

O'Dwyer's

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THE FOOD ISSUE

Communicating purpose in the food & beverage industry

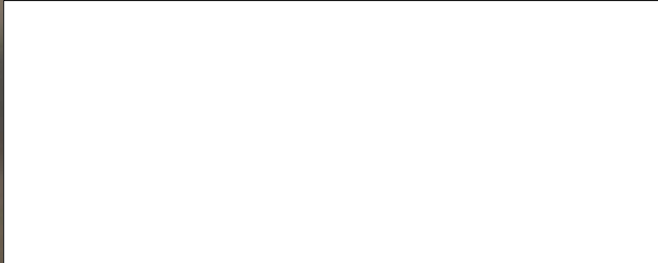
Looking past PR to push food, beverage awareness

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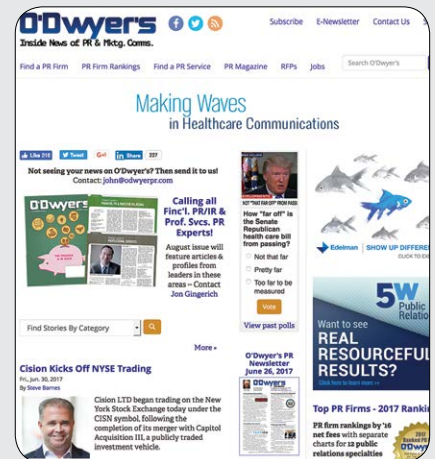
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Coronavirus response reveals failure in leadership

It's difficult to overstate the Trump Administration's botched handling of its response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The mixed messaging, the countless contradictions, the sheer incompetency on display has cast the image of a leadership team uncoordinated and fully unprepared in handling this issue. Instead, they've given us something else: a textbook example of how not to respond to a crisis.

Trump had a chance to control the narrative. He could've allayed our concerns with specific updates on what his administration and health experts are doing to contain the virus. He could've educated us regarding what steps officials are taking to coordinate with other countries, updated us on how the virus is spreading and what its short- and long-term impacts on the U.S. might be, clued us in on our chances of contracting it. He could've laid out common symptoms as well as provided direction on how Americans can be screened, or when—if ever—a vaccine is on the way.

Instead, Trump decided to combat the crisis by downplaying it, dismissing the outbreak during a February South Carolina rally as a “hoax” cooked up by Democrats, and later claiming the media were “panicking markets,” effectively exaggerating the virus' threat in an attempt to undermine his leadership. Of course.

He suggested at one point that the coronavirus might mysteriously be eradicated, and even asked medical experts during a bizarre press conference if it could be treated with a common flu vaccine.

He framed the outbreak only in terms of its economic repercussions, the effects it might have on the stock markets, and used the opportunity to ask the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates. He used the opportunity to further other areas of his political agenda as well, expanding travel restrictions from Iran and even admitting at one point that his administration is now considering closing the border with Mexico in an effort to prevent contagion.

Impossibly, senior White House staff managed to fumble the messaging even worse. Trump sent National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow to tell the press that containment of the virus is “pretty close to airtight,” days before the virus claimed its first American casualty. White House Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney similarly told the Conservative Political Action Conference in late February that the virus “is not a death sentence, it's not the same as the Ebola crisis.”

Worst of all, Trump threw the health experts we need to hear from most under the bus, directly contradicting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's previous statement that the virus's spread to the U.S. was no longer a question of “if” but “when this will happen.” He then muzzled scientists at the CDC and HHS from educating the public on the virus, and instead put VP Mike Pence in charge of overseeing the White House's coronavirus response efforts, the same guy who enabled an HIV outbreak when he was Governor of Indiana.

All this has sent a different message altogether: the government's emergency-response infrastructure is woefully unprepared in protecting us. Public health crises matter only when they stand to undermine our economy. Ironically, the Trump Admin. crisis playbook here is remarkably similar to the Chinese government's, which similarly downplayed the coronavirus and even punished health experts who sounded the initial alarm about the virus' threat.

The Trump Admin.'s communications failures came on the heels of similar high-profile mistakes, such as when the State Department stepped over the CDC in its decision to fly infected evacuees from the Diamond Princess cruise ship in Japan back to the U.S. on the same plane as healthy passengers, or when the CDC shipped hundreds of faulty diagnostic test kits to detect the virus to state laboratories. Or when HHS Secretary Alex Azar said he couldn't guarantee that a forthcoming COVID-19 vaccine would be financially available to all Americans, because we'd “need the private sector to invest” it in (thankfully, the White House walked back that statement).

Communication has always been Trump's greatest enemy and his best friend. On one hand, no President in history has understood how the media works—and used it to his advantage—better than Trump. On the other hand, his messaging has always required an audience dumb enough to believe the things he says. It's the same game we've seen in action for more than three years now: If you don't like the facts, just change what the facts are. Scientific evidence doesn't matter, nothing bad is happening unless I say it is, and then it's the Democrats' fault.

Suffice to say, Trump should spend more time attempting to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus at home than silencing our health leaders and his critics. It's becoming more apparent that it will take the efforts of our local and state leaders to address our concerns, educate us on the health facts and identify ways to fight this crisis and, hopefully, contain it.

In the meantime, the Federal Reserve came through and slashed interest rates—in its first emergency cut since the 2008 financial crisis—in an effort to lessen the virus' economic impact on the markets. Feel safer now? ●

— Jon Gingerich

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Social media scores big points for distrust

Despite their political leanings, Americans are skeptical of social media platforms as a source for political and election news.

By Jon Gingerich

Americans widely distrust social media sites as a source for political and election news, according to a new study released by the Pew Research Center.

Pew's analysis found that, despite the widespread popularity of these platforms and Americans' familiarity with them (94 percent of respondents said they've "heard of" Facebook, for example), Americans overwhelmingly question the credibility of these sites when it comes to providing trustworthy political news.

Nearly six-in-ten Americans (59 percent) said they distrust Facebook as a source for political and election news. Nearly half (48 percent) distrust Twitter, 42 percent distrust Instagram, 36 percent distrust YouTube, 24 percent distrust Reddit and 18 percent distrust LinkedIn.

Of the half-dozen social media sites analyzed in the study, none registered more trust among Americans than distrust. However, YouTube, LinkedIn and Reddit registered mostly indifference when it comes to political/election content (neither

trust or distrust).

In a rare display of bipartisanship, Americans appear to distrust social media sites for political and election news despite political affiliation, although conservative distrust does typically run slightly higher. For example, 59 percent of Democrats said they distrust Facebook, as did 62 percent of Republicans; 46 percent of Democrats distrust Twitter, compared to 51 percent of Republicans; 41 percent of Democrats and 45 percent of Republicans distrust Instagram; 24 percent of Democrats and 25 percent of Republicans distrust Reddit, and 16 percent of Democrats and 21 percent of Republicans

distrust LinkedIn.

Facebook remains the most popular platform, used by a quarter (25 percent) of those polled for political and election news. By comparison, this means the social media site is more popular than NPR (20 percent), The New York Times (20 percent), The Washington Post (17 percent) and The Wall Street Journal (13 percent), though less widely used than Fox News, CNN or the three major commercial TV news outlets (ABC, CBS and NBC).

Overall, only 18 percent of U.S. adults said social media was the "most common" means by which they access political news. Even among those who do, only slightly more than half (56 percent) said they trust the information they get there. ○

Online brands are reputational targets

By Steve Barnes

Online brands need to prepare themselves for "a far greater level of consumer interaction and accountability," according to a new study by Brands2Life.

The study looks at the pitfalls that come with the increasing amount of consumer interest in the reputation of online brands.

More than four out of ten (41 percent) of respondents say that they have either stopped or reduced their usage of an online brand in the past year due to that brand's malpractice or reputational problems.

That number is even higher for consumers between the ages of 18 and 24, with 68 percent of them saying an online brand's bad reputation or misdeeds have caused them to cut back on their use of that brand.

But it seems talk and action are far different things for many of the respondents. While 90 percent said they would stop using a brand in the future if it fell short on customer service, that number fell to 15 percent when they were asked if they had actually stopped using a brand for that reason in the past year.

Good customer service and protecting data and privacy were cited as top priorities by 94 percent of the survey's respondents.

Having a diverse workforce was deemed important by 73 percent, with giving back to society cited by 80 percent and taking action to reduce environmental impact by 84 percent.

In regards to what online brands can do to make consumers want to engage with them, 46 percent of respondents cited honest and authentic marketing. Reducing prices (71 percent) and compensating customers for faulty products and services (69 percent) outpaced such criteria as doing something to help disadvantaged people and making a commitment to reduce carbon emissions (both at 55 percent). ○

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Americans think fake news targets their beliefs

A report found one issue on which Democrats and Republicans seem to agree: both sides appear to believe fake news is biased against their political party more than the other.

By Jon Gingerich

No matter what side of the partisan fence they sit on, a majority of Americans believe fake news is biased against their own political party, according to a recent report by the Pew Research Center.

Pew's study, which sought to uncover Americans' perceptions of the fake news phenomenon, found one issue that Democrats and Republicans seem to agree on: both sides think misinformation is aimed at their party more than the other.

According to the report, more than half of Democrats and Democratic-leaning respondents (51 percent) said they believe fake news will primarily be intended to attack their party. Meanwhile, nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of Republicans and Republican-leaning adults believe their party will be the primary target of fake news.

Only about a third of Democrats (36 percent) and a little more than a quarter of Republicans (29 percent) believe misinformation will harm both parties equally.

It appears this persecution complex grows more pronounced the further to the

right or left respondents lean. For example, 67 percent of self-described "liberal" Democrats said they expect their party to bear the brunt of fake news attacks, as do 75 percent of those labeled "conservative" Republicans.

Meanwhile, nearly half (45 percent) of those who consider themselves conservative/moderate Democrats and the same number of those who consider themselves liberal/moderate Republicans believe the fake news phenomenon has it out for both sides equally.

Overall, half of Democrats (48 percent) said they're "very concerned" about fake news influencing the upcoming election, a concern shared by virtually the same number (49 percent) of Republicans.

Once again, the further respondents strayed from the ideological center, the more likely they were than their moderate counterparts to express worries about fake news' presence in the 2020 election. 58 percent of Democrats who describe themselves as "liberal" said they're "very concerned" about fake news' impact on the election, as

did 57 percent of Republicans who describe themselves as "conservative."

Moderate/conservative Democrats and moderate/liberal Republicans, meanwhile, were far less worried about the threat of fake news, at 40 percent and 38 percent, respectively.

Older adults in both parties were also more likely than their younger counterparts to express concerns about misinformation in the election. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of Democrats ages 65 and older reported being "very concerned" about fake news, compared to only 38 percent of Democrats between the ages of 18 and 29. Similarly, 68 percent of Republicans ages 65 and older said they're "very concerned" about fake news, compared to only about a quarter (26 percent) of Republicans between the ages of 18 and 29.

Pew's report was based on a survey of more than 12,000 U.S. adults conducted in October and November. The findings are part of the nonpartisan group's Election News Pathways project, an initiative that seeks to understand how Americans are getting their news in the months leading up to the 2020 presidential election. ○

Beer drinkers abandon Corona

A growing number of American drinkers are putting down popular Mexican beer brand Corona in light of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, according to a recent survey.

By Jon Gingerich

More than a third of beer-drinking Americans admit they won't purchase popular Mexican beer brand Corona in light of the ongoing coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak, according to a recent survey by New York-based agency 5W Public Relations.

5WPR's survey, which polled more than 730 imbibers via telephone between February 25 and 26, discovered that 38 percent of beer-drinking Americans now won't buy Corona under any circumstances.

Additionally, 14 percent of those who reported drinking Corona regularly said they now won't purchase Corona in a public venue.

Finally, 13 percent of beer drinking Americans admitted being confused regarding whether Corona beer is related to the deadly coronavirus that's currently cir-

cling the globe.

Multiple media outlets have recently reported an uptick in online searches for "corona beer virus" and "beer coronavirus."

Market research firm YouGov in February reported that Corona beer's buzz score—a net score based on whether U.S. adults have heard anything negative or positive about the brand—has fallen from 75 at the beginning of January to 51 as of late February.

"There is no question that Corona beer is suffering because of the coronavirus," said 5WPR Founder and CEO Ronn Torossian. "While the brand has claimed that consumers understand there's no linkage between the virus and the beer company, this is a disaster for the Corona brand. After all, what brand wants to be linked to a virus which is killing people worldwide?"

The highly contagious coronavirus, which

was first identified in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, has since spread to more than forty other countries. More than 82,167 cases have been confirmed since February 27, including 2,801 deaths.

The virus has sent the stock market reeling and has decimated the U.S. tourism industry, with Oxford Economics' global advisory firm Tourism Economics projecting the outbreak has resulted in a \$10.3 billion loss to the U.S. tourism sector.

Corona is the highest-selling imported drink in the U.S. The pale lager is a property of Mexican brewer Grupo Modelo, itself a subsidiary of Leuven, Belgium-based brewing titan A-B InBev. A-B InBev also markets Anheuser-Busch, Beck's, Michelob, Stella Artois and Hoegaarden.

Constellation Brands, which markets and sells Corona in the U.S., recently unveiled a controversial promotion for a forthcoming Corona Hard Seltzer, promising that new flavors were "coming ashore soon."

The company later said in a statement that its customers "understand there is no link between the virus and our business." ○

How to successfully execute a brand partnership

Leveraging successful partnerships with brands, companies and influencers can boost ROI and brand awareness among new audiences.

By Paola Cuevas

In today's PR and marketing world, it takes more than traditional PR to drive consumers' engagement and awareness for food & beverage brands. In an industry oversaturated with activations, media events, and co-branded partnerships, it's crucial for food and beverage brands to execute strategic partnerships to increase customer base, drive depth of engagement, improve customer perception and increase brand loyalty.

Publicists are often faced with conservative budgets and have to find a way to do the most with the least. Securing a strategic partnership is a win-win situation for both participating brands and an effective way to share marketing resources, tap into existing audiences and boost brand awareness without breaking the bank. A partnership with the right company on the right project goes a long way in helping you tap into a new audience and strengthening the brand identity through association.

Great brand partnerships are a result of in-depth research, deliberate foresight and strategic planning, but most importantly, being transparent and completely realistic about the execution. Offering consumers a unique product, activation or experience that's newsworthy and relevant can result in big benefits and ROI for the brand. But before embarking on a brand partnership, publicists need to keep in mind the following to guarantee a successful partnership and campaign:

Define your objective

The first step in creating a successful relationship with another brand, company or influencer is determining what you want to gain from this partnership. It's important to be specific on your goals before embarking on a partnership. Your goal might be to get more engagement and visibility from a new audience or increase sales in a specific period. Determining your goals ahead of time will help you choose the best partner and allow you to structure your strategy and deliverables.

Outlining your goals to your brand partner ahead of time will also help the relationship and ensure both parties are focused on working together to achieve these

goals. Partnerships require a lot of time and patience, so being transparent from the beginning and maintaining an honest and open communication opens up the possibility for more partnerships in the future, builds trust and creates a long-lasting relationship.

Find the right partner

There are many opportunities for brands, whether through a product, event, campaign or platform, where both parties can benefit from exposure and access to new consumers and markets.

The first step is to align with a brand that shares the same values as the audience, so the partnership is organic and authentic. Think quality over quantity. You don't need to reach massive numbers, but rather reach the right people who will support your brand and become long-term loyal customers. Niche brands are becoming more popular as they create a deeper connection with their followers, resulting in a greater

culinary world. Through executing the "Bibigo On-the-Go Culinary Challenge" we were able to showcase clients' most popular food products in front of a large number of student / influencers. Each student chef was charged with creating a non-traditional recipe using Bibigo products for an opportunity to win a scholarship. This partnership with the CIA successfully provided Bibigo access to the CIA's faculty and alumni while leveraging the CIA's promotional efforts and channels—all to substantially increase brand awareness with minimum financial investment.

Think outside the box

The media landscape has changed. It's no longer only about securing the print feature or the broadcast segment. A successful PR campaign is measured not only by impressions but by its engagement and long-term results. When planning a brand partnership, it's important to establish from the beginning the different strategies and outlets where that partnership will live in the long-term. Consider all the different tools to expand your partnership's reach, including influencers, editorial content, social media channels and more.

Enlisting influencers to assist in brand promotion and cultivating these influencers into genuine brand spokespersons is another important tactic in today's ever-changing public relations landscape. In Bibigo's successful collaboration with the CIA, another tool to add to the campaign's success was the partnership that was created with digital media powerhouse Foodbeast.

The goal with this strategy was to generate awareness of the campaign among Millennial consumers and create social media buzz online surrounding the "Bibigo On-the-Go Culinary Challenge." Through the collaboration with Foodbeast, our agency enlisted three specifically-targeted influencers to serve as judges during the product cook-off. As judges, they were also tasked to promote the winning recipes on their social channels. We then tapped into Foodbeast's audience and created a live stream of the cook-off onsite at the Culinary Institute. Foodbeast's production team was responsible for filming the event live and coordinating the interviews



Paola Cuevas



Bibigo, CIA and FOODBEAST judges at Bibigo On-the-Go Culinary Challenge.

influence on their audiences' purchasing decisions.

Our agency's partnership with Bibigo, Korea's leading food company, provides a great example of "outside the box" thinking. The goal was to create brand awareness in the U.S. and influence decision-makers. To achieve this goal, we collaborated with Bibigo's marketing team in Korea to form a partnership with the renowned Culinary Institute of America. This partnership resulted in creating a Student Innovation Challenge Program with over 3,000 enrolled students across their three campuses. The CIA has access to some of the brightest young culinary minds who will become influencers and decision makers in the vast

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Embracing the omni-shoppertunity

Digital technology has revolutionized how we buy food, but these disrupted consumer behaviors present opportunities for grocers to gain data-driven insights and improve upon their business for the future.

By Kristen Ingraham

It's finally here: 2020, the year when we're supposed to have teleportation, flying cars, personal robots, vacations to the moon and technological conveniences for every aspect of our lives. Outlandish as some of these outdated predictions may still seem, the rise of digital disruptors and high-tech solutions is spot on, especially in regards to our relationship with food shopping.

Speed, convenience and innovative advancements have held the spotlight in QSR, fast-casual restaurants, meal-kit delivery services and third-party delivery vendors have been news for years, now. However, now's the time for what was—or, perhaps, still is—known as the final frontier for digital disruption: the grocery business.

Forget predictions ... change is here

People said it couldn't be done; we have too personal of a relationship with food to allow someone/something else to own their shopping experience. E-commerce and delivery services will slowly—if ever—infilitrate the brick and mortar grocery system. Remember that old mantra?

Safe to say, we were wrong. The great digital disruptor has broken through the barriers of grocery at a record pace.

According to a 2017 study, just 23 percent of American households were buying food online. A meager margin compared to other shopper categories. But that same study also predicted that by 2022, consumers would be spending up to \$100 billion a year on online grocery. While it's hard to give meaning to \$100 billion, think of it this way: that's equal to every household in America spending around \$75 online per month, every month, all year for food and beverages.

A similar study by Statista found that among all the online food and beverage retailers, the e-commerce giant Amazon has the highest market share. Not a surprise, especially considering it introduced its two online grocery shopping services, Amazon Fresh and Prime Pantry. But Amazon alone is projected to deliver online food and beverage sales to surpass \$23 billion in 2021. Makes it easy to imagine the reality of a \$100 billion industry on the horizon.

Still, the digital revolution of grocery is

not all about Amazon. According to Progressive Grocer, to compete with such tech-savvy e-retailers, grocery stores are doubling down on digital orders and delivery options for customers, including same-day delivery and curbside pickup services. Beyond the obvious convenience, these online efforts are designed to improve the customer experience, which helps to improve engagement and retention.

So, what's fueling this record adoption of the digital grocery experience?

Grocers no longer just competing with each other

Not only do grocers have to contend with—and deliver on—elevated customer expectations, they must battle for consumers' convenience-driven cravings, with an increasingly expanding and complex digital food ecosystem, which includes:

- Shoppable recipes (Whisk, Tasty).
- Third-party grocery delivery (Instacart, Postmates).
- Third-party food delivery (Uber Eats, DoorDash, GrubHub).
- Meal-kit subscriptions (Blue Apron, Plated).
- Restaurant delivery (Panera, Olive Garden).

Let's face it: consumers want what they want when they want it, and it's easier than ever—thanks digital technology—for them to get it. But what's at the heart—or stomach—of customers' desires?

Personalized, perfected, convenient

As noted in a recent article from AT&T Business, the pervasiveness of digital experiences in our lives is such that we don't compartmentalize our expectations anymore. We're busy. We need help. We'll pay more—just not the cost of shipping—for said help. Enter digital conveniences to provide that help.

The expectations grocers must meet are now set by consumers' best experiences across all categories, from on-demand entertainment bingeing to seamless meal-delivery at a push of a button to convenient crowd-sourced ride-sharing services like Lyft and Uber.

As shoppers embrace digitally-driven experiences in all aspects of their lives, there's no longer a perceived barrier to allowing grocers and third-party delivery

vendors to assume their food buying responsibilities.

Consumer shoppers are content to leave the grocery store visits behind them, but only if they can be replaced by efficient, transparent and continued personalized experiences from their favorite grocers. Hence the rise of:

- More online ordering and fulfillment options.
- Same-day delivery, real-time order tracking and easy returns.
- Shorter, more accurate time ranges for in-store pick-up.
- Personal shoppers literally restocking your fridge for you.

But can every digital innovation in grocery really be all wine and roses?

Opportunities to improve for the future

No, not all things in digital development for grocery are rosy. For one, online grocery delivery is largely unprofitable. As the AT&T survey finds:

- Profit-per-order has worsened for three-in-five retailers who offer online ordering.
- Other than fulfilling from distribution centers or vendor drop-ship, all other forms of online order fulfillment are margin negative or neutral.

To put that into perspective, as Recode finds, Walmart will reportedly lose \$1 billion of its \$21 billion e-commerce revenue as a result of its challenges integrating the Jet.com acquisition and rough margins from its next-day delivery operations.

And let's not even get started on the costs of packaging for delivery and its impact on the bottom line and the environment.

Still, grocers must not despair or resist the digital momentum. Online ordering is a double-edged sword for grocery retailers. It offers customer growth but increased competitiveness. It grows local market footprint but puts further pressure on grocers' wafer-thin margins. It presents a packaging nightmare but allows greater customer insights than ever before.

That's the one indisputable reason to embrace the omni-shoppertunity: data! As FMI notes, food retailers and manufacturers are currently failing to adequately share shopper data, segmentations and consumer insights, leading to missed op-



Kristen Ingraham

— Continued on next page

Look past regular PR to push food & beverage awareness

Foodservice marketing campaigns provide big opportunities for food and beverage brands to educate consumers, reach new audiences and increase business.

By Alexandra Oppenheimer Delvito

Public relations and marketing campaigns have evolved over time, but frequently include the same traditional elements of traditional media outreach, social media activations, spokesperson and influencer partnerships, media and consumer events and advertisements. Reporters get hundreds of press releases and pitches every day. This familiar roadmap charts the course to PR success when personalized with creative themes, meaningful causes and attention-grabbing events. While these tried-and-true plays can score big wins for companies and brands, it's important for food and beverage brands and commodities to look at additional marketing channels for opportunities beyond media.

Marketing campaigns targeting foodservice—specifically school foodservice that reach kids in Kindergarten through 12th grade—provide a tremendous opportunity to food and beverage companies to enter new channels that drive volume sales. Every day, almost 100,000 schools or institutions serve school lunches to 29.8 million students. Reaching the K-12 market opens the door for commodities and brands to reach new audiences, introduce children to new foods and flavors and create a generation of consumers, all while increasing business.

Entering the school foodservice market is challenging, but with the right partner and strategy, your products can be on school lunch trays nationwide. Pollock Communications' newly launched school foodservice division, On the Tray, is dedicated to executing impactful programs that reach our youngest consumers with healthy foods and beverages. Here are some tips from the On the Tray communications pros and registered dietitians who've executed award-winning school foodservice campaigns for clients:

Research makes perfect. Research is essential when entering the school foodservice sector—even with experience in foodservice, schools are a whole different ballgame. Set by the U.S. government, the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Programs have specific requirements and nuances that make planning meals extremely complicated. School foodservice directors and registered dietitians specializing in school foodservice are key resources—a reason Pollock Communications has registered dietitians on staff leading the On the Tray division—to help understand the opportunities and challeng-

es for brands and commodities in the K-12 market.

Identify the influencers. It's essential to identify influencers who will benefit from your upcoming campaign and can help provide boots-on-the-ground feedback that will guide content development and program execution. These influencers have decades of experience in school foodservice and hold positions within their state or professional organizations that make them leaders among other school foodservice pros. This relationship helps align your program with what's most effective in schools while generating advocates on the frontlines of school meal planning and execution.

Speak the language. The right lingo is essential when creating content that educates school foodservice professionals about why and how to incorporate your products into school meals. Schools must provide meals with specific amounts of all major food groups. To put foods on the tray, schools need to know how your products stack up against the criteria they're audited against. Experts, like the registered dietitians at Pollock Communications, have years of experience communicating how foods meet these strict guidelines and how schools can build them into their menus.

Know what matters most. School foodservice professionals are responsible for feeding kids nationwide. They face long, demanding hours and busy schedules, but their passion is unmatched. Not only do they have challenging requirements for their meal patterns, but they want to know they're making smart, healthy choices to nourish their students. It's essential to tell this audience why a food or beverage is so valuable for students and provide turn-key ways to put the item on the tray with standardized school foodservice recipes meeting National School Lunch Program guidelines. Focus on the right messages for the audience: include details about how foods meet food group requirements and help schools stay within required limits, like sodium. Talk about where foods are grown; schools are required to purchase U.S.-grown foods as much as possible.

Show up. Like school, attendance is mandatory at trade meetings like the School Nutrition Association Annual National Conference. This is an important annual event to be face-to-face with school foodservice professionals and share resources and recipes that help them add your product to

their menus. You should have standardized school foodservice recipes, product sheets and well-informed registered dietitians staffing your booth to speak to the benefits of using your product in schools. Attendees are extremely knowledgeable and need to have all their questions answered in order to consider putting your product on the tray.

Test for success and publicize to the masses. Pilot programs are an opportunity to build relationships with schools, test your products among the students and measure successes that can be used as product testimony. School foodservice professionals want to know your products will work in their operation and in-school testing answers that question, creates new supporters and generates data that can be used to promote successes to trade media. Publicizing successes in trade media reaches the broader school foodservice audience with your product benefits and built-in endorsements.

The school foodservice market reaching K-12 students holds great potential for food and beverage brands and commodities to drive volume sales and build a new generation of consumers. Having the right partner that understands and has had success in this market can help clients enter the market with the best chances of success.

Alexandra Oppenheimer Delvito is a Registered Dietitian, Vice President at Pollock Communications and team lead of Pollock's dedicated school foodservice division, On the Tray. ○



Alexandra Oppenheimer Delvito

OMNI-SHOPPERS OPPORTUNITY

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portunities to work collaboratively and increase sales. With the digital data collection, available only through the adoption of online shopping, grocers have the ultimate roadmap to customize insights-driven marketing programs and turn one-time online orders into loyal lifetime customers.

A far cry from the final frontier for digital disruption, the grocery business is now poised to be the pioneer of omni-shopper-tunity.

Kristen Ingraham is a Senior Vice President at Padilla and leads digital integrated marketing and business development for the agency's Food + Beverage Practice. ○

Teaching consumers about healthy, sustainable diets

Companies working across the food sector share a responsibility to educate consumers regarding the sustainability of their food and how to achieve healthy, sustainable diets.

By Andrea Carrothers and Katie Padilla

Global food systems are facing incredibly complex and urgent challenges, yet at the same time, provide tremendous opportunity to help achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. SDGs are a universal call to action to achieve a more sustainable future by addressing a broad range of interconnected challenges by 2030. Climate change, poverty, inequality and the need to feed a growing global population are accelerating the convergence of nutrition and sustainability through efforts to produce nutrient-rich, safe, affordable and culturally acceptable foods while reducing environmental impacts. While the SDGs are guiding global sustainable food and agricultural commitments by commodities, food companies and retailers, much debate remains regarding how to define and achieve healthy, sustainable diets.

Growing sense of urgency is fueling efforts to define and achieve sustainable diets

Global conversation on the topic is quickly amplifying. In 2019 alone, more than 20 global reports and initiatives focused on defining and/or setting targets for global sustainable diets. As a few examples, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization released their Sustainable Healthy Diets Guiding Principles; the World Resources Institute included a shift to “healthier and more sustainable diets” as a key priority in its Creating a Sustainable Food Future report; and the EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health recommended its Planetary Health Diet, which attempted to set global targets for healthy diets and sustainable food production for the first time.

Still, research on sustainable diets is in its relative infancy and, not surprisingly, fueling a lot of friction in the resulting dialogue. There’s a strong need to consider tradeoffs across multiple dimensions of sustainable food systems to operationalize these recommendations, including consideration of affordability, accessibility and cultural differences. All dimensions of sustainability—including environmental, health and socioeconomic factors—must be considered to develop effective sustainable dietary guidance. Conflicting views on these complex issues among stakeholders are adding

to confusion on how to define and achieve sustainable diets.

Consumers are interested in sustainable foods but are uncertain how to identify them

Conversations about the impacts of diets on the environment have moved into the mainstream, and recent surveys affirm there’s both strong consumer interest and confusion on the topic of sustainable foods. For example, the 2019 International Food Information Council Food and Health Survey found that six in 10 U.S. consumers find it hard to know whether their food choices are environmentally sustainable, and 63 percent of these consumers say this information would have a greater influence on their food choices if it were easier to determine. A nationally representative survey conducted by Padilla|FoodMinds found that 66 percent of U.S. consumers want to learn more about sustainable foods but only one in five turn to food and beverage companies for sustainability information. They’re primarily looking toward authoritative bodies like the Food and Drug Administration (43 percent) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (39 percent) to learn more but find the available information confusing and challenging to navigate.

These results are echoed globally. The 2019 Globescan Healthy and Sustainable Living Report, conducted with consumers across 25 countries, found that consumers are keenly interested in leading more healthy and sustainable lives, but there’s a significant gap between intent and action, and they’re unsure how to achieve them.

We know that consumers seek credible sources of information about the sustainability of their food choices yet don’t know where to turn. The resulting lack of clarity drives consumer skepticism and limits the ability of sustainability considerations to impact purchase decisions today. This creates an opportunity for stakeholders throughout food supply chains, including commodities, companies, retailers and restaurants to enhance how they communicate about their products’ roles in sustainable food systems. Given the high propensity for confusion, messages should be clear and credible to effectively communicate how products are delivering benefits across all dimensions of sustainability, including environmental, health, sociocultural and

economic elements.

Protein foods in the spotlight, adding to consumer confusion

One particular source of confusion are protein foods, especially with the explosion of meat alternatives and plant protein options available in the market. Consumers are increasingly looking for more choices in protein food, and the proliferation of protein products makes it essential for the food industry to clearly articulate and substantiate the sustainability benefits of their products, so consumers can make informed choices.

Interestingly, research suggests that consumers are expanding their protein choices for a variety of reasons beyond health and environmental considerations—they’re also driven by curiosity, novelty and convenience. Their food choices may be further complicated by potentially competing priorities like clean labels, price and taste. Clear labeling and marketing is critical to help consumers choose sustainable food products aligned with their values, motivations and nutrition needs. In the ongoing conversation on sustainable diets and on plant and animal protein foods specifically, transparency is more important than ever.

Clear, credible sustainability communications are key

Today’s consumers want and demand transparency regarding the sustainability of their food and the food system. Escalating pressures on the world’s food systems aren’t going away, and stakeholders across the food industry share responsibility for helping consumers eat more sustainably. As consumers continue to strive for personal and environmental wellbeing, companies should focus on continuous improvement efforts and provide transparent, credible information about the sustainability of their products to help achieve healthy, sustainable diets.

Andrea Carrothers, MS, RD, is a Senior Vice President at FoodMinds, a division of Padilla, based in Denver, Colo. Katie Padilla, MA, PMP, is a Director at FoodMinds, a division of Padilla, based in the Washington, D.C., office. Together, they lead the agency’s Healthy, Sustainable Food Systems team. ○



Andrea Carrothers



Katie Padilla

Rethinking corporate apologies

The slightest misstep in today's social-media-driven culture can push companies into crisis mode, resulting in knee-jerk public apologies that might cheapen genuine expressions of contrition down the road.

By Matthew Beaton

I'm shaking my head over the latest corporation begging for forgiveness: Buffalo Wild Wings. The restaurant chain caught some flack online for implying that the Houston Astros baseball team deserved a more severe punishment for cheating in the 2017 and 2018 seasons. In January, the Astros dodged player suspensions and received only a \$5 million fine, the loss of some draft picks and one-year suspensions for its manager and general manager over the sign-stealing scandal.

"THAT'S how you punish a team that cheats," Buffalo Wild Wings tweeted, taking a shot at the Astros while sharing a story about the Manchester City soccer club that faces a \$32.5 million fine and a two-season ban from the Champions League for rules violations.

Then, outrage ensued (a very online, very Houston-specific, very blink-and-you-miss-it type of outrage). Apparently, a few fans sent angry tweets, a few local news outlets wrote articles and Buffalo Wild Wings went into apology mode.

"So last night was the roast of Buffalo Wild Wings, courtesy of the city of Houston. And honestly, we deserved it. Well done, H-Town, for coming to your team's defense, and we're sorry about what we posted," the company tweeted from its ac-

count on Saturday.

The apology, if anything, drew more criticism than the initial tweet. (Original tweet: 3,900 comments; 26,500 retweets; 159,300 likes. Apology tweet: 4,000 comments; 667 retweets; 5,400 likes).

So, what was Buffalo Wild Wings' reasoning? What was the value of the apology? What was the expectation: that angry Astros fans would suddenly flock to the nearest location and place an order? Was criticizing a professional sports team's cheating during a year it won the World Series really beyond the pale?

If a company plans to apologize for every innocent social media flap, it can expect to remain in constant crisis mode. And if an apology is necessary, it should follow a thoughtful, well-reasoned review of the situation—not because enough tweets said you should.

Perhaps the biggest upside from the apology was the additional media attention Buffalo Wild Wings received.

Most Americans think about Buffalo Wild Wings only during its commercials, so maybe the company leaned into the publicity opportunity and, at the same time, felt it was taking the high road.

Companies, though, shouldn't be so quick to grovel in public, relying on quick-fix

apologies to satisfy social media and press criticism. And not all do this.

For example, Peloton declined an apology tour last December after its infamous holiday commercial drew accusations of sexism and comparisons to the dystopian world of Black Mirror.

"While we're disappointed in how some have misinterpreted this commercial, we are encouraged by—and grateful for—the outpouring of support we've received from those who understand what we were trying to communicate," the company's statement said.

Now, only two months after the outrage erupted over the Peloton commercial, few remember whether the company self-flagellated for a week or just said its ad was "misinterpreted."

From a PR perspective, that matters a lot. First, an apology tour is full of potential landmines (think Norm Macdonald). The last thing you want is to be forced to do a second apology tour because your first one was inadequate or tone-deaf. That vicious circle can get out of control quickly.

Second, by unreservedly apologizing and taking full responsibility for a tweet or commercial, a company essentially accepts all the worst interpretations of that tweet or commercial. In the case of Peloton, that means accepting the sexist label; in the case of Buffalo Wild Wings, that means admitting the tweet was truly offensive to the city of Houston and to Astros fans across the country (and threats to boycott the restaurant were perfectly reasonable).

Companies only harm themselves by accepting the social media smears and intentional misrepresentations of their public messaging. Once they admit guilt, the news media reports the apology and the company is forever branded by its public sin.

That's not to say apologies are unnecessary—obviously, misbehaving companies should own their mistakes, ask forgiveness, and explain how they'll do better—but automatic apologies shouldn't be issued as soon as a few angry tweets roll in and some negative news coverage hits the web.

Consider this: Three months after the outrage ensues, few will remember your misunderstood tweet or commercial, but, if handled correctly, a company will have safeguarded its brand by refusing to accept or sanction any odious labels that were meant to do it permanent harm.

Matthew Beaton is a PR consultant and Founder of Beaton PR in New York. ○



Matthew Beaton

BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

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with the judging panel, CIA and student chefs. Additionally, editorial articles were secured within top-tier publications as an added value. This multi-faceted campaign with Foodbeast garnered more than 21 million impressions and, most importantly, transformed the influencers we worked with into valuable brand spokespersons for Bibigo. This campaign successfully raised awareness for the brand by reaching their targeted millennial consumers and provided an open-ended platform for future partnerships with the CIA.

When working with influencers or media partners, it's essential to keep in mind that just because someone has a large audience of followers doesn't necessarily mean their audience is a good fit. Focus on a niche and more specialized influencers and brands that align with your company values and

target audience.

Evaluate your campaign's success

As with any PR and marketing initiative, it's important to evaluate the partnership's success during and after the campaign. Make sure before the partnership starts, you outline your metrics and expectations upfront and share the results with your brand partner.

Establish your KPIs from the beginning and keep track of your impressions and goals during the partnership to ensure you're meeting them and your partner is delivering the expected results.

Brand partnerships must be carefully considered and responsibly implemented, but if done so, have the potential to propel a brand to new heights.

Paola Cuevas, Senior Director at Carolyn Izzo Integrated Communications (CIIC), is a bilingual public relations specialist with experience in food and beverage, travel, lifestyle and consumer brands. ○

Communicating purpose in the food/beverage industry

Consumers are paying attention to corporate responsibility and sustainability issues more than ever before. As a result, companies are now taking meaningful action because they realize their future depends on it.

By Cory Ziskind and Tim Streeb

During the past decade, corporate sustainability and social purpose have evolved from a “nice to have” to business imperatives for companies of all sizes and across all industries. In the food and beverage industry, brands without an authentic social purpose and substantive commitments to environmental sustainability are likely to do so at their peril as they will fail to appeal to the tastes and values of Gen X, Y and Z. Combined, these cohorts have the dominant purchasing power and their purchasing decisions have a long-tail effect that will influence future generations.

By virtue of the fact that people are paying increasingly close attention to what they put in their bodies, environmental and social issues are critically important in the food and beverage industry as consumers of all ages and demographics are increasingly voting with their feet and their wallets.

The companies and brands with a clear purpose backed by real substance are winning hearts and minds, long-term brand loyalty, and trust with all key stakeholders: employees, consumers, business partners, investors, governments, NGOs and the communities in which they operate.

The Enabling the Good Life Report from Sustainable Brands and Harris Poll found that Americans are redefining “The Good Life” and are looking to brands to take the lead in showing them how they can make a more fulfilling life. According to the landmark research, 71 percent of Americans say their view of The Good Life differs from their parents; 66 percent say “living a healthy, balanced life” is important to them; 76 percent say The Good Life requires making a difference for others; and 80 percent are loyal to brands that help them live The Good Life. This sentiment is here to stay for the long-term.

Further, the world’s largest retailers such as Walmart are mandating compliance with stringent sustainability and social responsibility metrics to secure and keep shelf space. Walmart’s Standards for Suppliers are its fundamental expectations of its suppliers related to social responsibility, and its Global Compliance Guidance Tool helps supplier brands to comply with its expectations for Responsible Sourcing, Food Safety, Health and Wellness, Product Safety, Environmental Health & Safety, Global Supply

Chain Security and Factory Capability and Capacity Audits.

Walmart’s Sustainability Index gathers and analyzes information across a product’s life cycle—from sourcing, manufacturing and transporting, to selling, customer usage and end of use. Walmart uses the data from the surveys to identify key social and environmental hot spots and to set an agenda to drive continuous improvement with its suppliers. In 2017, Walmart reached its goal set in 2012 of buying 70 percent of its goods from suppliers that participate in the sustainability index. Simply put, social and environmental factors are driving retail purchasing decisions.

The war for talent is driving substantive change as well. Today’s multigenerational workforce increasingly wants to work for companies that align with their values in not just words, but actions. According to The Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019, millennials and Gen Zs want all of the talk business gives to purpose to become meaningful action, and for business leaders to serve as agents for positive change. Earlier Deloitte millennial surveys found that “companies and senior management teams that are most aligned with millennials in terms of purpose, culture and professional development are likely to attract and retain the best millennial talent and, in turn, potentially achieve better financial performance.”

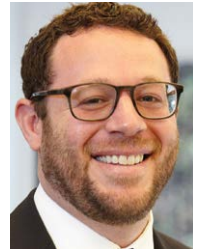
The pressure for brands to have a purpose isn’t just from consumers, retailers and employees/talent; it’s coming from the world’s largest institutional investors. The emerging topic of Environmental, Social and Governance made recent headlines and reverberated throughout boardrooms with the release of BlackRock’s annual letter to clients and CEOs, in which the world’s largest asset manager announced that sustainability is its new standard for investing.

BlackRock sent a clear signal. Regardless of one’s view on climate change, environmental and social performance are inextricably linked with long-term business performance—not at odds with each other. The message from BlackRock is: we’re not going to risk our fiduciary commitment to our clients with investments in companies that don’t properly manage both the business risks and opportunities associated with

environmental and social issues.

Increasingly, clients recognize that a confluence of factors are driving a renewed sustainability and social purpose mandate that is critical to their long-term business success. And they know that appropriately communicating their strategic approach, execution and successful implementation of sustainability and social purpose is paramount for long-term credibility and building reputational capital.

Following are our key recommendations for effectively communicating sustainability and social purpose in the food and beverage industry:



Cory Ziskind



Tim Streeb

Embed into brand DNA. Embed environmental sustainability and social purpose into the DNA of the company to strategically align with the business strategy and create authentic food and beverage brands that resonate with

all stakeholders. Sustainability and social purpose must permeate all interactions between the brand and stakeholders—not just customers, but partners, NGOs, the local communities in which you operate and vendors and partners throughout your supply chain.

Engage and empower the team. Employees are your brand’s front-line ambassadors, and as such, employee engagement is critical for successfully implementing sustainability and social purpose into the company’s brand DNA and products. Invest time, energy and resources into regular engagement and communications with employees and empower them to make meaningful contributions.

Prioritize and focus. Understand which ESG factors are material to your specific business and product offerings. Focus on those issues, especially when communicating ESG strategies and outcomes to your investors and board. ESG risk factors can have significant and direct impacts on value creation, which means they should be top of mind with these groups. Integrate Board and management teams into the process.

Set goals and communicate progress. Set realistic long-term quantifiable goals and

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Sustainability writes headlines for food, beverage news

Sustainability has become a top concern in our current conversations about food, resulting in an uptick in sustainable practices and messaging for marketing and communications agencies whose food and beverage clients now view these issues as essential ingredients of a successful branding strategy.

By Jon Gingerich

On March 1, New York's statewide ban on single-use plastic bags went into effect. The law, passed by the state legislature in an effort to reduce the usage of plastic bags—which often ends up in landfills or waterways—prohibits retailers such as grocery stores from providing customers with plastic carry-out bags.

New Yorkers are encouraged to instead bring their own reusable bags, or they purchase buy paper alternatives for a mandatory five-cent fee, three cents of which will go to the State Environmental Protection Fund, the remaining two cents going to the county or city government (fees would be waived for shoppers receiving SNAP or WIC benefits). Businesses can also opt to sell their own multiple-use tote-style bags.

Exceptions apply, such as single-use plastic bags used for produce, or bags covering raw meats or made-to-order foods. Dry cleaners and laundry services would be allowed to continue using bags, as would pharmacists handing out prescription drugs. Trash bags and food storage bags would also remain for sale. And carryout bags provided by restaurants won't be covered under the law either.

The law isn't without its problems. The state's Plastic Bag Task Force found that paper bags actually have a larger carbon footprint than their plastic alternatives, as they require a significant quantity of water to produce as well as increased energy for production and transportation. This means increased costs for New York-area retailers, who also have to contend with future bag shortages, as paper bag manufacturers in 2020 are harder to come by than plastic.

Then there's the little-known loophole that thicker plastic bags—over 10 mils

thick—fall under the state's current rubric of "reusable," meaning that retailers could, hypothetically, bypass the law by handing out free, thicker versions of the flimsier alternatives normally found at grocery check-out lines.

New York's bag ban is only the latest episode in an era where issues of sustainability and environmental consciousness have emerged as overarching themes in the headlines. California voters approved a statewide ban of plastic bags in 2016, and similar plastic bag bans have since been enacted in Connecticut, Delaware, Oregon and Vermont. Last year, Maine became the first state to ban the selling or distribution of disposable food containers made of polystyrene, otherwise known as Styrofoam. San Francisco International Airport followed suit by banning the sale of plastic water bottles at its restaurants, convenience stores and vending machines.

Since then, America's focus on sustainability has only increased. The latest Food News Study commissioned by Hunter Public Relations, which surveys Americans on the most memorable food-related news items of the year, discovered that sustainability ranked as the most prevalent issue for the first time in 2019, taking three of the top ten food stories of the year.

Opposition among consumers and businesses to the plastic straw bans that popped up across the country, recent laws to end the sale of plastic water bottles and Styrofoam food container bans were the fifth, eighth and ninth most popular food stories in Hunter's latest annual study, now in its 17th year.

"In 2019, we saw three stories related to

sustainability in the top ten," Hunter CEO Grace Leong told *O'Dwyer's*. "That's a remarkable rise in a relatively short time and reflects the fact that Millennials and Gen-Z in particular are becoming more sustainably-minded."

Study after study shows that today's consumers—particularly young consumers—are more likely to trust and do businesses with companies that support environmental and socially-responsible causes.

Research published by NYU Stern's Center for Sustainable Business last year found that 50 percent of growth among all Consumer Packaged Goods between 2013-2018 came from sustainability-marketed products, even though those products represent only 16.6 percent of the total CPG category.

A similar Nielsen report discovered that products featuring sustainability claims outperformed competing products in sales by more than three percent in 2018.

Finally, a Jan. study by the National Retail Federation discovered that 70 percent of North American shoppers think it's important for brands to be eco-friendly, with more than two-thirds (69 percent) willing to pay a premium for recycled products.

Because sustainability issues have surged in the national conversation, it's no surprise that companies in the food and beverage sector have continued leveraging those messages into branding opportunities in an effort to differentiate themselves from the competition.

If the headlines are any indication, we might expect sustainability practices to increase in the coming years, both in response to consumer trends and because they recognize it's the right thing to do. **○**

COMMUNICATING PURPOSE

—Continued from page 16

communicate progress towards those goals with all stakeholders. Develop an annual corporate sustainability and social impact report to communicate success against ESG goals. Show how ESG performance aligns with financial performance and the company's long-term vision and mission. Create effective shareholder engagement plans to communicate your ESG approach. Integrate communications across investor relations, public relations, and digital/social media to

maximize communications opportunities and minimize communications risk.

Tell your story, but never greenwash. Sustainability communications is about story telling based on facts, not hype. Greenwashing may feel good in the short term, but it will lead to a loss of long-term credibility that likely cannot be recaptured, as well as punitive media coverage that will tarnish the company's reputation. Strategically pursue select media opportunities to amplify your sustainability and social purpose message, but always be prepared to support claims with facts and figures, verified by credible third parties.

It's an exciting time for the corporate responsibility and sustainability movement. Without a purpose that helps people lead a better life, it's simply impossible for a food or beverage brand to establish or keep its relevance over the long-term. At the same time, the sustainability mandate creates tremendous opportunities for food and beverage brands of all sizes to innovate with a purpose and effectively communicate their purpose to create lifetime and multigenerational brand affinity.

*Cory Ziskind, Managing Director and Tim Streeb, Senior Vice President, co-lead the Better Living Public Relations group at ICR. **○***

Are impressions a worthwhile metric of success?

Two trends that are making PR harder, and four ways to deal with them.

By Dustin Siggins

The biggest challenge of PR isn't getting clients in the press. It isn't proving a client's value to a reporter or increasing that client's brand value to their customers and shareholders. It's getting a client to see the real value of earned media, of proactively telling their story to reach and influence their target markets.

Our industry is so intangible that many people don't engage in earned media until a crisis hits. And then it's too late. The deluge of negative stories wasn't countered through an effective brand strategy beforehand, and the prospective client lacks necessary relationships with media gatekeepers to craft an effective counter-narrative.

We have a hard sales job. And it's only getting more difficult as measuring the value of earned media becomes more complex and as news deserts increase. The 20th century PR trends are giving way quickly to an era of rapid technological disruption, and PR professionals have to keep up.

Two challenging trends

One of the most important areas of client education is countering the idea that "impressions" are a worthwhile measure of earned media success. A client's quote is never going to reach everyone who reads the *New York Times*, yet some leading organizations still imply that a single placement is going to reach every reader, listener or viewer of a particular outlet.

"The way we measure digital editorial content in 2020 is still a holdover from the last century," Memo CEO Eddie Kim said. "A better way to understand impact is to calculate what it would cost the brand to create the value themselves—building the content, providing the platform, and then driving target audiences to the content."

"How would you recreate the value of an earned placement in the *Wall Street Journal*, which receives 10,000 executive readers for an average engaged time of nearly two minutes?" Kim asked. "If you were to target executives on LinkedIn, it would cost you anywhere from \$5-10 per click, which means it would cost a brand \$100,000 from start to finish!"

Another challenge is the nationalization of media. iHeartMedia's recent layoffs only impacted a fraction of the company's five percent market share, but the layoffs mostly affected small markets. This continued the trend of creating local news "deserts" in exchange for generalized national news and

perspectives, and it continued to make the job of getting local earned media harder.

Solution: Establish a human connection

The solution to all of this technological-based change is the human connection. We must earn trust, get personal and deep with client needs, and then create real value that resonates with a client's goals.

Earn trust before signing a contract by being open and forthright about the reality of earned media. My firm has a good-faith pledge—not a guarantee of success—and we forthrightly explain how we work with clients. By engaging in your own variation of former FBI hostage negotiator Chris Voss' rapport-building accusation audit before a prospect can raise the same objections, you reduce a prospect's emotional fear and hesitation, and increase their level of trust in your professionalism, integrity and ability to perform.

Greater trust can also be built through the calibrated question strategy. These "what/how" questions open doors to identifying, understanding and solving a prospect's challenges. Which is also step number two.

Get deep and personal with the client's needs. Tactics like press releases and video are often necessary, but are they done ad-hoc or in complete integration with the company's overarching mission and goals? Does the communications strategy have buy-in from senior staff and junior staff you'll work with every day?

Touchdown Strategies' James Davis has developed a proprietary method of assessing a client's communications operation. "Conversations about performance too often focus on tactical decisions and execution, rather than assessing the capability on a strategic level," he explained. "We help organizations uncover why decisions are made by analyzing the current capabilities, processes, practices and the culture. Then, we develop a tailored plan to drive continuous improvement."

At the end of the day, it's the tailored plan which will produce results and turn a hesitant client into a repeat customer. But a key part of that is ...

Being able to explain why you picked specific outlets for earned media. Turning our intangible industry into a hard deliverable through quantitative and qualitative analysis is critical to proving value.

We recently had a client ask why a media list had only one national outlet. We reas-

sured the client that success in industry and regional outlets is a better use of time and money, and will build the client's nascent brand for national media in 2021.

"The value of earned media depends entirely on a client's target market and the outlet's following," said Uriah Kiser, Publisher of the Virginia-based online news portal Potomac Local. "Local news is seen by the national media as from a bygone era, but entrepreneurs are filling the gap. A 2019 Knight Foundation-Gallup study found that local journalists are seen as more caring, trustworthy, and unbiased compared to national media, and 60 percent of Americans believe local news accomplishes most of the key tasks of informing communities"

"The *Washington Post* has many more readers than Potomac Local, but our readers trust us to report what's important to the local community," Kiser concluded. "The same is true for industry trade publications and other outlets which specialize geographically or by industry."

Finally, **create multiple values from each placement through tactical synergy.** A Super Bowl-winning lineman doesn't just make a good block; he also knows where his quarterback and running backs are, where they're going, and what the play is. The placement that can be reposted or republished, repurposed as a driver of traffic to the client's website via social media and a newsletter, and/or turned into handouts at a lecture or conference creates maximum return on investment. It's a win-win-win for the client, media gatekeepers and you.

Bill Collier of Intellz Inc. has two other tactics he uses for clients like the American Medical Association and the Republican National Committee. "You should have three angles on your earned media announcements so you can remind people multiple times without being repetitive. Additionally, developing relationships with mid-level industry bloggers gives your placements tremendous SEO and credibility boosts, as well as massively increase reach."

Changing with the times

Technology is changing the way most industries function. PR is no different. The question is whether individual practitioners and companies will get with the times or go the way of the dodo.

Dustin Siggins is CEO of Proven Media Solutions and a business columnist. ○



Dustin Siggins

Rubenstein's Marcia Horowitz dies at 68

Marcia Horowitz, a force of nature at Rubenstein Assocs., died Feb. 10 after a battle with pancreatic cancer. She was 68.

The former Press Aide to New York Mayor Abe Beame joined Howard Rubenstein's firm 41 years ago.

She handled crisis PR, litigation support and reputation management assignments for clients such as Estee Lauder, Mount Sinai Hospital System, Phillips Van Heusen, ACLU, American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Cooper Tire and Apollo Management.

The family requests donations in Horowitz's memory be made to The Museum of Jewish Heritage, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, Marcia Horowitz Education Fund for Cross-Cultural Awareness; Lustgarten Foundation, Pancreatic Cancer Research and Let's Win! Pancreatic Cancer. ○



Marcia Horowitz

Comcast calls Khoury comms. chief

Cable and telecommunications giant Comcast Corporation has promoted Jennifer Khoury to the role of Chief Communications Officer.

Khoury succeeds D'Arcy Rudnay, Comcast's first CCO, who's retiring after 16 years with the Philadelphia-based cable TV company. Rudnay will remain onboard until the end of the year, where she'll serve as Senior Advisor to Comcast's executive leadership team.

Khoury joined Comcast in 1999. She was previously Senior VP of Corporate and Digital Communications, where she led all strategic comms. for the company's consumer products, as well as media relations, social media and digital comms. for the company's brand.

Khoury will now oversee all of Comcast's external and internal corporate communications functions. She'll report to Comcast Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Brian Roberts and Senior Executive Vice President Adam Miller. ○



Jennifer Khoury

Ogilvy's Anderson takes Edelman brand post

Ogilvy's Michele Anderson has joined Edelman as Vice Chair of Brand for the U.S.

Reporting to Brand Chair Amanda Glasgow, Chicago-based Anderson will plot market and talent strategy, while integrating data/analytics and performance communications to drive brand growth. She also will oversee brand development for Edelman's Midwest region.

Anderson, who has 25 years of PR & marketing experience, served as Ogilvy's US Head of PR & Influence. She was responsible for BP, Kimberly-Clark, State Street Global Advisors (award-winning "Fearless Girl" campaign), Tyson Foods, Sargento and Chicago Blackhawks business. Earlier, she led Ogilvy's Chicago and Ketchum's Atlanta offices.

The South Africa native co-founded Magna Carta, which became the country's largest firm with offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town, which led to work from Coca-Cola, Vodaphone, Disney and 2010 FIFA World Cup. ○



Michele Anderson

NTIA head joins Beacon Global Strategies

Diane Rinaldo, who was acting Administrator at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, has joined Beacon Global Strategies as Senior VP.

At the NTIA, she advised the White House and Congress on issues regarding cybersecurity, 5G, privacy and Internet access.

Before joining the executive branch, Rinaldo was Director of Government Affairs at SAP and a staffer on the House's permanent select committee on intelligence, where she played a key role in the development of the Cybersecurity Act of 2015.

Rinaldo also did an eight-year stint at Cassidy & Assocs. ○



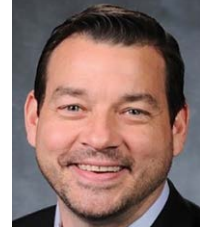
Diane Rinaldo

Patterson to lead H+K's global comms

Hill+Knowlton announced that Ed Patterson is now Global Head of Communications. The LGBTQ & diversity strategist took the job in December following a stint as VP-communications at Madison Square Garden.

He also was VP-Corporate Communications & PA at Veritiv, Senior Director-PA at Cox Enterprises, Senior VP at Edelman, and Director of Media/Analyst Relations at AT&T.

Patterson did a six years on the board of governors of LGBTQ advocacy and political group the Human Rights Campaign. ○



Ed Patterson

WeWork's Asci returns to Teneo

Jimmy Asci, who left his Chief Communications Officer job at WeWork in October, is back at Teneo as senior managing director in its New York office.

He joined WeWork in April 2019 to work with co-Founder/CEO Adam Neumann to refine the company's narrative ahead of its proposed public offering.

At WeWork, Asci provided strategic oversight of external, internal, financial, government and consumer PR. ○



Jimmy Asci

KP names George partner

KP Public Affairs has named Managing Director Patrick George a Partner at the Sacramento-based agency.

Patrick joined KP Public Affairs in 2010. Prior to joining the firm, he was stationed at Burson-Marsteller for 15 years, where he served as media director.

Other KP partners include Mike Burns, Patrick George and Alison MacLeod. MacLeod was named partner at the firm in January 2019. ○



Patrick George



We are consumed by food.

**Food, beverage and nutrition
expertise, every way you slice it.**



Together, Padilla and FoodMinds provide global expertise and leadership in the planet's evolving food ecosystem. We're reimagining why, what and how the world eats and drinks – to build a flourishing future for all. See what we've got cooking at [PadillaCo.com](https://www.PadillaCo.com).

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O'Dwyer's guide to FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS



BMLPR developed the idea for the Pizza-Kini, a bikini made entirely of pizza, to generate some buzz for its client Villa Italian Kitchen on National Bikini Day!

5W PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Ronn D. Torossian, Founder & CEO

It's hard to open a magazine, scroll through social media or turn on the television without seeing information about a new food or beverage trend. Often, the 5W food & beverage PR team is the source of those stories.

With new brands, lines, products, and restaurants introduced each day, we understand competition for space (in shopping carts, on shelves and in the media) is fierce.

From facilitating the launch of new products to developing long-term creative strategies that ensure maximum traditional and social media coverage, sell product, increase distribution and win market share, our experience and results in the food and beverage arena are unparalleled.

We understand the food and beverage space and are experts at crafting compelling Public Rela-

tions narratives for health and wellness beverages, alcohol and spirits, functional beverages and much more.

Client experience include Sparkling ICE, ZICO Coconut Water, Anheuser-Busch, Evian Natural Spring Water, Santa Margherita Wines, Whole Foods Market, GAEA, Viki's Granola, M&Ms, Welch's Fruit Snacks and many others. We get food and beverage PR.

ARTISAN PRODUCTION HOUSE

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Erin Lahey Schwitter, Producer/ Partner, erin@artisanproductionhouse.com

Kara Leibowitz, Producer/Partner, kara@artisanproductionhouse.com

Artisan Production House is a full-service production house specializing in food & lifestyle publicity. We create brand content that resonates with your audience, keeps them engaged and brings value to

their lives. Our innate understanding of story relevance and personal relationships with TV producers and media influencers throughout the country gets your story heard. We'll help you deliver your messages seamlessly and with style utilizing our high-end production capabilities (including film-style shooters and graphic designers). Artisan's in-studio & on location satellite junkets include quality bookings that are actually seen, spot-on custom craft services and a fresh, modern design aesthetic ... because taste matters. Additional services include stunning branded content food videos, original book promotional videos and select matchmaking between celebrity talent and brands.

Our clients include Food Network, Penguin Random House, The Wonderful Company, Le Creuset of America and commodity boards ranging from the National Onion Association to Grapes from California.

BLAZE PR

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Matt Kovacs, President

BLAZE is the go-to PR agency for lifestyle brands hungry for a real piece of the marketshare. Fresh and seasoned, our boutique agency is comprised of veteran practitioners who stay one step ahead of trends and will not rest on the laurels of past successes. Our media strategies are meaty, creative and on-point because they are backed by a thoughtful process that considers the particular world of each brand.

Recent Awards: *PR Week*, Best Places to Work; *LA Business Journal*, Best Places to Work; One Planet Awards, Gold—PR Campaign of the Year; One Planet Awards, Bronze—Product Launch of the Year.

Clients include: Barebells protein bars, Bilinski's Chicken Sausage, California Olive Oil Council, Chronic Tacos, Dalmatia Fig Spread, Day One CBD water, Designer Protein, Grass Roots Farmers' Cooperative, High Peaks plant-based sausage, KOE Kombucha, Mary's Gone Crackers, Meat District, Melora Manuka, Perfect Hydration and Weihenstephan Brewery.

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Andrew Testa, Vice President
Tricia Ryan, Vice President
Meredith DeSanti, Vice President

BML Public Relations is a national, award-winning PR and social media agency, specializing in food, CPG, entertainment, retail and franchise concepts, to name a few. We do everything every other firm does, only we do it greater than the rest.

Rooted in earned media, we communicate your point of difference in a sea of the same to insert your brand into the conversation. We have made a name for ourselves in the past decade representing some of the planet's most recognized brands in the fast, casual, QSR and

fine dining space. From creating the infamous Pumpkin Spice Pizza, massive World's Largest Hot Chocolate and Gender Reveal Lasagna, to newswjacking current events and managing daily blocking and tackling for clients, BMLPR does it all—with the guarantee that we do it better.

We're experienced newswjackers, media mavens, issue managers, true partners and team players. If this is something your brand needs, give BMLPR a buzz.

BULLFROG + BAUM

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Jennifer Baum, President + Founder

With 20 years of success under its belt, Bullfrog + Baum continues to disrupt the communications world. We are storytellers, intuitive marketers, brand gurus, trend forecasters, event visionaries and social media mavens, who thrive where food + beverage meets travel + lifestyle. We are travel junkies, wellness mavens, former editors and restaurant employees, globe-trotters who are curious about the world around them.

B+B is a one-stop for clients seeking game-changing awareness and tangible ROI. Once a leading boutique PR firm specializing in restaurants, we have since grown to be much more. Our clients still



Bullfrog + Baum first launched Black Tap Craft Burgers & Beer in New York's SoHo neighborhood in 2015. Five years later, Black Tap has grown into a global brand with locations around the world and known for their award-winning burgers and famous CrazyShake™ milkshakes. Bullfrog + Baum oversees Black Tap's public relations strategy, leading media relations in the U.S. and advising on global strategies, marketing and strategic partnerships, as well as digital strategy, including influencer relations and paid social media campaigns.

include F+B icons and innovators such as Bobby Flay, Black Tap Craft Burgers & Beer, Katz's Delicatessen, Bluestone Lane and 50 Eggs but now spans farther and wider to include Ketel One Family Made Vodka, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Canyon Ranch, Changi Airport, Singapore Tourism Bureau and more.

But it is our fully integrated ap-

proach that sets us apart from the pack. Travel and F + B teams collaborate offering a unique advantage: effortless support, for every aspect of business, under one roof. By combining our expertise across disciplines, we create the stories and experiences media and influencers love to cover and those that make consumers act.

We're not just a marketing, hos-

pitality PR or lifestyle firm. We're a style of life, bent on sharing the most inspiring hospitality experiences with everyone, everywhere.

The industry has taken notice. Recent awards include the *PR News*' Platinum Award, Media Relations for the launch of Ketel One Botanical and Ragan's PR Daily Media Relations Award, Special Event or Stunt, for harnessing the phenomena of "Crazy Rich Asians" to generate wanderlust for Singapore on behalf of the Singapore Tourism Board.

So, give us a call. Let's make something exciting happen.

CAROLYN IZZO INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS (CIIC)

NY + Miami
845/358-3920
www.ciicnews.com

Carolyn Izzo-Feldman, President & Chief Strategist
Amy Sedeno, Executive Director & Partner
Paola Cuevas, Senior Director

PR & Social Media for the food & beverage, travel & tourism, hospitality, real estate and lifestyle in-



CIIC's Exec. Director and Partner Amy Sedeno, along with Account Exec. Melanie Neff and Associate Account Exec. Marissa Labadie, celebrate client Barton & Guestier's Love Letters from France launch event.

— Continued on page 24

CAROLYN IZZO

Continued from page 23

dustries

CIIC is an award-winning, full-service international public relations, social media and communications firm specializing in creating dynamic campaigns for the food & beverage space. Our staffers bring many years of experience from several of the country's top PR firms and for 24 years, CIIC has been dedicated to servicing food and beverage brands with top-tier public relations campaigns and award-winning results.

CIIC got its start by putting Krispy Kreme Doughnuts on the map when they first launched in the Northeast. Since then, CIIC has represented a number of leading F&B brands, including The Original Soupman, Opal Apples, Barton & Guestier Wines, Bibigo Foods, Morton's The Steakhouse, Kona Red Beverages, Coney Island Brewing Company, New Leaf Beverages, California Pizza Kitchen, Bohlsen Restaurant Group, Beekman 1802, and more.

We are adept at launches, openings and franchisor relations, and are known for our networking expertise and extensive contacts in the trade, media and influencer categories, which we leverage to increase the level of reach, media coverage and access for our clientele. From working with key influencers and A-list media, to arranging appearances on network television shows, managing product sampling and planning top-level events in your key markets, our goal is to strategically and creatively deliver the best results at the best value.

CIIC is a woman-owned and operated business (WBENC Certified) and a proud member of Iatam-PR, furthering our reach in Mexico and Latin America.

For more information or to inquire about new business opportunities, please contact 845/358-3920 x 11 or visit us online at www.ciic-news.com.

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Coyne PR helps to solidify the PEEPS® Brand as a pop culture icon and extends its presence beyond the Easter season each year at PEEPSFEST®, a family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration.

212/938-0166

Thomas F. Coyne, CEO
John Gogarty, President
Lisa Wolleon, Executive Vice President
Tim Schramm, Executive Vice President

Working in the food and nutrition space has been a cornerstone of Coyne PR since the agency's inception over twenty-five years ago. From representing well-established category leaders to growing challenger brands, Coyne combines sound strategic counsel, cutting edge creative elements and flawless execution to achieve a client's communications and business goals.

Coyne has represented many of the most prominent and successful food brands in the world, including Del Monte Foods, Newman's Own, Chiquita, In the Raw, Perdue, General Mills, PepsiCo, Kraft, The Hershey Company, Eggland's Best, Entenmann's, Just Born Quality Confections, Campbell's, McCormick, and Perrigo Nutritionals, among others.

We've introduced scores of products, launched numerous breakthrough campaigns and initiatives,

and helped brands navigate significant industry challenges and crisis situations. We immerse ourselves in our client's business, becoming an extension of the communication and brand teams.

We create compelling storytelling, and match these skills with our broad and deep media relationships to drive new levels of attention for brands. Through proprietary tools, we identify, engage and activate the influencers who reach a brand's audience authentically. We understand how to tap into and amplify the voice of the brand evangelists. Our registered dietician network, consisting of 100+ influential and connected RD's and nutritionists, can be utilized to build, launch, and sustain campaign initiatives.

EVINS

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Mathew Evins, Chairman
Louise Evins, CEO
Drew Tybus, SVP, Food, Wine & Spirits

At EVINS we know that the secret to building brand relevancy,

consumer engagement and organic advocacy among consumers is through exceptional storytelling, and nowhere do stories come alive with more passion and lasting emotion than at the table. For over 30 years, EVINS' Food, Wine and Spirits (FWS) Practice has been telling the stories of the brands, experiences and people that shape the way consumers engage and enjoy. We are gratified and honored to have a number of client relationships for more than a quarter of a century, helping brands including Colgin Cellars, Cakebread Cellars, Chef John Currence, Crown Maple, Maker's Mark, Nat Sherman Cigars, Tequila Avion, SmartWater, Trinchero Napa Valley and countless others convey their stories to the audiences that matter most to them. We are the driving force behind a number of the most iconic brands, personalities and trends in the food and beverage industry. We pioneered the practice of "seeded self-discovery" marketing, and we take great pride in being the leading practitioners of seamless "no fingerprints" public relations and influencer engagement. The EVINS FWS Practice skillfully combines the intense

personal interests and proven professional expertise to create programs and attention-getting media coverage that bring hidden stories to the forefront. Transparent in our practices, relentless in our commitment to results, and passionate about solving the challenges facing our clients, EVINS has become a trusted and indispensable partner to our clients. Learn more about what we can do for you by visiting us at www.evins.com.

FINEMAN PR

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San Francisco-based Fineman PR is consistently recognized for its award-winning food and beverage programs. From coining the term “Brand PR” in the 90s, to driving the natural foods boom, to servicing prestigious wine clients—Fineman PR has a tenured reputation that prioritizes substance over spin. The agency specializes in Brand PR, crisis communications and digital marketing for a full range of food and CPG categories, including convention-

al and organic foods, nutritional supplements, confections and wine and spirits.

Fineman PR excels in building category leadership for its clients. We demonstrate why a client’s brand promise merits audience trial and trust. Fineman PR’s high-profile crisis communications work is nationally renowned and includes food safety issues and product recalls, labor negotiations, activist demonstrations, brand defamation, high profile lawsuits and workplace accidents. We safeguard and reinforce client reputations.

Current food and beverage programs include full-service marketing communications and issues management for Foster Farms poultry; regional event marketing and brand awareness for Dunkin’ Donuts and is agency-of-record for Amy’s Kitchen corporate and brand initiatives.

Fineman PR’s work for food and wine clients include proactive media relations; leadership positioning for brands and company executives; influencer relations; social/digital content strategy and development; media training; cause marketing and community relations; and internal, trade and retailer communications. Fineman PR’s lifestyle, wine and spirits divisions add specialty services tai-

lored to each client’s needs.

FINN PARTNERS

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Alicia Young, Founding Managing Partner (NY)

Missy Farren, Managing Partner (NY)

Wendy Lane, Managing Partner (Portland)

Malisa Meresman, Partner (NY)

FINN Partners employs a holistic approach to developing integrated marketing strategies that build buzz, drive trial and help clients exceed their marketing and sales goals. We deliver results by assembling teams of seasoned experts—a talented mix of media relations strategists, content developers, digital specialists, designers and more—that thrive on helping clients break through.

With almost 800 professionals across the U.S., Europe and Asia, FINN brings diverse backgrounds and viewpoints to the table. Our food, beverage, wellness and lifestyle experts have their fingers on the pulse of the evolving media landscape. We’re plugged into

the latest consumer trends and are at the forefront of industry developments driving innovation across retail. We offer clients a big picture perspective, drawing on these insights to develop campaigns that elevate and differentiate your brand and inspire action among your target audiences—online and offline.

FINN’s award-winning campaigns have produced measurable results for national and international brands ranging from wine, beer and spirits; beverages; natural, organic and specialty foods; foodservice concepts and retailers including Applegate, Auntie Anne’s, Carvel, Cinnabon, Frederick Wildman & Sons, fresh & co, International Olive Council, Jamba Juice, Jelly Belly Sparkling Water, Marine Stewardship Council, Northwest Cherries, Omaha Steaks, Peet’s Coffee, Pernod Ricard, Save-A-Lot, Snake River Farms, The Wine Region of Rioja, Treasury Wine Estates, Tree Top, Trinchero Family Estates and Whole Foods Market.

FISH CONSULTING

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Lorne Fisher, CEO / Managing Partner

Jenna Kantrowitz, SVP / COO
Lauren Simo, VP

Founded in 2004, Fish is a national PR agency that has helped some of the fastest-growing restaurant brands achieve their business goals. We’re proud to serve some of the industry’s leading companies, including Dunkin’, Denny’s, FOCUS Brands, Tropical Smoothie Cafe, and Chicken Salad Chick, among many others.

Our restaurant experience runs deep. From brand building, national consumer and B2B PR, and influencer marketing to franchisee recruitment, local grand openings, and crisis management, we’ve done a lot in the restaurant space. In fact, nearly half of our clients are restaurant brands.

Our strategic media relations campaigns consistently land our partners coverage in the most widely read and watched consumer and business outlets nationwide.



On behalf of French wine brand H&B Provence, FINN engaged fashionable rosé enthusiasts to celebrate National Rosé Day 2019.

Continued on page 26

FISH CONSULTING

—Continued from page 25

We love developing creative ways to get media talking about the brands we work with—and getting customers talking about them, too.

Fish is based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with operations in Dallas, Washington, D.C., and London.

FOODMINDS

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At FoodMinds, we put passion into practice by harnessing science, public affairs, food values and communications to meet our clients' business and public health objectives—a capability we created and define as food and nutrition affairs. FoodMinds is the only agency with more than 20 registered dietitians on staff and a Global ExpertBench™ of nutrition science, policy and communications professionals around the world. Capabilities include: food and nutrition affairs; sustainable and nutritious food systems engagement; personal wellness strategy; food values insights; strategic planning; thought leadership; nutrition, health and wellness science; partnerships and coalitions; health professional and influencer communications; influencer mapping; strategic insights; consumer engagement and media relations; and issues and crisis navigation. We are not just another PR agency. We help our clients tell a better story.

FoodMinds works with more than 30 leading commodity boards, food companies, brands and associations in the U.S. and around the world, including several *Fortune* 500 companies. Contact us to learn more.

FoodMinds is a division of Padilla. Between FoodMinds and Padilla Food + Beverage, we are happily consumed by food, all the time. Together, we're re-imagin-

ing why, what and how the world eats and drinks – to help build a stronger, flourishing future for all. We are building, growing and protecting brands and reputations by creating purposeful connections with the people who matter most to our clients. Together, our services span the ecosystem of food, beverage and nutrition—from research and insights to branding, creative and digital to marketing communications and our unique culinary center.

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), the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, is home to one of the country's largest Food & Beverage practice areas. FWV is ranked among the nation's 15 largest PR firms overall (2019 *O'Dwyer's* Ranking of Top U.S. PR Firms) and has been in the top 20 for more than a decade.

FWV specializes in creating maximum brand exposure through integrated campaigns that include earned media, promotional partnerships, celebrity endorsements, sponsor relations, event management, social media, influencer marketing, experiential activations and trade shows. The firm has vast experience with product launches in B2C and B2B channels, as well as in strategic counsel on issues related to environmental topics, supply chain, manufacturing and product recalls.

This broad range of expertise, including the evolving communications and content technologies utilized by consumers and the industry, has enabled FWV to support some of the most sought-after F&B brands in the world, including Melitta Coffee, Moe's Southwest Grill, BurgerFi, Certified Angus Beef, RealEats, The Coca-Cola Company (NESTE, Gold Peak, Minute Maid, DASANI, Simply Orange), ConAgra (Slim Jim, Pemican Beef Jerky), Nabisco Foods, the N.C. Pork Council and North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission. Our past and present

client roster in the beer, wine and spirits category includes Proximo (Pendleton Whisky), Brown-Forman (Jack Daniel's), Diageo North America (Bulleit Bourbon), Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits (Josh Cellars, Yellow Tail), BRAND Napa Valley, Grain and Barrel Spirits, Mother Earth Brewing and the N.C. Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association.

The agency has also produced award-winning campaigns for celebrity chefs Christine Hazel, Jeff Mauro, Lorena Garcia and Aliya LeeKong, Brinker International (Maggiano's Little Italy restaurants), Elevation Burger, House-Autry, Atlantic Natural Foods, Lidl, Whole Foods Market and Smithfield Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q, among many others.

FWV was winner of the *Bulldog Reporter* Best PR Agency of 2019 and is the only N.C.-based public relations firm to capture National Agency of the Year honors, something it has now done 20 times over the past two decades. Founded in April 1997 by agency Chairman & CEO Rick French, FWV employs more than 120 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C. headquarters and other offices around the country.

HEMSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS

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Samantha Jacobs, Founder and President
Michael Jacobs, COO

Passion, insight and connections are our go-to ingredients to create the perfect PR recipe. With a team of self-proclaimed "foodies" at the helm, driving creative programs that truly move the needle for our clients, Hemsworth is one of the fastest-growing, top-ranked award-winning PR agencies in the United States.

Whether we're launching a new menu with an intimate, interactive media tasting at an upscale neighborhood wine bar or putting the finishing touches on themed food drops to build media buzz around a quirky national food holiday, we work tirelessly to get our clients'

news into the right hands in a distinctive way. Our team of seasoned food and wine-focused PR professionals has built a network of unprecedented media relationships, which we leverage on our clients' behalf each and every day. You'll find our clients spread across the pages of renowned publications like *Food & Wine*, being talked about by the world's top foodie influencers, being profiled in leading restaurant industry trade outlets, and on high-profile network TV competitions like *Chopped* or *Guy's Grocery Games*.

Led by Director Lacey Outten, Hemsworth's Food, Wine & Spirits division represents fresh, up-and-coming businesses and leading, renowned global brands. Clients include AmaWaterways (known for its luxury cruises along the breathtaking rivers of Europe, Asia and Africa; including 60+ specialty wine sailings each year); JWB Prime Steak & Seafood; Kenefick Ranch Winery; The Local Culinary; Steelpan; I Heart Mac & Cheese; Press & Grind; the Walgreens Gridiron Grill-Off Food, Wine and Music Festival; Water's Edge Wineries; Zombie Donuts and more. Tailored programming includes brand communications strategy, media relations, promotions, guerrilla marketing, social media, thought leadership, event planning and franchise-focused campaign development.

HUNTER

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Samara Farber Mormar, Executive Vice President, Business Development

HUNTER is an award-winning, integrated consumer marketing firm and the second largest food and beverage agency in the United States. Our creative approach and client-led orientation has led to some of the most enduring client relationships in the business including TABASCO® Brand Pepper Sauce, Hunter's first partner over 30 years ago, and still a client today. Others include some of America's most iconic and beloved companies and brands including Post



To raise awareness of LACTAID® as the 100% real milk solution that allows people with sensitivities or lactose intolerance to enjoy dairy without discomfort, HUNTER helped LACTAID® appeal to moms making milk a staple in their households again, by partnering with Sesame Street and celebrity spokesperson and mom Sutton Foster. Foster and Cookie Monster were featured in digital video content produced by Hunter and supported with paid media garnering more than three million views in 2019. LACTAID® also joined Sesame Street as the official milk sponsor on its 10-city Sesame Street 50th Anniversary Road Trip, sampling thousands of glasses of LACTAID® to moms across the US and furthering the events' reach via influencer partnerships in each city.

Consumer Foods, Diageo North America, Smithfield, Pompeian, Chicken of the Sea and King's Hawaiian.

With offices in New York and London and a strategic footprint in markets across North America, Hunter's 120-person agency is perhaps best known for creative, equity building campaigns that drive conversation and insert brands firmly into the lifestyles of their target consumers. From the traditional days of "tasting is believing" to the modern world of #instagood #foodporn, food and beverage is in our DNA. For today's consumer, food and drink are one of the primary pathways in their pursuit of health and happiness. Eating, drinking, cooking and dining are critical parts of family connection, entertainment and self-care rituals. Through a powerful blend of our staff's passion for food culture, relationships with food influencers and prowess for strategic consumer marketing, we help brands to become part of these rituals by inserting them into the right moments in time through the right mediums

and right mouthpieces.

In addition to our core competencies, we offer specialized services for these clients including recipe development and photography; relationships with bartenders, mixologists, chefs and celebrity food influencers in both social and traditional media; and partnerships with government and non-profit organizations driving the conversations about food and beverages today.

Hunter served as the founding member of the Food + Beverage division of the Public Relation Society of America, and conducts an annual Food News Study, now in its 17th year, to help keep our clients abreast of what is making news in the industry and which media consumers trust most.

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, Beyond Meat, Boot Barn, Boston Market, CV Sciences, Chunghwa Telecom Co. Ltd., Darden Restaurants, GNC Holdings, Inc., Fogo de Chao,

Freshpet, Harman, Herbalife Ltd., Hostess, Just Salad, Inc., Legg Mason & Co. LLC, Limoneira, Luckin' Coffee, lululemon athletica, Michaels, Michael Kors, New Relic, Nomad Foods, Olo, Paramount Group Inc., Planet Fitness Inc., Praire Vodka, Shake Shack, Starwood Property Trust, Texas Roadhouse, The National Restaurant Association, The One Group, Tilray, Torchy's, Williams-Sonoma, Inc. and Workiva.

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Don Hunt, President/Partner
Matt Jackson, Managing Director/ Partner
Kristin Celauro, Managing Partner
Michelle Olson, APR, Managing Director
Lance Knapp, Chief Financial Officer

Lambert is the challenger agency for challenger brands™—think David vs. Goliath. For over 20 years, we have approached our work from the perspective of our clients, putting their metrics at the forefront of everything we do. This philosophy has helped Lambert differentiate its services and company culture, allowing us to be an organization where leaders want to grow, and clients want to stay. With nearly 85 team members across offices in Grand Rapids, Detroit, Lansing, Phoenix and New York, Lambert is listed as a top 10 PR firm in the Midwest, a top 20 food & beverage and top 50 PR firm nationally. Perhaps it's our heritage that began in our founder's basement or our integrated approach which allows us to "bolt on" as an extension of our client's teams to effectively manage the content machine that keeps brands relevant. We strive for success and understand today's global marketplace is less a push for product distinction and more a matter of establishing

— Continued on page 28



Nik and Lijana Wallenda walked a high wire 80 feet above the City of Detroit to promote McDonald's coffee. The event and media campaign orchestrated by Marx Layne & Company generated national media coverage and tremendous social media buzz.

LAMBERT

Continued from page 27

extraordinary relevance with highly targeted consumers.

MARX LAYNE & COMPANY

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www.marxlayne.com

Leslie Pardo, Senior VP and Food & Beverage Lead

Marx Layne has been providing cost-effective and results-oriented marketing, public relations and digital media on a local, regional and national basis to the food and beverage sector since 1987.

Services offered include media relations, social media, grand openings, product launches, special events, crisis and reputation management, internal communications, community engagement programs, sampling events, blogger relations, direct mail, e-blasts, graphic design, web development and design, SEO, content creation, brochure and newsletter production, and expanding concepts into new markets.

Industry experience includes fine

dining, fast casual, QSRs, super-market chains, and food and beverage manufacturers and suppliers. We have successfully introduced concepts new to Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Florida and other markets.

Our creativity is boundless. For example, Marx Layne conceptualized and managed all aspects of a product launch for a global restaurant brand that featured Nik Wallenda walking a high wire 80 feet above the City of Detroit, generating national media coverage and tremendous social media buzz. Wallenda later went on to break Guinness World Records crossing Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon.

PADILLA

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Kristen Ingraham, Senior Vice President

Padilla's Food + Beverage Practice is one of the strongest and most experienced in the country. Representing both brands and marketing cooperatives, the agency covers all audiences: consumer, foodservice, retail and manufacturing.

Consumed by food, Padilla's team includes food experts; wine and spirits aficionados; writers and publicists; registered dietitians; recipe developers; and research, branding and digital specialists. Unique in-house resources include a culinary studio near national media in New York City and an extensive food and beverage library.

Together with FoodMinds, a division of Padilla, the agency is reimagining why, what and how the world eats and drinks—to help build a stronger, flourishing future for all. Clients in the food and beverage sectors include Bordeaux wines, Dole Food Company, the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers, Avocados From Mexico, Prosciutto di Parma and the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council.

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. 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.

PEPPERCOMM

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Steve Cody, CEO & Founder
Ann Barlow, Senior Partner & President, West Coast
Jacqueline Kolek, Senior Partner & General Manager, New York
Tara Lilien, Partner and Chief Talent Officer
Maggie O'Neill, Senior Partner & Chief Client Officer

Peppercomm is an award-winning strategic, integrated communications and marketing agency headquartered in New York City with offices in San Francisco and London. The firm combines 25 award-winning years of expertise serving blue chip and breakout clients with forward-thinking service offerings and the freshness of a start-up. This unique mix of experience and energy attracts and empowers teams with a creative edge, drive and a passion for promoting, protecting and connecting clients in a fast-changing marketplace.

The agency has worked with food and beverage brands from retail to restaurants including TGI Fridays, The Capital Grille, D'Artagnan, Ready Pac, Bolthouse Farms, Edible Arrangements, The Cakerie, the American Beverage Association, Zagat and Diageo, among others.

Core capabilities include media relations, creative design, website design, digital marketing, crisis communications, user experience, branding and positioning, and employee engagement. And corporate purpose continues to be a focus with many brands taking a stand on societal issues to drive marketing programs. As a result, Peppercomm launched the STANDSMART Purpose Stress Test in 2019, which evaluates brands' business practices to ensure credibility and authenticity to stand behind their corporate purpose.

To learn more, visit www.peppercomm.com or find us @Peppercomm.

POLLOCK COMMUNICATIONS

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Louise Pollock, President

Pollock Communications is an independent PR and marketing communications agency that offers cutting-edge expertise in traditional and social media, events and trade shows, foodservice and retail support, target influencer engagement, crisis management, third-party alliance building, and science activation for food, beverage, health, wellness, and lifestyle clients. Its latest innovation, On the Tray, is a new division dedicated to school foodservice led by in-house dietitians who have successfully executed award-winning campaigns reaching this important audience. With an established background engaging influencers who affect change, Pollock provides impactful and successful communications campaigns for its clients.

Pollock pioneered communications for the functional food movement, creating some of the major food trends of the past decade, including making tea the healthy drink of millennials and making chocolate a healthy indulgence. Most recently, Pollock drove national media coverage, awareness and sales for Moon Cheese as the perfect healthy snack. On behalf of its Tea Council of the USA client, the agency engaged millennials through a creative, award-winning social media campaign that inspired tea lovers to share their #IndividualiTEA. The traditional and digital media campaign drove an increase in social followers and increased awareness for National Hot Tea Month and tea benefits among a key target. For its Cranberry Marketing Committee client, Pollock harnessed the power of social media and Friendsgiving, the trendy millennial holiday, to break through the digital noise and reinvent the cranberry with this new target audience.

For more than 25 years, we have been powering change for *Fortune* 100 food and beverage companies and global commodity foods, working to direct, shape and amplify their health and wellness stories. By strategically targeting and influencing food policymakers, traditional and social media, retail



The PCI team drove awareness and trial of Moon Cheese as a great-tasting, nutritious and convenient snack at Natural Products Expo East.

professionals and the healthcare community, Pollock delivers B2B and B2C results that change perceptions and protect and enhance a brand's position in the market.

In addition to PR practitioners and marketers, our staff includes media-savvy registered dietitians who can address health & nutrition issues that are top-of-mind for today's print, broadcast and online journalists. Pollock Communications has built a broad network of influential spokespeople, including media registered dietitians, celebrity chefs, social media celebrities, medical doctors and scientists, who are available and ready to deliver key messages for a variety of our clients in broadcast, print and social media.

We believe in pushing boundaries, breaking barriers and asking, "what if?" We diligently do our homework to develop an executable, strategic plan that delivers measurable results ... every time.

American Pulse Association, British Columbia Cranberry Marketing Committee, Cranberry Institute, Cranberry Marketing Committee, Danone North America, Healthycell, iTrackBites, Moon Cheese, National Watermelon Pro-

motion Board, Orgain, Tea Association of the USA, Tea Council of the USA, USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council, and USA Rice Federation.

THE POWER GROUP

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Amy Power, President & CEO
Kortni Robinson, Director of Sales & Marketing

The Power Group is a full-service public relations and social media firm specializing in media and influencer relations, crisis communications, social media content creation, events, and more. Our experienced team works with clients to build PR campaigns and social media strategies that fit specific needs and deliver powerful results. The firm's longest-tenured client, Golden Chick, has been retained for more than 18 years.

We work with our clients to set specific, measurable KPIs that tie

into their overall business objectives. Our unique "30-day guarantee" promises clients media coverage within the first 30 days of media relations outreach. The Power Group also utilizes an innovative value-based pricing model which benefits both the agency and clients by offering flat rate service fees rooted in actual value instead of inefficient hourly billing.

We know the restaurant industry and specialize in food and beverage PR. We have coordinated and executed successful grand openings, influencer campaigns, new menu launches and more across the United States.

To learn more about The Power Group's services, clients and results, visit www.thepowergroup.com or contact Kortni Robinson, director of sales & marketing, at kortni@thepowergroup.com.

Clients include: 3Eleven Kitchen and Cocktails, Abacus Jasper's Restaurant Group; Bulla Gastrobar; Borden Dairy Company; Cotton Patch Cafe; Cafe Express; Cafe Intermezzo; Cinco Taco Bar; Dallas Donut Fest; Dallas Quesa-

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THE POWER GROUP

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dillas; El Rincon Mexican Kitchen & Tequila Bar; Family Thais; Fire-side Pies; Golden Chick; The Latin Pig; LALA USA; Lawry's The Prime Rib; Mamoun's Falafel; Maple Leaf Diner; Marufuku Ramen; MidiCi Neapolitan Pizza; McDonald's; Mimi's Bistro and Bakery; MOOYAH Burgers, Fries & Shakes; Niwa Japanese BBQ; Pollo Campero; RedBull; Religion Tequila; RJ's Mexican Cuisine; Salata; Soley; Tacos 4 Life; TGI Fridays; TEAZZERS; Vacation in a Bottle (ViB); Which Wich Superior Sandwiches; Y.O. Ranch Steakhouse; YUMIX.

RFIBINDER

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Amy Binder, CEO
Jacqueline Piccolo, Head of Business Development
Atalanta Rafferty, Head of Food,

Drinks & Nutrition Practice

Driving business results for food and beverage companies, brands and associations is at the core of RF|Binder's communications and consulting experience in the food industry. Our creative work has made food and beverage brands not only pantry staples but also cultural icons. With the growing demand to build a more sustainable food future, one of our specialty areas is working with emerging food innovators, from food technology and plant-based companies to category disruptors.

We've developed award-winning consumer and corporate campaigns across QSR, restaurant, CPG brands, B2B ingredients, wine, beer and distilled spirits brands, country trade groups and industry associations. We have built reputations by creating highly targeted, integrated marketing and communications campaigns and handled a range of issues from product recalls, in-store incidents, customer complaints and activists' campaigns.

RF|Binder is a fully integrated communications and consulting firm—powered by strategy, creativity, analytics and purpose. We are

independent, entrepreneurial, and woman-owned. RF|Binder is headquartered in New York City, with offices in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco.

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Suzanne Parsonage Miller,
President & Founder

Since 1999, SPM has worked with food and restaurant clients, telling the story of the evolving food and nutrition landscape, from sustainability and non-GMO verified to farm-to-table and organic. We work with emerging and established brands to tell their stories and connect with key audiences.

We integrate earned media relations, influencer partnerships, events and social media to create campaigns that resonate with target demographics, to increase brand

awareness and meet business objectives. Just a few of our work highlights include:

- 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.
- Created national buzz to celebrate the 300th bakery opening of Nothing Bundt Cakes through an award-winning "Thank You for 300" campaign in which the company gave away 30,000 cakes in 5 minutes, generating unprecedented bakery traffic and more than 500 pieces of coverage.
- Generated national brand awareness for RW Garcia, the first snack brand ever to receive Non-GMO Project verification, through national media outreach that highlights the gluten-free brand's sustainable production processes, superior ingredients and taste, leading to industry awards and national product coverage.
- Helped reposition Smoothie King as a health and wellness lifestyle brand with the launch of purpose-driven, Clean Blend smoothies such as The Daily Warrior, developed in collaboration with the American Cancer Society.

In addition to building food and restaurant brands, we help protect brands through our robust crisis communications practice. We've managed some 3,500 crises, from foodborne illnesses and viral videos, and our media protocol is currently deployed in more than a thousand restaurant and retail locations across the nation.

Our culture-driven agency was founded on 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.

Other food and beverage brand experience includes Bruegger's Bagels, Mi Cocina, Cicis, Del Frisco's Restaurant Group, True Food Kitchen, Stubb's Bar-B-Q, Pei Wei, P.F. Chang's, Boulder Organic, Lantana Hummus, Whataburger, Taco Cabana, Salata and many more.



Taylor partnered with Crown Royal Regal Apple to present The Royal Court to media, influencers and community leaders during Miami Art Week 2019, one of the most prestigious art events in the world. In celebration of the city's rich culture and vibrant art scene, Taylor and Crown Royal Regal Apple enlisted the help of four-time NBA All Star Jimmy Butler and Miami multimedia artist and storyteller D'ana Nunez on a partnership that refurbished a basketball court and park for the whole community to enjoy. During the unveil, guests enjoyed Crown Royal Regal Apple cocktails and local Miami cuisine, along with a sneaker cleaning booth, premium gifting and DJ sets.

The May issue of *O'Dwyer's* will profile our ranked PR firms. If your firm is ranked with *O'Dwyer's* and you would like to be featured in the profiles section, contact Associate Editor Steve Barnes at 646/843-2089 or steve@odwyerpr.com



STAND ALONE DRIVE-THRU CONCEPT



Founded in 1916, Nathan's Famous selects its first agency of record, Trevelino/Keller, to introduce a new store prototype.

TAYLOR

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Tony Signore, CEO & Managing Partner
Mike Costabile, Managing Partner
Carla Wilke, Chief Strategy and Integration Officer

Taylor partners exclusively with category leading consumer brands that utilize lifestyle, sports, and entertainment platforms to engage consumers and drive business growth. With an integrated team of almost 100 employees across all marketing disciplines, Taylor SHAPES INFLUENCE on behalf of the world's leading brands. Whether it's developing strategy, building powerful brand narratives, crafting insight-driven creative, producing content or engaging the media, everything Taylor produces is designed to inspire, incite and shape conversation for the benefit of its client partners, their customers and stakeholders. For more than 30 years, Taylor has been a trusted partner of Diageo, the world's leading premium drinks business. Via social campaigns and strategic media relations, Taylor has successfully launched new products, reinvigorated iconic brands and sustained momentum in the marketplace for Diageo's adult beverage favorites such as Crown Royal, Guinness, Captain Morgan, Smirnoff and Bulleit, among others. The agen-

cy also partners with leading consumer food and QSR brands for a wide range of services, including product introductions, sponsorship activations, and digital strategy/social activation.

TREVELINO/KELLER

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Dean Trevelino, Founder & Principal
Genna Keller, Founder & Principal

Over the years, Trevelino/Keller combined its success in technology business with its passionate foodie culture. That growing reputation has landed an impressive set of established and emerging food and beverage, restaurant and association work. Those brands have had one of two things in common—a disruptive mentality or a re-emergence strategy. And while the firm's public relations discipline leads the way, more and more brands are not only impressed with its award-winning Groovy Studios, but choose the firm because of its 360 Reputation Marketing approach.

A great example is the firm's new relationship with 104-year-old Nathan's Famous which chose Trevelino/Keller as its first agency of record. Trevelino/Keller has wast-

ed little time positioning Nathan's Famous for the future, leading with the launch of its new drive thru prototype. The relationship represents a more common agency engagement where Nathan's is leveraging the firm's food and beverage expertise, especially in franchising, coupled with its strong capabilities in design, web, content and branding.

Late last year, Trevelino/Keller announced the first collaboration between a winery—Tarpon Cellars and Spotify whereby each wine release features a custom playlist, another great example of combining the F&B category with new economy brands.

Sought after for its experience with other brands like Johnny Rockets, TCBY, Moe's Southwest Grill, Starbucks and more, it's the firm's foodie culture that often solidifies such relationships. From wine making, to its own organic bee colony and a line of seasoned salts, it features such innovative internal programs as Red With Ted, Farm to T/K and Craft Days. It's Winepreneur Series which pairs entrepreneurs with amazing wines at hip venues, draws several hundred each year.

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Brad Wilks, Managing Director
Sarah Hintze & Greg Avdoian, VPs

Wilks Communications Group is an award-winning PR and integrated marketing communications agency with a proven track record built over 25+ years of helping food, beverage and spirits clients build customer awareness, strengthen brand engagement and drive sales. Our customized programs include everything from earned and online media, influencer engagement, content initiatives and more. Our expertise is derived from years spent as big agency leaders, corporate professionals, journalists, bloggers and digital strategists. Our programs help reach and engage the stakeholders who matter most to an organization's success—delivering the right messages through the best channels and at the right time. We are results-oriented and purpose-driven, which is why many of our client relationships span years, some decades. With an entrepreneurial spirit, thoughtful commitment to service excellence and focus on personal accountability, we help clients amplify their unique value proposition in ways that lead to growth and positive change. ●

View & download profiles of hundreds of PR firms specializing in a dozen industry areas at: www.odwyerpr.com

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

FOOD & BEVERAGE PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2018)	Firm	Net Fees (2018)
1. Edelman , New York, NY	\$111,419,000	26. Dana Agency, The , Miami, FL	\$900,000
2. Hunter , New York, NY	16,200,000	27. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	622,000
3. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	15,737,186	28. O'Malley Hansen Comms , Chicago, IL	557,200
4. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	15,736,400	29. Maccabee , Minneapolis, MN	531,062
5. Zeno Group , New York, NY	13,353,365	30. L.C. Williams & Associates , Chicago, IL	455,515
6. Citizen Relations , Los Angeles, CA	10,927,316	31. Stuntman PR , New York, NY	403,267
7. Havas Formula , New York, NY	8,664,470	32. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	369,000
8. MWWPR , New York, NY	8,504,187	33. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	342,755
9. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	6,400,000	34. Zapwater Communications , Chicago, IL	283,200
10. Finn Partners , New York, NY	5,950,000	35. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	246,812
11. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	5,038,021	36. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	216,000
12. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	4,500,000	37. Rosica Communications , Fair Lawn, NJ	205,915
13. 360PR+ , Boston, MA	3,895,581	38. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	198,828
14. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	3,619,775	39. J Public Relations , New York, NY	167,820
15. Konnect Agency , Los Angeles, CA	3,566,914	40. Judge Public Relations, LLC , Tampa, FL	162,791
16. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	2,850,000	41. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	150,000
17. Lambert , Grand Rapids, MI	1,671,000	42. Hemsworth Comms , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	125,411
18. Kohnstamm Comms, Inc. , St. Paul, MN	1,638,823	43. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	93,467
19. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,262,000	44. Hollywood Agency , Hingham, MA	61,500
20. Berk Communications , New York, NY	1,257,250	45. MP&F Strategic Comms , Nashville, TN	53,005
21. SPM Communications , Dallas, TX	1,189,590	46. BoardroomPR , Ft. Lauderdale, FL	50,000
22. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	1,174,967	47. Beehive Strategic Comm , St. Paul, MN	36,295
23. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	1,091,660	48. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	30,451
24. Matter Communications , Newburyport, MA	1,068,721	49. WordWrite Comms LLC , Pittsburgh, PA	16,400
25. BLAZE , Santa Monica, CA	950,100		

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O'Dwyer's is the #1 source for researching public relations firms and outside PR counsel. We've been connecting clients and PR firms for 47 years through our directory of PR firms.

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Why O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms is so popular:

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- ✓ *Cross-Client Index: O'Dwyer's Directory of PR Firms is the only place you can look up a company and determine its outside counsel.*

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"Single most important source of information on PR firms."

—Thomas L. Harris, Author
Choosing and Working with your PR firm

Beating Donald Trump

By Fraser Seitel

More and more, in talking with my friends, I hear the constant refrain, “I don’t want to live like this anymore!” In short, we are suffering collectively from deep bouts of depression. I can say without any hesitation that this is the worst in my nearly 82 years. I fear for this country as never before. It doesn’t help in the slightest to say that we’ve survived bad times before when one feels that this is worse than anything that’s happened, at least in my lifetime.



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*.

These aren’t my words. I passed 82 decades ago, and I’m happy as a clam. No, these are the words of one Ian Mitroff of Berkeley, California, whose funeral Letter to the Editor appeared in the *New York Times* the day after the Senate’s impeachment verdict.

That Mr. Mitroff is ready to chow down his last kale salad and end it all is sad but not surprising. His depression is shared by millions of like-minded Democrats, sickened by Donald Trump and the spectacle of their own uninspiring candidates, increasingly unwatchable televised debates and a political party that appears to have been hijacked by the owners of the New York Knicks.

When the *Times*’ most liberal of liberal columnists, Michelle Goldberg, is driven to bemoan the “harrowing chaos of the Democratic primary,” maybe the mean-spirited Trumpster is gleeful, but I’m not (well, maybe a little).

There’s a long way to go until Election Day, of course, and the revitalized, rejuvenated POTUS remains eminently capable of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory at any moment. But the Democrats have a real problem. Specifically, none of the crop of debating candidates prior to Feb. 19 will likely beat the incumbent in November.

The Democrats’ best—and perhaps only—hope to beat Trump is a newly-minted candidate (and also, Democrat), reviled by the left wing of the party, primarily because he’s a rich businessman. And while it’s a long shot that Michael Bloomberg can win the nomination in a party dominated by anti-business zealots, it’s he alone who

would prove the fiercest Democratic competitor to beat Trump in a general election.

Assuming he can make it through the AOC-inspired suicide squad gauntlet and earn the nomination, here’s the three-step public relations plan that could earn Bloomberg the election.

First, accept—and commend—much of the Trump economic program.

Giving Trump credit for anything is, of course, anathema to most self-respecting Democrats, including the presidential candidates. Their revulsion is so intense they can’t possibly bring themselves to endorse anything associated with the Machiavellian President.

That’s a big mistake.

The primary reason 60 million-plus Americans disagree with Democrat notions of Trump is because they correctly credit him for helping orchestrate a booming economy. With output, wages, the stock market and employment all flourishing, Democrats are dopes to insist that Trump’s economic course is the wrong one and to declare American business the “enemy.” But they’re stuck with that position for fear of offending the Bernie brigade of uninformed socialists.

Bloomberg, by contrast, should unapologetically echo Trump’s support of American business, industry and markets. The former Mayor’s credentials as an entrepreneurial business builder are eminently more authentic than Trump’s inherited wealth.

This allows Bloomberg to promise building on his predecessor’s economic successes with an economy that maintains much of the Trump business expansion, while focusing more on lifting the wage gap between haves and have-nots, increasing opportunities for those at the lower end of the scale and approaching trade policy with continued vigilance on protecting America’s interests but with increased diplomacy and less rancor, particularly toward American allies in Europe.

Second, assure progress in areas Trump is unwilling or unable to confront.

Most Americans—with one notable exception who lives on Pennsylvania Avenue and Mar-a-Lago—support gun control, agree the climate seems to be changing for the worst and basically support a woman’s right to choose.

Although Trump doesn’t particularly seem like the gun-toting type and hails from a liberal, abortion-supporting state, he owes much of his political success to staunch conservatives, who adamantly oppose issues like these. So, he’s hog-tied. This leaves Trump vulnerable to the all-im-

portant “moderate” voters who reside in the only states that matter: Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida.

This, in turn, presents an enormous opportunity for Bloomberg to differentiate himself from the incumbent with deep experience in and practical solutions to these critical U.S. problems.

- The former mayor’s “Everytown for Gun Safety” and “Mayors Against Illegal Guns” alliances have led the way in securing multi-state support for gun control.

- On climate change, Bloomberg reduced energy inefficiency in New York and personally donated hundreds of millions of dollars toward reducing carbon emissions. Also to his credit, he has denounced the pie-in-the-sky Green New Deal—as well as the equally fantastical Medicare for All—for being a non-starter.

- Finally, on reproductive choice, Bloomberg can talk freely about the importance of ensuring that *Roe vs. Wade* remains the law of the land and that the nation not veer too far right in restricting reproductive choice.

Third, guarantee a kinder, gentler, less combustible, more predictable leadership.

Even his greatest political and business supporters shudder at waking up each morning to learn what new tweet storm calamity Trump has unleashed on the world. At base, Donald Trump remains Donald Trump, guided solely by the counsel of one man: himself. And to anybody who knew him then or knows him now, that’s one terrifying thought to wake up to. And Trump’s petulance, coarseness and unpredictability remain the greatest present danger to his reelection.

Michael Bloomberg, on the other hand, though not particularly charismatic or eloquent and often a tad imperious and condescending, is still a sound, pragmatic, thoughtful and whip-smart leader. And he’s got way more experience in running and building things and way better judgment in making decisions than Donald Trump will ever have.

Stated simply, with Bloomberg as President, you’ll sleep better.

Again, Bloomberg getting nominated remains a long shot. For one thing, Democrats and most in the media may never be able to acknowledge the truth that Trump, warts and all, has accomplished some excellent things as President and millions of Americans like him.

And the harsh reality is that the only “Democrat” with a chance to beat him in November is the one with the billions of his own dollars to do it. ●

Tax changes that may affect your 2020 financial planning

By Richard Goldstein

Well, 2019 is in the books and we're now looking to 2020. It's never too early to think about taxes and its impact on our financial planning. The following are some of the changes for 2020.

Income tax brackets

The 2020 income tax brackets will be slightly wider than they were in 2019. This is because of the rate of inflation from September 2018 through August 2019. For example, the tax for married filing jointly for 2020, assuming taxable income is over \$171,050—but not more than \$326,600—is \$29,211 plus 24 percent of the excess over \$171,050. For 2019, the tax in the 24 percent bracket assuming taxable income is over \$168,400—but not more than \$321,450—is \$28,754 plus 24 percent over \$321,450.



Richard Goldstein is a partner at Buchbinder Tunick & Company LLP, New York, Certified Public Accountant.

Standard deduction

The standard deduction for 2020 will go up slightly. For example, married couples will receive \$24,800 plus \$1,300 for each spouse, age 65 or older. So, a married couple most probably will not itemize for federal tax income tax purposes unless they have substantial medical expense and are charitable.

Long-term capital gains and qualified dividends

The tax rates on long-term capital gains and qualified dividends don't change, but the income thresholds go up.

The alternative minimum tax exemption

The AMT exemption goes up for 2020. For example, for married couples the exemption goes up to \$113,400. The phaseout zones also go up—the point where there is no exemption—to \$1,036,800. The AMT tax rate will also go up slightly for 2020.

Lifetime estate and gift tax exemption

The lifetime estate and gift tax exemption for 2020 goes up to \$11,580,000. If portability is elected, this goes up to \$23,160,000 for couples. The gift tax exemption remains at \$15,000 per donee. You can gift up to \$15,000—\$30,000 if your spouse agrees—to children, grandchildren any other person, related or not, in 2020 without filing a gift tax return. However, my advice is to file the

return, because no tax is due.

The Kiddie tax

Some good news from Congress. Prior to 2018, children under 18—or under 24 if a student—were taxed on unearned income in excess of certain amounts at the tax rate of their parents. For 2018, the tax law changed the pre-2018 tax rates to the tax rates applicable to trusts. Without going into detail, the impact of this change increased the amount of the Kiddie tax. Congress subsequently changed the new rates applicable to the Kiddie tax to the pre-2018 law. Accordingly, taxpayers can elect to apply the pre-2018 law to 2018 and 2019 tax returns. This may require amending the 2018 tax return.

529 plans

The college savings plans can now be used to pay for fees, books, supplies and equipment for enumerated apprenticeship programs. Also, up to \$10,000 in total can be used to pay off or down student loans.

The Social Security annual wage base

The wage base for social security is now \$137,700 for 2020, up by \$4,800.

QBI deduction

Owners of limited liability companies, S corporations, and other pass-through entities (a partnership for example) can deduct 20 percent of their qualified business income subject to limitations with taxable income in excess of \$326,600 for joint filers

and \$163,300 for all others. There's a new form that must be completed: Form 8995 or Form 8995-A.

Section 179 expenses of equipment

For 2020, \$1,040,000 of assets can be expensed. This amount will phase out dollar for dollar when \$2,590,000 of assets are placed in service.

Electing the cash method of accounting

For taxable years beginning in 2020, C corporations with average annual gross receipts of \$26 million or less over the previous three years can use the cash method of accounting. Businesses should consider speaking with their CPA or other tax advisor.

Other changes

The threshold for deducting medical expenses is 7.5 percent.

The standard mileage rate drops to 57.5 cents per mile.

The Obamacare excise taxes are repealed.

The limits on deducting long-term premiums are higher in 2020.

The annual cap on deducting contributions to HSAs rises.

The fine for filing a late tax returns 60 days after the due date has been increased.

The Secure Act

The President signed a new law called the Secure Act. The purpose of the law is to increase retirement savings. Next month's column will review many of these changes. ○

Publishers predict growth in 2020

Despite shrinking budgets, declining circulations and a historic spike in closures across the country in recent years, publishers are optimistic about the state of the industry in 2020, according to a recent survey conducted by magazine industry news site Folio.

Folio's report, which surveyed the chief executives of major U.S. media companies, found that nearly half (43 percent) of the publishing chiefs polled anticipate that revenues will grow by single digits at their organizations in 2020, according to the survey. Meanwhile, about a quarter (26 percent) predict revenues will remain roughly flat, while the same number (26 percent) believe revenues will actually grow by more than 10 percent. Only about four percent of media CEOs expect revenues to decline.

Not surprisingly, most media executives (58 percent) expect that growth to come primarily from digital advertising. Events, conferences and trade shows were listed as another major income source (43 percent), followed by marketing services for advertisers (38 percent). Print advertising made

an appearance at fourth place (36 percent). Subscriptions and single-copy sales (both print and digital), sales of other products (such as e-commerce), affiliate marketing, awards programs and licensing bottomed out the list, at 23 percent, 19 percent, 10 percent, seven percent and five percent, respectively.

More than a third of media CEOs (36 percent) also predicted single-digit audience growth for their publications this year, while about the same number (35 percent) anticipated growth being roughly flat. More than a quarter (28 percent) said they expected to see growth by more than 10 percent, while only about two percent anticipate a decline in readership/viewership.

A positive sign for such a layoff-heavy industry, a majority (26 percent) of media executives said bringing aboard new talent would be their most significant source of investment in 2020. This was followed by expenditures on technology (18 percent), investments in new digital products or platforms (16 percent), print (13 percent) and events (12 percent). ○

Hicks returns to the White House

Hope Hicks is returning to the White House as “counselor to the president,” reporting to President Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

The 31-year-old was White House Communications Director before exiting early last year for the Chief Communications Officer post at Fox, which is headed by Lachlan Murdoch son of media baron Rupert Murdoch.

“There is no one more devoted to implementing President Trump’s agenda than Hope Hicks,” Kushner said in a statement. “We are excited to have her back on the team.”

Hicks is expected to play a major role in Trump’s re-election campaign. ○



Hope Hicks

Advocacy group launches lobby salvo to fight foreign hacking

Americans for Transparency and Accountability, a Merrifield, VA-based nonprofit that works to promote increased transparency in U.S. foreign policy, has hired a series of D.C. lobbying outfits this month to advocate on Capitol Hill for H.R. 4189, also known as the “Homeland and Cyber Threat Act.”

Introduced last year by Rep. Jack Bergman (R-MI), H.R. 4189 would hold foreign governments accountable for committing cyberattacks against U.S. citizens.

Foreign cyberattacks against U.S. citizens, government agencies and policy groups have become common headlines in recent years, many of them sponsored by governments such as China, Iran and North Korea that seek to steal personal information, disrupt operations or destroy infrastructure.

High-profile incidents in recent years include China’s cyberattack on the Office of Personnel Management, North Korea’s hacking into systems owned by Sony Pictures and Russian-backed attacks against everyone from American military spouses to the DNC.

In February, the Justice Department announced that U.S. prosecutors had charged four Chinese military hackers over the infamous 2017 data breach of credit reporting bureau Equifax, which exposed the personal data of 143 million people, nearly half the U.S. population.

Those hackers are reportedly part of a Beijing-backed cyber espionage group that has also been accused of hacking into networks belonging to Hewlett Packard, IBM and NASA, among others.

According to lobbying registration documents filed with Congress, ATA hired Steptoe & Johnson the lobby on issues related to H.R. 4189. The ATA account will be led by Darryl Nirenberg, formerly Chief of Staff to Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Deputy Staff Director to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; and Douglas Kantor, former Deputy Chief of Staff to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

ATA has also hired McGuireWoods Consulting to advocate on behalf of H.R.4189. A three-person team at MWC handles the account: Robert Wasinger, who was Chief of Staff to Kansas Republican Senator Sam Brownback; Paul Reagan, who was Chief of Staff to former Congressman Jim Moran (D-VA) and former Virginia Democratic Senator Jim Webb; and Edward Hill, who was Legislative Assistant to Congressman G.K. Butterfield (D-NC). ○



TikTok takes Internet Assn. chief

Internet Association CEO Michael Beckerman is leaving his post at the trade group to join TikTok social media platform on Feb. 29.

He’ll be VP in charge of U.S. public policy, a TikTok spokesperson told *O’Dwyer’s*.

US lawmakers believe TikTok, which is owned by Beijing-based ByteDance, poses a threat to its national security.

Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Tom Cotton (R-AR) fear that TikTok may be used by China’s government, as a tool of espionage and for spreading propaganda among millions of Americans.

ByteDance spent \$270,000 in lobbying during the second-half of 2019 on issues related to Internet technology and learning-enable content platforms.

Beckerman has served as IA CEO since its founding in 2012. General counsel Jon Berroya will slide into the interim President/CEO slot on March 1.

Google, Facebook, Amazon, eBay, Microsoft, Twitter and Uber are among IA members. ○



Michael Beckerman

American Securities Assn. invests in McMorrow

The American Securities Assn. has hired Kelli McMorrow as Head of Government Affairs and Director of Fixed Income Policy.

She joins the ASA from Bond Dealers of America, where she exited as Senior VP after a three-year run.

Earlier, McMorrow was Chief of Staff for former Texas Republican Congressman Randy Neugebauer, who served on the House Financial Services Committee.

The ASA bills itself as “America’s voice for Main Street investors” and the only trade group to advocate on behalf of regional financial services firms. ○

SABIC hires Edelman for \$5.6M B20 Summit push

Saudi Basic Industries has agreed to pay Edelman \$5.6 million in professional fees for strategic communications services surrounding the B20 Summit.

SABIC CEO Yusef Abdullah Al-Benyam is President of the B20, a group of business executives and CEOs from the 20 countries that will be represented at the G20 Summit of world leaders slated for Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from November 20-21.

The G20 sessions bring together the heads of both developed and developing countries who represent 80 percent of the globe's economic output and three-quarters of international trade.

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud plans to use the G20 platform to announce Saudi Arabia's pursuit of a new cooperative environment for the G20 and progress it made under the Saudi Vision 2030 plan to modernize the country and diversify its economic base.

Edelman has estimated \$1 million-plus in expenses for the SABIC program. The agreement went into effect this month and will run through January. A formal contract is not yet available.

The Saudi government owns a 70 percent stake in SABIC. ○

Saudi Arabia secures lobbying support

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has retained public policy and communications consulting firm The Williams Group to provide strategic counsel on how to build relationships on Capitol Hill.

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.

Hogan Lovells US LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 8, 2020 for Georgian Dream Party**, Tbilisi, Georgia, regarding efforts to strengthen the political, economic, and social aspects of the U.S.-Georgia bilateral relationship.

Broydrick and Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 26, 2020 for Malaysian Rubber Export Promotion Council**, Washington, D.C., regarding the dissemination of scientific information on what may elicit an allergic reaction to humans when considering legislation to ban the use of latex gloves.

Daniel J. Edelman, Inc., Chicago, IL, **registered Feb. 26, 2020 for White House Writers Group** on behalf of the Polish National Foundation, Warsaw, Poland, regarding assistance for the group as it conducts activities in the U.S. that recognize Polish history and cultural contributions as well as its efforts to promote the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Poland.

Linklaters LLP, London, UK, **registered Feb. 24, 2020 for Department for International Trade, Government of the United Kingdom**, London, UK, regarding analysis, advice and support for negotiation of free trade agreement between the UK and the U.S.

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.

Mr. Barry Schumacher, Portland, OR, **registered Feb. 24, 2020 for Tony's Chocolonely**, Amsterdam, NED, regarding child labor, forced labor, modern slavery, importation of products made with cocoa from Africa.

S-3 Group, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 24, 2020 for American Petroleum Institute**, Washington, D.C., regarding issues related to oil and gas production.

Miller Strategies, LLC, Buda, TX, **registered Feb. 21, 2020 for Free Conference Call**, Long Beach, CA, regarding issues related to telecommunications regulations.

Nossaman LLP, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 20, 2020 for Petland, Inc.**, Chillicothe, OH, regarding legislative and regulatory action impacting companion animals and international trade.

Pack Madigan Jones, Washington, D.C., **registered Feb. 18, 2020 for Prevent Opioid Abuse**, Parsippany, NJ, regarding issues related to the prevention of opioid abuse.

WG will counsel Saudi Arabia's Embassy in Washington, D.C. on how to best establish relationships with members of U.S. Congress and staff, according to Foreign Agents Registration Acts documents filed in February.

The contract, which began in October, runs for a year. It brings WG a fee of \$30,000 per month.

WG founder Michael Williams was formerly Staff Director of legislative affairs during the Clinton Administration. He also served as a special assistant to the President, where he was a key member of the team responsible for developing and implementing that Admin's agenda on financial services, tax and international trade legislation. ○

Teneo acquires Bridge in Ireland

Teneo has acquired Bridge PR strategic communications and content creation shop based in Ireland's County Clare.

Founded in 2011 by Eugene Hogan, ex-journalist who was Regional Director of FTI Consulting, Bridge PR represents clients such as Shannon Airport, Hotel Doolin, Clean Ireland Recycling, Bothár and Element 6.

Hogan said the opportunity to link with Teneo will enable Bridge PR to scale its operations and deepen resources for its client base.

Irishman and Teneo CEO Declan Kelly noted that Ireland is an important market for many of the world's leading companies.

With the exit of the UK from the European Union, Ireland is a natural fit for the regional headquarters of US companies eager to do business on the Continent.

Kelly was US CEO of Financial Dynamics and Executive VP at FTI Consulting before co-founding Teneo, which bills itself as a global advisory for CEOs, in 2011. ○

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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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Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts
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Rancho La Puerta
Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa
Regent Seven Seas Cruises (project work)
Relais & Châteaux
The Palms and The Shore Club, Turks & Caicos
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