communications infuses the high quality of big firm work with the focused client service and cutting-edge strategy that only a nimble, independently owned strategic communications agency can offer. We create dynamic programs that drive positive conversations to ensure our clients are heard clearly and consistently. Our approach breaks through a noisy market with an understanding that brand equity and reputation are built by endorsement from a range of influencers who receive information from a variety of sources. We focus on five core expertise areas: consumer marketing, corporate reputation management,

social media, influencer communications and employee engagement.

**PADILLA**

1101 West River Parkway Suite 400 (Headquarters) Minneapolis, MN 55415 612/455-1700 PadillaCo.com

**Lynn Casey**, Chair **Matt Kucharski**, President

Padilla is an independently operated, globally resourced public relations and communication company with offices across the United States. The agency builds, grows and protects brands and reputations worldwide by creating purposeful connections with the people who matter most through public relations, advertising, digital and social marketing, investor relations and brand strategy. Padilla includes the brand consultancy of Joe Smith, the food and nutrition experts at FoodMinds, and the research authorities at SMS Research Advisors. Clients include 3M, Barnes & Noble College, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cargill Animal Nutrition, Hass Avocado Board, Mayo Clinic, Prosciutto di Parma, Rockwell Automation, Sanofi Pasteur, U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council, the Virginia Lottery, Virginia Wine and Welch's. Padilla is an AVENIR GLOBAL company and is a founding member of the Worldcom Public Relations Group, a partnership of 132 independently owned partner offices in 115 cities on six continents. Connect with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

**PAN COMMUNICATIONS**

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Boston | San Francisco | New York | Orlando

**Philip A. Nardone**, President & CEO **Mark Nardone**, Executive Vice President **Elizabeth Famiglietti**, EVP, Human Resources **Darlene Doyle**, EVP, Client Relations **Gary Torpey**, EVP, Finance **Lisa Astor**, Senior Vice President & Managing Director, North America **Gene Carozza**, Senior Vice President **Dan Martin**, Senior Vice President

**Nikki Festa O'Brien**, Senior Vice President **Megan Kessler**, Senior Vice President

PAN Communications is a data-driven integrated marketing & PR agency servicing B2B technology and healthcare brands. With offices in Boston, San Francisco, New York and Orlando, we move ideas by creating compelling stories, driving intent and influencing markets across all forms of media. We currently work with several leading and emerging brands nationally and globally including SAP, Radial, MediaMath, Cogito, Sift Science, Maestro Health and App Annie, to name a few.

With a staff of 140+ professionals, PAN offers the agility and personalized service of a mid-size agency while leveraging national and international relationships to manage large scale communications programs. An award-winning firm experiencing impressive growth, we strive to help today's modern marketers by integrating a combination of services to better engage with your audiences and move markets.

Connected Content — Creative Storytelling — Results that Matter!

**PROSEK PARTNERS**

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**Jennifer Prosek, Mark Kollar, Russell Sherman, Andy Merrill, Mickey Mandelbaum, Karen Niovitich Davis, Caroline Gibson**, Partners

Key senior hires in the past year: **David Wells**, Partner **Neil Goklani**, Managing Director and Head of Marketing **Dan Hunter, Mike Geller, Karen LeCannu**, Managing Directors **Nadia Damouni, Philippa Ushio, Trevor Gibbons**, Senior Vice Presidents **Mike Maiello**, Senior Vice President, Head of Content Marketing **Samantha Norquist**, Vice President

Prosek Partners is among the largest independent public relations firms in the U.S., and one of the few domestic, mid-size firms that offers global capabilities through its London office and international network. We deliver an unexpect-

ed level of passion, creativity and marketing savvy to the financial and business-to-business sectors. Our "Unboxed Communications" approach brings breakthrough ideas and unmatched results to every client engagement.

- We are a rare hybrid; a corporate communications firm with a fully integrated, top-ranked deal shop and a comprehensive investor relations practice inside.

- Through our gateway office in London and network of partner agencies, we can deliver for clients in major business and financial centers around the world.

- We are an "Army of Entrepreneurs™." Our creative, entrepreneurial culture attracts and retains the most talented professionals. Employees develop an "owner's mindset," delighting clients with top-quality service, fresh ideas and flawless execution.

- In the past year, we made a number of key investments in the firm. In 2018, we opened a Boston, MA office (with 12 full time employees), we launched a sister/conflict agency called Profile Advisors, we renovated a second floor in our New York office, and we made a historic number of key senior hires across the firm.

**RACEPOINT GLOBAL**

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**Larry Weber**, Chairman & CEO **Peter Shanley**, Co-COO & CFO **Karen Bouchard**, Co-COO & CHRO

**RJ Bardsley**, Chief Strategist, Global Technology Practice & Exec. VP **Anne Potts**, Mng. Dir. & Exec. VP **Dan Carter**, Mng. Dir. & Exec. VP **Andrew Laxton**, Mng. Dir. & Exec. VP **Ginger Ludwig**, VP, Global Mktg. & Bus. Dev. **Jorge Rodriguez**, Mgr., Global Mktg. & Bus. Dev.

A global communications agency specializing in technology and healthcare.

Founded in 2003, Racepoint is a global communications company with technology thinking woven into its DNA. The agency uniquely understands how the use and "humanization" of technology impacts how audiences perceive and experience brands today. Whether an emerging company or enterprise

brand, clients in the technology, healthcare, consumer, professional services and public affairs sectors partner with Racepoint for its strategic, earned-first approach to engaging constituents in a way that is both authentic to the brand and meaningful to the audience. At a time when customer experience expectations have never been higher, Racepoint creates technology-driven communications strategies that help earn attention and move brands and businesses forward.

Racepoint Global is an independent communications agency specializing in technology, healthcare and innovation. Whether an enterprise brand or emerging category disruptor, companies partner with Racepoint for its strategic, earned-first approach to building brands and reputation. The agency helps clients define their authentic brand story and builds channel agnostic communications strategies that are meaningful to the audiences most important to their businesses — to own the conversations and coverage that matters. Racepoint is headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts, with eight additional offices across the U.S., U.K. and China. More info: <http://racepoint-global.com/>

## RASKY PARTNERS

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**Larry Rasky**, Chairman & CEO  
**Ron Walker**, Chief Operating Officer  
**George Cronin**, Managing Director  
**Justine Griffin**, Managing Director

Rasky Partners is a nationally recognized public and government relations firm with more than a decade of experience providing exceptional client service to organizations that operate at the intersection of business, politics and media.

With offices in Boston and Washington, D.C., Rasky Partners offers a comprehensive range of services

including media strategy and public relations, government relations, reputation management, crisis communications and digital media. The firm works with a wide array of clients that includes *Fortune* 100 companies, trade associations, coalitions, nonprofits, think tanks and foreign governments.

As an independent firm, Rasky Partners has the flexibility and resources to address complex communications challenges with a commitment to serve our clients' interests first. We are dedicated to providing consistent, strategic hands-on engagement at all levels, as each client team — including the senior professionals — is highly engaged, from the beginning to the end of each client engagement.

## RBB COMMUNICATIONS

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**Christine Barney**, CEO & Managing Partner  
**Lisa Ross**, President

rbb Communications champions breakout brands with integrated marketing, digital and public relations strategies that engages stakeholders. rbb's employee-driven workplace empowers its staff to deliver strategic insights and innovative campaigns that inspire action and deliver bottom line results. Recognized multiple times as "Agency of the Year" and "Best Agency to Work For," rbb's 80+ professional and creative staff excels in marketing, PR, corporate communications, branding, digital marketing, community relations, reputation management, influencer engagement and media relations. rbb brings the right tool to every situation following its PESO model, meaning it explores paid, earned, shared and owned strategies for each challenge. Specialty practices include consumer, travel, health, entertainment, education, professional services, luxury, real estate and B2B. Breakout Brand clients include: Bank of America, Brown & Brown Insurance, Cleveland Clinic Florida, Cross Country Home Services, DHL Express, Dreams and Secrets Resorts & Spas, Embassy Suites by Hilton, FirstService Residential, Florida Power and Light Company, The Related Group and Virgin Voyages. With a presence in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Los Angeles and New York, the firm also has internation-

al reach across more than 100 cities in 50 countries through its partnership in PROI Worldwide, the largest global network of independent communications agencies.

## ROSICA COMMUNICATIONS

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**Chris Rosica**, President

Rosica Communications is an integrated PR and online marketing company that promotes and protects companies, brands and people. Founded in 1980, the firm serves a diverse healthcare, B2B, nonprofit, consumer products, food and beverage and corporate clientele. Our PR and communications capabilities include positioning and messaging, thought leadership, media relations, social media management, influencer marketing, crisis communications, content marketing, corporate communications, cause marketing, direct marketing, and media training. Rosica's social media services include strategy, management, branding, content development and optimization, and follower acquisition. Our online marketing team, based in New Windsor, NY, is a Google Certified Partner and specializes in SEO, online reputation, reviews management, online advertising (PPC and social ads), website development, and Word-Press security.

As a "thinking partner" focused on achieving our clients' objectives, Rosica creates and executes thought leadership programs with clearly defined KPIs/metrics. We craft compelling, authentic stories and messaging then effectively disseminate our client-partners' good news while supporting their sales and communications goals.

In 2017, Rosica formed a joint venture with New York City-based Feintuch Communications, which specializes in Tech PR, analyst relations and investor relations.

Our process includes:

- Strategically identifying our clients' business and marketing goals/objectives
- Identifying target audiences, influencers and key opinion leaders
- Honing the positioning, story and key messages, tailoring messages to each audience
- Developing measurable, inte-

grated and creative PR, social media and internal/external communications programs

- Proactively communicating with clients
- Aggressively securing results, evaluating against pre-determined strategic objectives
- Repurposing and leveraging content and PR coverage to augment SEO, sales activities, online reputation, tradeshow marketing, analyst relations, and direct marketing.

Clients include: Alzheimer's New Jersey, BeneCard, BioReference Laboratories, Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey, Bridor, Dynarex, Exergen, Jewish Vocational Service, National Vision Administrators, Newark Public Library, Celsius, NJ Sharing Network, T & M Associates, and TriStar Products.

Please visit [www.rosica.com](http://www.rosica.com) for case studies and additional information.

## THE SPI GROUP, LLC

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**Steve Goodman**, CEO  
**James Koppental**, Senior Managing Director, Digital Communications  
**Ellen English**, Senior Managing Director, Communications Strategy and Editorial

What is SPI? SPI stands for "Strategy, Planning and Implementation" — the core focus areas of successful communications. At SPI, we think of ourselves as communication problem solvers; we are a one-stop shop for your communication needs. We'll help you plan a strategy, tell a great story, make it look fabulous and deliver that message through the best channel — traditional, digital or both. Our services include Corporate Reputation and Branding, Employee Communications, Digital Communications, Design, Application and Database Development, Web Development, and beyond. We're at our best when creating integrated communications strate-

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## SPI GROUP

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gies that combine traditional tactics and new technologies.

## SPM COMMUNICATIONS INC.

2030 Main St., 3rd Fl.  
Dallas, TX 75201  
214/379-7000  
24-hour media line: 817/329-3257  
www.spmcommunications.com

For 20 years, SPM has worked with packaged food, restaurant, retail, apparel and lifestyle clients, telling their stories in a rapidly changing media landscape. We've worked with emerging brands to help take them national and with established national brands that have important stories to tell to make a deeper impact.

We integrate earned media relations, influencer partnerships, events, community outreach and social media to create campaigns that target the right audiences, increase brand awareness and meet business objectives. Some of our work highlights include:

- Brought natural, gluten-free niche brand Van's Simply Delicious into the mainstream with intensive national media and influencer relations outreach that garnered multiple food awards and ultimately, the brand's sale to Hillshire Farms.

- Created the national Haggard Hall of Fame Dads contest to connect new consumers to the 92-year-old legacy brand.

- Aided in the rise of industry giant and sustainable foods pioneer Chipotle through a 17-year partnership and landed the first national story about "Food With Integrity" mission to change the way people eat and think about fast food.

- Helped iconic fitness brand Gold's Gym reach a new female member base through a National Best Friends Day program that brings together nationally known trainers, influencers and digital and traditional media.

Through our robust crisis communications practice, we've helped clients manage some 3,000 crises, from foodborne illnesses and data breaches to product recalls and viral videos. SPM's media protocol is currently deployed in more than a thousand restaurant and retail lo-

cations across the nation.

Through it all, our culture is driven by our "No Jerks" policy, which fosters strong agency-client relationships with mutual trust and respect and leads to greater creativity, productivity and true partnership between agency and client.

Current Clients: Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas, Bruegger's Bagels, Cicis, Del Frisco's Restaurant Group — Dallas, Gold's Gym, Haggard Clothing Co., Kirkland's, Leslie's Pool Supplies, Luna Grill — Texas, Nothing Bundt Cakes, RW Garcia, Smoothie King, Spence Diamonds and Travis Frederick's Blocking Out Hunger

## STUNTMAN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**Neil Alumkal**, President  
**David Abrams**, Senior Vice President  
**Elana Levin**, Associate Vice President

Stuntman is a full-service, Manhattan-based public relations agency that is highly specialized within food & beverage and hospitality-oriented media relations. The core belief of the agency is that widely accepted public relations practices are completely outmoded, and based around old, legacy media.

However, the proliferation of interactive, on-demand content over the past decade has created a cluttered cultural and media landscape that requires a return to bold thinking. The big-idea publicity associated with early-century figures like P.T. Barnum and Edward Bernays. One-way communication, powered by cutting-edge methodologies.

Our longstanding media relationships with bloggers, social media influencers, magazine & newspaper editors, television producers and talent bookers, combined with a keen eye for creating targeted and poignant messaging, allow for us to consistently secure headline news. Our coverage for hospitality clientele have frequently become the most highly cited.

We have launched national campaigns for the likes of the Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium, Max Brenner Worldwide, MealPal, Le Coq Rico, Valrhona, Francois Pa-

yard, Drunken Dumpling, The 21 Club, Kanon Organic Vodka, YO! Sushi, Bareburger, Hotel Indigo, Mellow Mushroom Pizza Bakers and scores of other brands and properties.

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**Dean Trevelino**, Founder and Principal, 404/214-0722 X106  
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Outcome-Driven. Beyond services, industry practices and even results, come to us if you have a specific outcome you're trying to achieve. We'll use our reputation marketing suite of services — public relations, digital/social marketing, demand generation and creative services — to deliver. We feature four — Thought Leadership, Growth, Engagement and Valuation. And yes, there are nuances to each of these, but most of our clients land on one of those outcomes as part of their strategic objective. Have your own outcome, great. Serve it up and we'll give you our honest take on whether we can achieve it. Beyond outcomes, we connect with clients whose leadership aligns with one or more of our entrepreneurial endeavors — Disruptive Forces, Category Pioneers, Stealth Leaders and Wonder Women. So ask yourself, what's your story?

As far as experience goes, we have seven practices, six ranked nationally — technology, health, financial services, food & beverage, lifestyle and environment. Franchising, the agency's seventh practice, is in an unranked category, but it has featured brands such as TCBY, Johnny Rockets, Corner Bakery Café and Moe's Southwest Grill. Based in Atlanta's urban westside, the firm operates Groovy Studios, a creative arm that offers graphic design, web services, content development and brand identity. Since its inception, Groovy Studios has received more than 60 creative awards. Trevelino/Keller also owns and runs the Winepreneurs.Club, an initiative that brings together entrepreneurs and small batch winemakers to sip, taste and connect each quarter. The firm's Start-Opia platform houses its technology and entre-

preneur endeavors that establish it as a first mover in the region with support for Atlanta Tech Village, Atlanta Tech Angels, Tech Alpharetta, Keiretsu Forum, Launch Pad2X and Raise Forum.

Client work features a mix of publicly traded, middle market and emerging companies, including Belgard, Carvana, Ciox, Discovery Point, Interface, Monkey Joe's, Pritikin Longevity Center, Sakrete, Sita, SOC Telemed and Stretch Zone.

## W2O GROUP

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**Jim Weiss**, Founder & CEO  
**Jennifer Gottlieb**, President  
**Richard Neave**, Chief Financial Officer  
**Deborah Hankin**, Chief People Officer  
**Adam Cossman**, Chief Digital Officer  
**Gary Grates**, Chief Communications Officer

W2O is a healthcare-focused marketing communications firm built on marketing science. W2O incorporates Insight Integration, a strategic approach based on unearthing transformative insights from data/analytics and integrating them — across all marcom disciplines — to arrive at a precise solution for clients' business needs. W2O applies proprietary analytics models, methodologies and approaches in a digital world to design precise communications and marketing strategies to deliver sustained business results. The firm employs nearly 800 people in 15 offices across the United States and in Europe.

*Holmes Report's* #1 Best Large Agency to Work For 2019; *AdAge's* Best Places to Work 2019; *The Holmes Report's* Best Large Agency to Work for 2018; *MM&M's* Best Places to Work 2018; *MM&M* and *Holmes Report* Large Agency of the Year Finalist 2018; *PRWeek's* Best Places to Work 2018; *PRNews's* 2018 Top Place to Work in PR; Jim Weiss was selected for the PharmaVOICE 100; W2O named finalist in *PRWeek* Awards 2019 in the Outstanding Large Agency category; Jennifer Gottlieb named to *PRWeek's* Hall of Femme; Jim Weiss named a finalist in the *PRWeek* Awards 2019 in the Outstanding Agency Professional category.

For more information, please visit [www.w2ogroup.com](http://www.w2ogroup.com).



## WEISS PR, INC.

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Founded in 2008, Weiss PR, Inc. helps companies and non-profit organizations to reach, engage, and influence the right audiences in order to achieve their communications and business objectives.

Staffing accounts exclusively with senior-level executives who have a minimum of 10 years of public relations experience, Weiss PR has developed a strong reputation for getting positive results for clients by using an integrated communications approach that includes media and influencer relations, social media, marketing services, and issues management — all anchored by strategic communications planning.

Weiss PR's clients are concentrated in five industry sectors: commercial real estate (including architecture, construction, development, and engineering); employee benefits and healthcare; non-profits; professional services; and technology. In addition, the firm has extensive experience in crisis communications, including strategy development and rapid response implementation for both corporations and individuals.

In spite of its rapid growth and assignments throughout the U.S. and internationally (including clients in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Israel, and Iceland, and work throughout Europe and the Middle East), Weiss PR has stayed true to its vision to provide clients with ideas built on strategy — not egos — from a team of senior public relations professionals who are committed to providing exceptional service, great work, and measurable results.

## WORDWRITE COMMUNICATIONS LLC

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**Paul Furiga**, President & CEO  
**Jeremy Church**, Partner & VP,  
Director of Results  
**Hollie Geitner**, VP, Culture &  
Brand Ambassador



The Zapwater team at their annual ZapU professional development and team building event in Chicago. The all-day get-together covers topics from sparking creative thinking to team management.

**Brenda Furiga**, VP, People, Policy and Profits

Every company has at least one great story to tell: its own. At WordWrite, we believe authentic stories move hearts and minds and inspire action. We uncover, develop and share your company's capital "S" story to reveal why someone would want to partner with you, work for you or do business with you. It's your most powerful marketing asset and is the difference between a transactional service versus securing a long-term mutually beneficial relationship with a customer or other stakeholders.

For nearly 20 years, our approach to public relations has proven to be unlike any other firm: it's driven by a proprietary storytelling process and our unique 3P process — a plan, a pyramid to craft and organize key messages, and the industry-leading PESO model that focuses on the right mix of paid, earned, shared and owned content.

WordWrite is a member of PR Boutiques International, a worldwide collaborative network of boutique PR firms.

Our clients include Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, HornetSecurity, Kennametal, Koppers Inc., McClintock & Associates, Meyer, Unkovic & Scott, New Pig, PA Health and Wellness, Pfizer Inc., Robert Peirce & Associates, The Waterfront, VetAdvisor, Waldron Private Wealth, YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh and YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh.

## ZAPWATER COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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**David Zapata**, CEO and Founder  
**Mayra Bacik**, CFO  
**Jenn Lake**, Senior Vice President  
**Jennifer Barry**, Managing Director  
**Stephanie Poquette**, Vice President, Social Media and Influencer Programming

Zapwater Communications, Inc. is an award-winning public relations agency specializing in consumer, hospitality, travel and lifestyle brands. Founded in 2005, Zapwater has grown into one of the premier creative communications firms in the United States.

With offices in Chicago and Los Angeles, Zapwater shares a culture that fosters creativity, quality, collaboration and enthusiasm. Long-standing client relationships and the determination to lead in a dynamically evolving industry distinguishes the agency's work. Zapwater's reach can be hyper-local, regional or national — our clients may need to connect with one, two or all three markets. We know how

to adapt, to go broad, or to focus in. And our global partnerships and experience with international clients differentiates us and add a fresh perspective to all of our market outreach.

Current clients include Finair, Privatefly, Skydeck Chicago, Greektown Chicago, Uptown United, West Town Chicago, National Tourism Office of Serbia, The Board of Tourism of La Paz, Tourisme Montréal, Travel Manitoba, Visit Finland, Casa Kimberly, Coco Collection, Coco Bodu Hithi, Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu, Fairmont Mayakoba, Hilton Aruba Resort & Casino, Mount Cinnamon Grenada Resort, Ball Horticultural Company, Burpee Home Gardens, Tyson Innovation Lab, Wave Petunias, jYappah!, [yellowtail] wines, Hotel Zachary, Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, Marriott Marquis Chicago, Pacifica Hotels, Swissôtel Chicago, The Kinney Slo, The Kinney Venice Beach, Angel City Brewery, Crustacean Beverly Hills, Fisk & Co., The Revel Group, Tre Rivali, Union League Club, Veggie Grill, Woven & Bound, Aven Tower, CIM Group, CMK Companies, Gallagher Way, Hickory Street Development, LA Closet Design, Merritt Woodwork, Sterling Bay, Advanced Clinicals, Block Thirty Seven, Brooklyn Boulders, Hollywood & Highland, Hook & Albert, Kiehl's Since 1851, Oilixia Skincare, SmileCycle, The Perfit, UNIQLO and Winky Lux. ○

# The oxymoron of 'legal ethics'

By Fraser Seitel

If you've ever wondered which party is more "ethical," public relations professionals or lawyers, the answer can be summarized in two words: Jussie Smollett.



**Fraser P. Seitel** has been a communications consultant, author and teacher for more than 30 years. He is the author of the Prentice-Hall text, *The Practice of Public Relations*.

The obscure actor, purportedly "accosted" by MAGA hat-wearing racist homophobes on the frigid streets of Chicago, is back in the news. First, the city of Chicago sued Smollett, seeking to recover more than \$130,000 for costs related to the investigation of the actor's dubious complaint. Then, Kim Foxx, the embattled Cook

County Attorney, called for the county's inspector general to review how her office handled—or if you're so inclined, "mishandled"—the case.

Regardless of how the lawsuit or the investigation turn out, the Smollett case has already yielded nourishing lessons for public relations professionals, specifically highlighting the differences in the counsel offered by PR people compared to lawyers.

Assume for a moment that the actor, as the Chicago police charged, hired two African American associates to "attack" him, and then lied about it. Here, then, are the key questions that client Smollett faced and how his handling of them might've been different, had he consulted savvy PR advisors rather than ethically-challenged attorneys.

## What happened?

This is the first question an attorney asks a client. The client then tells the lawyer what went on, and generally, the attorney leaves it at that and accepts the explanation. The reason a lawyer doesn't probe is that he or she is forbidden to tell a judge or jury that the client didn't do something the lawyer knows he did.

That's why when they asked Alan Der-showitz whether he thought his client, O.J. Simpson, was guilty, the Harvard lawyer famously answered, "I didn't ask, because that wasn't my job."

In Smollett's case, of course, the actor claimed he was attacked by two white men,

and his lawyers ran with it.

Had a PR professional been on hand, the question wouldn't have been, "What happened?" but rather, "What did you do?" Public relations people must probe more deeply to determine if the client is telling the truth. If you think your client is lying, then you risk losing your own credibility by defending his innocence.

Accordingly, a savvy PR person would've had real trouble defending Smollett's flimsy claim that he had been attacked. His lawyers, of course, suffered no such pangs of guilt. After a grand jury indicted Smollett for arranging the whole thing, the actor's lawyer said, "Like any citizen, Mr. Smollett enjoys the presumption of innocence, particularly when there has been an investigation, like this one where information, both true and untrue, has been leaked."

## What's the worst case?

One essential responsibility for a PR person is to present the client with a "worst case" analysis. In other words, determine, in advance, what's the worst thing that can happen.

In Smollett's case, the worst thing that could happen was that he'd be found out to be lying about the attack, thus committing a crime, destroying his reputation and imperiling his career.

Had a public relations advisor been consulted before Smollett's cockamamie stunt, the actor might've been talked out of risking everything on such a hare-brained idea. After the fact, a PR advisor would've cautioned the actor to tell the truth and show contrition, rather than continuing to follow his lawyers' advice to insist on his innocence.

## What's the right thing to do?

"Doing the right thing" is the ultimate public relations mantra.

A lawyer advises you on what you must do to stay out of jail. In Smollett's case, his attorneys—with a head-scratching assist from County Attorney Foxx—successfully got the charges dropped. In response, Smollett's lawyers continued to declare, "The case is closed ... Mr. Smollett, like every citizen, is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law."

A PR professional, on the other hand, doesn't tell you what you "must" do but rather what you "should" do to defend yourself in the Court of Public Opinion; there's a big difference. In Smollett's case, the "right" thing to do, especially after the case was thrown out, would have been to admit what happened, take responsibility

for the mistake that clearly was made, apologize profusely for wasting everyone's time, and volunteer to make restitution to the city that took the actor seriously and wasted scarce taxpayer resources accordingly.

The last thing a thoughtful PR advisor would've counseled Smollett was to continue to maintain his innocence.

## What do you say?

Jussie Smollett's statement at his press conference after Foxx had thrown in the towel was stunning in its audacity.

"I have been truthful and consistent on every level since day one. I would not be my mother's son if I was capable of one drop of what I'm accused of. This has been an incredibly difficult time. Honestly one of the worst of my entire life."

Following his lawyers' advice to play the "victim" to the end, the actor refused to be remorseful.

What should Smollett have said? Well, he could've taken a cue from fellow actor Felicity Huffman, who pleaded guilty and accepted full blame for participating in the college admissions cheating scam.

Accordingly, Smollett should've said, "What I did was stupid and a mistake. Implicating my two friends and taking advantage of the dedicated Chicago police force and the goodwill of the public was wrong in every way. I am ashamed and committed to repaying the city for its monetary loss and regaining the trust of the public through my actions going forward."

Instead, the harassed actor opted to stay true to the wrong-headed advice his lawyers continued to proffer. With the "Empire" star's acting future in doubt and the false police report story refusing to go away, Smollett's attorney lashed out with one final tone-deaf appeal, "We will not try this case in a court of public opinion. There is no case to try. The case was dismissed. We should all allow Mr. Smollett to move on with his life as a free citizen."

Good luck with that, Counselor. ○

## PR news brief

### ICR works Chuck E. Cheese's return

ICR is handling the return of Chuck E. Cheese, pizza joint/playroom, to the public market via a reverse merger of its parent, CEC Entertainment, with Leo Holdings, a blank check company.

Chuck E. Cheese Brands Inc, which also owns Peter Piper Pizza, will trade on the Big Board with an initial valuation of \$1.4 billion. Apollo Global Management, which took CEC private in 2014, will own a 51 percent stake in the publicly listed company.

CEC franchisees operate 606 Chuck E. and 144 Peter Piper units in 47 states and 14 foreign countries.

# Is your time to plan for retirement running out?

By Richard Goldstein

It occurred to me that many of the PR pros I've worked with over the years are now approaching retirement age. This could be one reason why there's been a recent uptick in merger and acquisition activity.



**Richard Goldstein** is a partner at Buchbindler Tunick & Company LLP, New York, Certified Public Accountants.

Unfortunately, many PR agency owners are so wrapped up in the day-to-day affairs of operating their companies, they give little thought to their own financial needs. Many of these executives anticipate maintaining at least the same lifestyle during retirement that they enjoy today, perhaps even a better one.

As time goes by, you're faced with the question: "Will I really have enough to live on?" And where will the money come from? Is selling your agency the answer to this question?

There's a real need to control the future and not simply look forward to it! Even if you're 31 as opposed to 51 or 61!

## Pieces of the nest egg

Most business people have four basic types of assets that can be used to create a retirement fund: Social Security; savings or a retirement plan through business; investments; and proceeds from the sale of a business interest. Together, these sources should make up a hefty nest egg. But it takes a closer look to understand what they really provide.

Social Security depends largely on the size of your pre-retirement income. Even at higher salary levels Social Security falls short, providing a fraction of the total amount needed.

A pension or profit-sharing plan may provide a third or half of the income you'll need, and you have to depend on it being there. In addition, you may be able to take advantage of other tax-favored vehicles, such as a 401(k) plan or an IRA to supplement your business' retirement plan. As for personal investments: have you allowed enough time for your investment to achieve the desired result need to retire? The longer you delay your long-term investment planning, the larger your regular contributions to your investments will have to be.

## When is the time to sell?

If you're nearing retirement age, you may want to generate income for your interest in your agency. Although selling may seem the simplest solution, the cash you receive represents only part of the value of your business.

Let's assume you want the business to continue. Maybe you want to keep the business in the family. There are two basic issues that need to be considered. First, a family member will need to be a PR professional with the requisite experience and desire to buy your business. Second, where will the money come from to buy your agency? In my view, this probably isn't the best solution.

A better solution would be to "shop" your agency. There are many professionals who can guide you through this process. If you decide to go this route, there are many questions to consider:

1. Will a buyer be available when you are ready to retire?
2. Will the buyer have the necessary funds or the ability to finance the transaction?
3. Will you be able to agree on a selling price?
4. Will the price generate the income you will need in retirement?

At this point, it would be a good idea to pursue various planning options with your financial advisors: your CPA, attorney, financial planner and insurance agent.

When you do this, there are a few fundamental guidelines to keep in mind:

1. Use realistic planning assumptions. Don't ignore the eroding effect of inflation or the growth potential of interest.
2. Reduce or consider taxes on money going into and coming out of your retirement plan.
3. Plan for unexpected events according to their consequences, not just their likelihood.
4. Use your business wherever possible to fund benefits with business dollars.

You should also be sure that adequate provisions are made for possible ill health or accident that include disability insurance and long-term care insurance in your planning.

## Additional thoughts on selling (mergers)

According to the late Al Croft, "mergers have become a normal part of the life-cycle of PR firms. In addition to bolstering management, they may provide greater opportunity for both parties with minimum risk. Nowadays, involvement in merger discussions usually is a sign of agency strength, not weakness. Almost all professionally

managed mergers are at least reasonably successful."

## When to think about merger

Well, it's never too early to think about merger. At the very least, you should discuss any promising opportunities that come your way. These talks can be very educational even if they're ultimately not successful. Properly and professionally run, it requires only a small investment of time, money and emotion. They never should distract or disrupt agency management, and they shouldn't be allowed to drag on inconclusively.

If you've reached the age of 55 and your business has leveled off, you should begin to consider merger. Most potential partners want to join forces with a dynamic firm, and—fair or unfair—age is a factor in this perception. Each year that passes usually reduces your firms' attractiveness to a merger partner.

Don't even consider selling and walking away. At the very least, you'll have to stay several years—at least three—to fulfill the terms of the merger. According to Al Croft, numerous PR firm executives have found that once they've unloaded part of the burden of top management, they can become an elder statesperson and do the kind of PR work they truly enjoy. ○

## PR news brief

### Digitization PR's top challenge

Providing adequate services in an increasingly digital world remains one of PR firms' greatest goals and challenges, according to a survey of member agencies by global agency network International Public Relations Network.

The survey, which sought to provide insights regarding how PR agencies are adapting to new trends, found that nearly three quarters of respondents (74 percent) cited integrating digital communication as the single biggest challenge they currently face.

The survey also discovered that more than half (58 percent) believe digitalization, including the use of new technologies and an increase in online media, is the biggest change they see shaping the future PR landscape.

Nearly all (95 percent) of the agencies polled said they now offer some form of digital service, be it through internal digital teams or via partner agencies. Three quarters (75 percent) of agencies said they currently have an in-house digital department.

Despite the increasingly digital landscape, however, half of respondents (50 percent) said they still plan to bolster their traditional PR toolkits within their agency, citing skills like media relations, press release writing, feature and opinion leader content and influencer relations.

The IPRN report, "The Changing Trend of PR Globally – An Agency Perspective," surveyed executives at more than 40 IPRN member agencies worldwide.

## NRA sues Ackerman McQueen, Mercury Group

The National Rifle Association has sued long-time ad agency Ackerman McQueen and its Mercury Group PR unit for allegedly failing to turn over its business records to justify its billings. The organization paid Ackerman McQueen more than \$42 million in 2017.

According to the suit filed in Virginia Circuit Court, the NRA “requested access to material, readily available records that Ackerman and Mercury are contractually obligated to provide,” but the defendants refused to provide them.

The gun group claims it negotiated with AM for access to the records for the better part of a year and its patience has now run out.

It wants business records including “budgets purportedly approved by the NRA, copies of material contracts for which the NRA is purportedly liable, and readily available performance data—all to inform the judgment of its fiduciaries.”

AM dismissed the suit as “frivolous, inaccurate and intended to cause harm to the reputation of our company.”

The Oklahoma City-based shop said in a statement: “We will defend our position and performance aggressively and look forward to continuing to serve the NRA’s membership.”

## Cannabis group taps VS Strategies

Cannabis Trade Federation Action has hired VS Strategies to promote its mission to educate DC policymakers and advocate for a sensible marijuana public policy.

VSS will also focus on legislation impacting the operation of the state-legal cannabis industry including the SAFE Banking Act, Marijuana Revenue and Regulations Act, RESPECT Resolution, Marijuana Justice Act and the Responsibility Addressing the Marijuana Policy Gap Act.

VS is the public affairs wing of Denver-based Vicente Sederberg LLC, which *Rolling Stone* dubbed “the country’s first powerhouse marijuana law firm.”

Steve Fox, of counsel to Vicente Sederberg, spearheads the D.C. lobbying push for CTFA.

In 2005, he co-founded Safer Alternative for Enjoyable Recreation group to change the mindset of Colorado voters that marijuana is more harmful than alcohol.

He authored *Marijuana is Safer: So Why Are We Driving People to Drink*.



Steve Fox

## Venn Strategies Advocates Opioid Alternatives

Addiction prevention coalition Voices for Non-Opioid Choices has retained political and public affairs shop Venn Strategies to handle health issues on Capitol Hill.

D.C.-based Voices for Non-Opioid Choices is dedicated to combatting America’s opioid crisis by increasing awareness and access to FDA-approved non-opioid options and therapies to help manage patients’ post-surgery pain.

Voices for Non-Opioid Choices has hired Venn Strategies to communicate issues relating to increasing patient and provider ac-



cess to non-opioid approaches for acute pain management, according to lobbying registration documents filed with Congress in April.

A five-person team manages the account, including Tyler Roberts, former legislative assistant to Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and staffer to Reps Roy Blunt (R-MO), Joe Barton (R-TX) and Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE); Claire Badger, a former State Department staffer who was later associate director to the Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee; and Kelly Ferguson, former staffer to Reps. Hal Rogers (R-KY) and Paul Gosar (R-AZ).

## HHS suspends Porter Novelli’s GOP-linked pacts

The Health and Human Services Administration slates a review of subcontracting deals flowing from Porter Novelli’s \$2.25 million contract with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Politico reported March 29 that money from the PR contract went to Republican consultants to burnish the image of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma.

Pam Stevens, a media adviser, coached Verma; Marcus Barlow wrote speeches and devised strategy; while Nahigan Strategies’s staffers traveled with the administrator and helped orchestrate announcements, according to Politico.

HHS notified relevant congressional committees on April 3 that the contracts are suspended pending the review and audit by the inspector general.



Seema Verma

## Glover Park Co-founder forms Breakwater

Arrik Ben-Zvi, a founder of Glover Park Group, has launched Breakwater Strategy, which will be part of WPP. From New York and D.C. offices, Breakwater will offer crisis management, positioning, thought leadership and public advocacy services.

Ben-Zvi, who served on the advance team of Al Gore’s 2000 campaign before helping to launch GPG in 2001, formed Breakwater with the goal of “once again experimenting with new ways to be a trusted strategic advisor to companies navigating today’s ever more chaotic and complex operating environment.”

GPG alum Max Gleischman will head the NYC outpost. He served as Communications Director to Samantha Power during her tenure as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

## Zimbabwe Bolsters Trump Ties

Zimbabwe has hired Avenue Global Strategies to a \$1.1 million, one-year contract, which went into effect April 5, to foster better relations with the U.S.

Barry Bennett, who was a Senior Advisor to Donald Trump's presidential campaign, helms and co-founded AGS. He joined Team Trump after working as Presidential Campaign Manager for Ben Carson, now Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Secretary, and organizer of the 2012 Super PAC of Rick Perry, now Energy Secretary.

Zimbabwe in March inked Brian Ballard's Ballard Partners to a two-year contract valued at \$1 million. Ballard led Florida's Trump Victory fundraising group.

The firm's job is to encourage a re-examination of Zimbabwe from the State Dept. with a view of "establishing the best possible bilateral relationship with the U.S. and facilitating the restoration of Zimbabwe's membership in the good standing with the community of nations." ○

## Cambodia Signs PacRim Bridges

Cambodia has given a \$500,000 one-year contract to PacRim Bridges, which is fronted by two Washington state politicians, to improve its relations with the U.S.

Sen. Doug Ericksen visited Cambodia in July to observe the country's elections, which NGOs criticized as a sham and featured a government crackdown on political opponents.

### FARA News



## NEW FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT FILINGS

Below is a list of select companies that have registered with the U.S. Department of Justice, FARA Registration Unit, Washington, D.C., in order to comply with the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, regarding their consulting and communications work on behalf of foreign principals, including governments, political parties, organizations, and individuals. For a complete list of filings, visit [www.fara.gov](http://www.fara.gov).

**Crowell & Moring International, LLC**, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 16, 2019 for **Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Government of the Republic of China**, Washington, D.C., regarding comprehensive conduct of trade relations between Taiwan and the US.

**BGR Government Affairs, LLC**, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 5, 2019 for **Hong Kong Trade Development Council**, New York, NY, regarding strategic advice and government relations assistance with respect to US foreign policies.

**Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP**, Denver, CO, registered Apr. 5, 2019 for **Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia**, Washington, D.C., regarding government relations services and strategic counsel on matters before the US government.

**Beacon Policy Advisors LLC**, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 9, 2019 for **Embassy of Japan**, Washington, D.C., regarding legislation in Congress and actions and policies of the US executive branch.

### Lobbying News



## NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT FILINGS

Below is a list of select companies that have registered with the Secretary of the Senate, Office of Public Records, and the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Legislative Resource Center, Washington, D.C., in order to comply with the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. For a complete list of filings, visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

**Mehman Castagnetti Rosen & Thomas, Inc.**, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 25, 2019 for **Tesla, Inc.**, Palo Alto, CA, regarding H.R. 2256, The Driving America Forward Act.

**O'Keefe Shahmoradi Strategies**, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 23, 2019 for **Ford Motor Company**, Washington, D.C., regarding FAST Act Reauthorization, highway trust fund, autonomous vehicles and electric vehicles.

**S-3 Group**, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 25, 2019 for **Third Option Foundation**, Reston, VA, regarding issues related to members of the CIA's Special Operations community and their families.

**GuidePostStrategies**, LLC, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 24, 2019 for **Trade Works for America, Inc.**, Washington, D.C., regarding the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

**Vianovo**, Washington, D.C., registered Apr. 23, 2019 for **Unisyn Voting Solutions**, Vista, CA, regarding election technology legislation.

His firm is to arrange cultural exchanges between the two countries and meet with American business leaders to promote investment in Cambodia.

The U.S. established full diplomatic relations with Cambodia in 1993. U.S. foreign assistance to Cambodia accounted for 28 percent of its national budget in 2016, according to the State Dept. ○

## H+K touts Georgia's 'tremendous economic opportunities'

Hill+Knowlton Strategies is building awareness of the "tremendous economic opportunities" available in the former Soviet republic of Georgia under an agreement worth \$750,000 in fees. The pact became effective April 3 and runs through the end of the year.

Georgia is a major producer of grapes, citrus fruits, hazelnuts, wine, gold, copper and manganese.

H+K will assist the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia with outreach to U.S. lawmakers, businesses and selected groups as it works to attract investment and boost trade.

Outreach may include print, TV and digital advertising. Georgia has agreed to shell out \$1.1 million for paid media production and placement services.

The WPP unit will conduct opinion research, forge coalitions, organize roadshows, do media relations and reach out to state governments on behalf of its client. ○

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Employees: 65. Founded: 2005.

**Agency Statement:** J Public Relations (JPR) is an international luxury PR and social media agency specializing in hospitality, travel and luxury lifestyle brands with offices in New York City, London, Los Angeles and San Diego. JPR is a trusted leader in media relations and brand strategy, trend forecasting, brand partnerships, influencer relations, social media strategy and unparalleled media placements worldwide.

Established in 2005, the award-winning agency has consistently risen to become the country's fastest growing, bi-coastal agency in the travel and hospitality spaces. JPR's global roster includes more than 125 hotels in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai, Europe, New Zealand, Asia and more. JPR steadily garners and retains notable clients including Relais & Châteaux, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Vail Resorts Hospitality, Grace Hotels, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, Newport Beach & Company, Four Seasons Lanai and 15 Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts.

JPR is listed on the Observer's annual 'PR Power 50' as one of the country's most powerful PR firms. The agency also garnered 'Top Places to Work' by PR News and 'Agency of the Year' by Bulldog Reporter in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success.

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

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