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The healthcare issue

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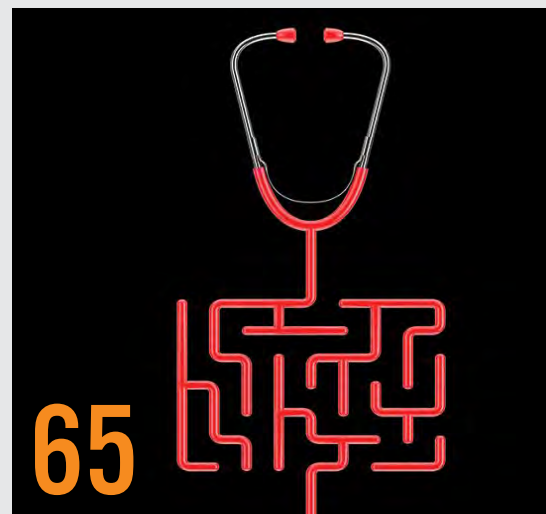
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The perils of pandemic disconnection

We're almost two years into this pandemic, and big surprise, business leaders are desperate to get employees back into the office. For months, companies have been setting return dates and beginning the slow crawl back to normal. Unfortunately, our "great wait" has been complicated by a recent surge in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant, once again postponing those plans and confirming the concerns of employees who remain leery of in-person work amid ongoing health and safety concerns, all of which has reignited the debate on what role office life plays in post-pandemic America.

According to an August Gartner survey of more than 200 executives, two-thirds of organizations (66 percent) reported delaying re-opening their offices in light of the lingering pandemic. In September, Google once again announced it would hold off on its return-to-office plans, now slated for January 2022 (the tech behemoth had previously announced that workers would return in October, and before that, September, and before that, July). Google's latest flip-flop followed similar announcements from Apple, Amazon, Facebook and Microsoft, all of whom have similarly postponed their office re-openings.

Employees are understandably frustrated by all this. A September study released by JLL found that 41 percent of respondents feel exhausted by their employer's constant waffling on return-to-work plans, with another 32 percent claiming their employer hasn't shared any plan with them at all.

What's compounding all this frustration is the fact that, after working from home for more than a year, office life as we knew it is effectively an antiquated concept. Anytime there's a disruption to the system, the world realigns in response. We adapt. People have relearned how to do their jobs, we've grown accustomed to the work-from-home lifestyle and we want the benefits and flexibility we've been allotted these last 18 months to continue indefinitely. Some are planning on changing jobs if and when their employer asks them to come back. Suffice to say, no booster shot will address the adjustments we've made once the pandemic finally ends.

The benefits of virtual work are manifold. It's good for the environment, and for working parents, it provides a more manageable work-life balance. For companies no longer renting office space, it's saving businesses a fortune. There are all kinds of debates—and polls—circulating regarding how remote work has either boosted productivity or tanked it. I'll just say productivity at home probably depends on the individual worker and the job/industry in question. The only thing that's certain is that going back to business as usual will be a tall order.

While the benefits of remote work abound, I can't help but consider the social costs to a life where many of us are no longer leaving the house. We talk about the physiological impacts of COVID, but we rarely discuss the psychological effects that lockdowns and quarantines and essentially giving up on person-to-person interaction have had on our mental health. We've been riddled with anxiety from the beginning of this pandemic, and being removed from the people close to us certainly hasn't helped. We're a social species; we value meaningful connections with others. And do I need to mention that managing family life while trying to do one's job isn't exactly the ideal model of a work- and home-life in perfect balance?

Perhaps that's why a well-publicized Morning Consult poll that appeared in *The New York Times* in August found that nearly half (45 percent) of workers now want to return to the office full-time, compared to less than a third (31 percent) who want to remain remote full-time. People are feeling disconnected from the communities they had in the workplace, and there are clear benefits to the work we do when we're allowed to collaborate in-person with others. It's human nature.

I can only speak from personal experience. Since March 2020, the creative writing class I teach has moved to the Zoom platform. Admittedly, there are benefits to remote teaching—the convenience of not taking a train into the city, for one—but I've learned that teaching virtually will never replace the experience of a live classroom, where eye contact, body language and allowing students to collaborate in an analogue environment are fundamental to learning. It's just not the same. Also, speaking only for myself: I like getting out of the house. I like having my work life and my home life partitioned. I don't like the expectation of being on call all the time. I like physical reality, I like seeing people.

It's going to require a Herculean effort for business leaders to turn the tide and make in-person work the cultural norm again. Most likely, some employers will resort to offering incentives to lure workers back, be it a shortened work week or some sort of hybrid approach, where employees are allowed to work from home for several days and make office appearances for the rest. Many will require employees to get vaccinated before they return, and of course, COVID safety protocols will be around for some time. Whatever happens, it's clear that the office environment will never be quite what it was, and it will no doubt take time for us to adjust to yet another new normal. Eventually, we'll see each other again. I can't wait. ○

— Jon Gingerich

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Americans bullish on future

A Ruder Finn report finds many Americans have a positive view of the past year despite its challenges, and most think that things will improve in the future.

By Steve Barnes

Despite the difficulties and challenges of the past year, a new report from Ruder Finn finds that many Americans have a positive view of the past 12 months, and a majority think that things will improve in the future.

Overall, almost half of the respondents (48 percent) to Ruder Finn's FutureThink Index study said that they felt positive about the events of the past year, with 37 percent saying their feelings were neutral, and only 15 percent labeling the last 12 months as negative.

When it comes to the future, 58 percent said they think their lives in terms of career, health and technology will improve, with 24 percent registering a neutral take on their prospects and 18 percent having a negative view.

In two measures of who picks up much of the tab for work-from-home living, parents and women both had significantly less-pos-

itive views than did men and non-parents. While 58 percent of men said they thought positively about the last 12 months, that number drops to 35 percent for women. A similar gap exists between non-parents (53 percent positive) and parents (37 percent positive).

Not surprisingly, economic status was another major marker of how respondents viewed the past year. Almost seven out of 10 (69 percent) of those who described their financial status as wealthy were positive about the past year, while only 31 percent of those who said they were low-income felt the same.

Boomers were not as happy about the past 12 months as their younger cohorts, with only 30 of them voicing a positive view. That contrasts to 52 percent for Gen X, 49 percent for Millennials and 55 percent for Gen Z.

The study also finds that business lead-

ership can boost positivity levels. It measured respondents' connection to employers, healthcare and technology providers in terms of transparency, dialogue and knowledge-sharing (or TDK, as the study puts it). A big majority (82 percent) of those who said they felt a high level of TDK with those groups also took an optimistic view of what the future holds, with only 31 percent of those reporting a low level of TDK having a positive outlook.

A high level of TDK with healthcare providers was linked to an increased likelihood of getting a COVID vaccine or using a wearable health device, while those with a closer TDK connection to their employers were more likely to update their resumes or take a professional development course.

"In this new age, businesses and their leaders are emerging as primary, trusted sources of information, and they are becoming true influencers," said Ruder Finn CEO Kathy Bloomgarden. "It is crucial that leaders and businesses consider their impact and how their actions can help both close the gaps in sentiment we see across demographics, and improve the outlook of society overall." ○



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Delta variant dooms travel recovery hopes

The Delta variant has dealt a blow to high hopes that the travel business had for a speedy recovery from the pandemic as more than a quarter of respondents to a Brandon Agency poll say they won't even plan for a trip in 2022 or beyond.

By Steve Barnes

COVID-19 remains a major hurdle for the travel industry, according to a new study from The Brandon Agency and TravelBoom Marketing.

While the agencies' COVID-19 Travel Consumer Sentiment Study found that almost eight of out 10 potential travelers surveyed (79 percent) had been fully vaccinated, nearly half said they were either hesitant to book a vacation—or won't be booking one—due to the emergence of the Delta variant.

More than a quarter (27 percent) of respondents said that they won't even start to plan a trip until 2022 or later. Even those who were currently thinking about taking a trip voiced hesitation, with 39 percent indicating that they would not actually travel until sometime next year and 33 percent saying they would not book their trip until 2022.

The biggest concern for 30 percent of those surveyed was the fear of interactions with other guests, with fears of circulated air (25 percent) and budget concerns (23 percent) following close behind.

Keeping trips close to home seems to up the comfort level for many travelers, with most respondents saying they'd be willing to drive up to three hours away from their homes within the next month.

But there was an overall reluctance to take longer trips, with 45 percent of respondents saying that they would not be willing to fly to a travel destination within the next year.

One thing that could sway more travelers toward hitting the road again is flexibility on the part of travel providers. Eight out of ten respondents indicated that they could be persuaded to book a vacation during the pandemic if they were allowed to change their travel dates without penalty.

Another plus for travelers: cleanliness. For 82 percent of respondents, deep cleaning hotel rooms between guest visits would make them more willing to stay in a hotel. In addition, almost seven out of 10 (68 percent) said that keeping rooms vacant for 24 hours between guests would make them more likely to check-in.

Travelers also are asking that travel destinations keep the lines of communication with potential visitors open. At the top of the list of what they want to know are the

most recent local mask requirements for the destination (75 percent), followed by cleaning protocols at the property (68 percent) and the open status of local restaurants (67 percent).

When asked what would encourage them to travel again, the top three responses

were: "I will travel again when I feel safe," "I will travel when I am comfortable," and "I will travel when I am vaccinated."

The COVID-19 Travel Consumer Sentiment Study surveyed 1,902 individuals on Sept. 1, with 1,844 providing complete responses. ○



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Can you mandate better health?

How a new leadership model can help shape healthier behaviors for a healthier future.

By Kathy Bloomgarden

Americans are struggling through work-life balance exhaustion, an overload of dark news and a pandemic that seems to extend forever. And yet, Ruder Finn's recent FutureThink Index found that as a society, we remain mostly positive about our futures, with 58 percent of Americans feeling positive about what's to come in terms of career, health and technology.

The Ruder Finn FutureThink Index is a new tracking study that aims to measure how Americans think about the future, and explores how the Transparency, Dialogue and Knowledge connections respondents have with businesses and providers impacts their outlook and behaviors. The study emphasizes healthcare as a critical force impacting people's futures: as the pandemic goes on, with additional waves of COVID, we still need to battle the healthcare needs of the population to get back to normal or to build back better. There are several areas which are urgent: vaccinating more of the population and adopting healthier behaviors, improving health through individual use of new technologies and reaching more of the underserved population. The index lends insight into how to progress in each of these three areas that are fundamental to improving health.

Individual responsibility for new health behaviors

As the current wave of COVID and the Delta variant illustrate, we still need to reach those who remain vaccine hesitant. Businesses and leaders have tried both vaccine requirements and incentives, and the President has just announced vaccine mandates for government workers, asking businesses with more than 100 employees to mandate vaccines or submit to weekly testing. But it doesn't only have to be a stick-or-carrot approach. Making a meaningful connection with those who are resistant must also be part of the solution. Our study shows that when people have high TDK connection with healthcare leaders and providers, they're 20 percent more likely to get vaccinated. This means that leaders who exercise and encourage transparency, dialogue and knowledge-sharing have a significant impact on vaccine positivity. Going forward, we must emphasize educational efforts to share knowledge about vaccinations and COVID as well as stimulate a dialogue with those who are trusted in the community. Local voices

are often more impactful than national influencers. Health professionals need to be paired with religious leaders, advocacy groups and peers to increase dialogue and create an environment of understanding. To increase personal relevance, we also need to explore the factors and channels that influence each demographic cohort. For example, our study shows that vaccine rates correlate directly with people's levels of TDK connection: the percentage of Gen Xers with high Health TDK connection is more than twice that of Gen Z; and the percentage of people in cities with high Health TDK connection is 50 percent-plus higher than in the suburbs or rural areas, with knowledge-sharing being the most significant driver of positive change in those groups.

The impact of approaching healthcare through a transparency, dialogue and knowledge sharing lens has impact beyond just vaccinations. Americans with high Health TDK connection are overall 37 percent more likely to take personal action to improve their health: 22 percent more likely to change eating diet and habits, 55 percent more likely to use a wearable health device and 45 percent more likely to start a new prescription medication.

Adopting new technology tools

We learned a great deal from the pandemic about how technology could transform most industries. The increase in telemedicine has skyrocketed to 38 times higher than it was before the pandemic, according to McKinsey & Company. The amount of money being poured into digital-health startups is already upwards of \$14.7 billion in 2021 as reported by the *Wall Street Journal*. 2021 is projected to be the most-funded year to date for the digital health sector. From smart watches and other wearables to at-home COVID tests, there's a wave of innovation that could help people to improve their health.

One example is how technology is helping ameliorate the increased levels of mental stress experienced during the pandemic. During the pandemic, about 42 percent of employees globally said their mental health declined. Employers have sponsored digital health offerings on demand, including meditation apps, online therapy sessions, digital biomarker apps, analytic tools that collect remote data from wearables and provide guidance on when to seek help to boost positive mindsets. Of course, people

need to use the tools and not drop out of these systems, which is where a TDK connection can make a difference. Americans with high TDK connection are 78 percent more likely to use new technologies than people with medium or low TDK connection.

Reaching the underserved

We also need to double our efforts to reach more segments of the population, especially those who have suffered from low access to healthcare. The FutureThink Index shows populations who are uncertain about their outlook for the future are increasingly less likely to act to better their own health.



Kathy Bloomgarden

Consider that rural residents are among the most vaccine hesitant group in America, despite the fact that people in rural areas are at an increased risk for severe COVID-19. CNN highlights that 80 percent of rural Americans live in locations designated as "medically underserved," with lower access to regular doctor appointments and consistent healthcare insurance.

These audiences are not receiving regular and authentic communications that shape their thinking and therefore are suffering from what we term "Negative FutureThink," which, in fact, leads not only to things like health instability but also more overarching stagnation toward action and change.

The good news is that the American Dream is alive and well; a new leadership model has built better connection with Americans, helping to shape a positive FutureThink across all demographics. We have learned a great deal about the healthcare gaps we have to fill coming out of the pandemic. With a new commitment to increasing transparency, dialogue and knowledge-sharing, we can improve connection to achieve better healthcare outcomes.

Kathy Bloomgarden is CEO of Ruder Finn.

The Ruder Finn FutureThink Index study was designed in conjunction with Full Spectrum Insights and surveyed a representative sample of 2,000 18+ year old Americans between July 25 and August 28, 2021 on Pollfish. ○



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When healthcare is politicized

How healthcare communicators and marketers can help reduce stigma and increase access to quality care.

By Amy Rosenfeld and Megan Kay

On September 1, women awoke to learn that Texas had enacted a new law banning abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. The Texas law, which prohibits abortion before most people even know they're pregnant, is one of the strictest abortion bans we've seen. As if it wasn't cruel enough, the law also authorizes private citizens to sue abortion providers and anyone else who helps a woman get an abortion, including the Lyft driver who gives a woman a ride to the clinic or the friend who helps a woman pay for the abortion.

Like other abortion restrictions in this country, this law will disproportionately impact low-income, immigrant and communities of color. According to a report from the Guttmacher Institute, Texans will now have to travel "20 times farther to get a safe and legal abortion, increasing travel times an average of 3.5 hours by car or bus each way." This is on top of the burdens faced by women seeking an abortion, like taking time off from work or school and finding childcare.

Abortion restrictions have far-reaching impacts felt across the country. More than a dozen states have tried to pass similar abortion bans, but have been unsuccessful. Now, with the precedent set by Texas, these states are emboldened to try again.

How does this impact the millions of women of reproductive age who live in these states? The shock, desperation and fear felt by women as they try to access abortion services is unprecedented. According to the Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health, research shows that, "carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term is dangerous to a woman's physical and emotional safety," and may result in "more women keeping in contact with violent partners, which puts both women and their children at increased risk of violence." For women across the nation and throughout the world, these laws increase abortion stigma, which shames and silences women who seek abortions—as well as abortion providers—and increases the occurrence of unsafe abortion.

Abortion is certainly not the only healthcare service that's been politicized. Transgender individuals have been fighting for their right to healthcare for decades, with Medicare only recently lifting its ban on gender confirming surgeries in 2014. Research shows that transgender individuals are consistently underserved by the Amer-

ican medical system and face regular prejudice and discrimination by healthcare providers. According to a report by the Center for American Progress, transgender individuals, compared to the general population, suffer from more chronic health conditions and experience higher rates of health problems related to HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, mental illness and sexual and physical violence.

Just as with abortion, transgender healthcare is currently under attack: By April of this year, 2021 had already broke records by becoming the worst year for anti-transgender legislation since the Human Rights Campaign began tracking data more than 15 years ago. Across 33 states, at least 117 anti-trans bills were introduced, many of which restricted or banned transgender healthcare.

Notably, Arkansas became the first state to pass a bill prohibiting doctors from providing gender-affirming care, including puberty blockers, hormone therapies and transition-related surgeries, to minors in a move the ACLU said would "send a terrible and heartbreaking message" to transgender youth. Texas is also pushing anti-transgender legislation that would "classify gender-affirming treatments like hormones and surgeries as child abuse and ban puberty blockers provided by a physician."

Legislation like this is incredibly dangerous. Trans youth are already more likely to experience suicidal thoughts than their cisgender counterparts, and one crisis hotline for transgender individuals saw a 72 percent increase in calls from Texas compared to the previous year, suggesting that anti-transgender legislation has a direct effect on the mental health of transgender individuals. In addition, one 2019 study from the Williams Institute found that trans adults who can't access hormones and other gender-affirming care report higher rates of suicide attempts and ideation.

According to advocates, it's no mistake that bills restricting women's and transgender healthcare are surging at the same time, calling it a "coordinated attack." Jules Gill-Peterson, a history professor at Johns Hopkins University, explained that anti-abortion and anti-transgender healthcare bills "share the same kind of idea. They are really restrictive infringements on bodily autonomy, on individual rights and the state taking an aggressive, moralizing police role."

So, how can healthcare communicators and marketers fight back against the stigma that's created when healthcare is politicized and increase access to care for all patients?

Cut through the headlines and legal speak: Don't expect the average person to understand the nuances of state law or Supreme Court precedent. People seeking healthcare in states with restrictive laws often feel confused, stressed and desperate. Craft clear, direct language that provides essential information, and above all, connects patients to the services they need.

Normalize the conversation: In recent years, we've seen PR campaigns centered around, "Abortion is Healthcare," "Our Clinic is Open" and "Care for Every Body." Create campaigns that focus on reducing stigma and supporting a counter-narrative that normalizes reproductive and gender-affirming services.

Center patients: Whether a political debate is about controlling women's bodies or gender-neutral bathrooms, what's so often missing from these conversations is the real-life experiences. Elevate the voices of marginalized people in earned and owned media to keep the focus where it belongs.

Back to basics: Healthcare is personal and it's private, but fears over lack of privacy is a documented barrier to many seeking services. Confidentiality in medical treatment, especially related to sexual and reproductive health, is a protected constitutional right. Don't underestimate the importance of including "privacy" and "confidentiality" wherever sensitive services are listed.

Replace political jargon with facts: Avoid using inflammatory or misleading terms to describe reproductive and transgender care and correct others when you come across it. For example, the phrase, "late-term abortion" was created by anti-abortion politicians and isn't a term used in medicine. Yet, it's heard over and over again by opponents of abortion and mainstream journalists. Ensure the terminology you use is medically-accurate.



Amy Rosenfeld



Megan Kay

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Problems with the pandemic nomenclature

What the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us about the power of words, and how the language we use impacts patient behavior.

By Michael O'Brien

As public health officials discuss whether to call subsequent COVID-19 vaccinations “boosters,” fearing it gives the impression that previous inoculations weren’t effective—some preferred “third dose” or “final dose”—chalk it up to yet another debate about words and nomenclature related to the worst global pandemic in a century.

COVID taught us many things about public health, patient behavior, health equity and more. But it also taught health communicators about the seriousness and dire consequences of poor word choices, unfortunate correlations and the complexity of language when it comes to conveying an urgent public health message to every human being on Earth.

Let’s start at the beginning of the pandemic, where one of the very first opportunities to clearly communicate with a frightened public led to, perhaps, a misstep. In late April 2020, with rising COVID cases and the public fearful, a public-private partnership to accelerate development and manufacturing of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics was launched. It was called Operation Warp Speed. While it may have seemed like a good idea to highlight speed—even if named after a fictional “Star Trek” term—what wasn’t considered was how that moniker would be perceived months later when the government asked people to trust that vaccines developed at “warp speed” were safe.

I spent the better part of the past year working for a large hospital system, where I witnessed firsthand the consequential negative effects the concept of speed had on a concerned public. “The vaccines were rushed!” was the constant refrain, causing medical, government and public health experts to spend precious time and resources convincing people that the science was sound; it was just the administrative timeline that was rushed. It only partially worked and many physicians and frontline health workers loathed the Operation Warp Speed name.

Vaccine uptake was also hampered by FDA nomenclature. Not to debate the arcane world of government regulations, but “Emergency Use Authorization” doesn’t exactly elicit confidence in a life-saving vaccine. EUAs are a critical tool used by the federal government during extraordinary

health crises. EUAs, and their predecessors, have been used for decades to provide critical treatments in a timely manner, from a new strain of influenza A in 1976 to the H1N1 pandemic in 2009.

But those health threats didn’t affect as many people as COVID-19 and they didn’t require every single American to take notice. Again, the name gave the impression the vaccines were rushed or otherwise weren’t safe.

Another unfortunate name was “mRNA,” or messenger ribonucleic acid. We all saw the numerous claims that these vaccines “alter our DNA.” Of course, this isn’t true, but it’s challenging to communicate highly complex scientific concepts to nonscientists. What many thought was that RNA sure did *sound like* DNA, so it must be true.

As communicators, we spent months explaining that mRNA simply provides the instructions for our cells to make a harmless piece of the spike protein found in COVID-19, and thus teach our bodies how to fight off COVID. But, to some, they simply couldn’t get past the name. Would this issue have risen to the surface had the vaccine technology been named something else?

On a side note, and another example of an esoteric regulatory process that’s a mystery to most Americans, is the naming of the COVID vaccines after full FDA approval. Pfizer/BioNTech chose a brand name of Comirnaty, which appears to be a combination of community, mRNA and immunity. The tortured mashup was widely panned and endlessly mocked on social media and late-night television.

Moderna went a completely different route, with plans to brand their fully approved vaccine simply as SpikeVax. It’s pithy, memorable and action-oriented. And to most Americans, will probably elicit a positive vibe. But does it really matter? I would say it does, as these vaccines are probably the most studied and familiar pharmaceuticals in the history of the world. So, Moderna saw their naming construct as an opportunity to connect with patients and Pfizer/BioNTech went a more traditional pharma route, and perhaps missed an opportunity.

The way we labeled those who weren’t vaccinated is also a public health lesson. First, calling people “hesitant” to receive the

vaccine may not have been ideal. Hesitancy sounds responsible, thoughtful and even rational. Now, for some, there was good reason to be “hesitant,” such as those with severely compromised immune systems or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, for example. But for the vast majority of those deciding not to get the COVID vaccine or delaying receiving the shot, their reason wasn’t vaccine hesitancy; it was simply vaccine “refusal.”

Across the country, medical and public health professionals debated this small yet meaningful distinction. Was “refusal” too strong? Was it judgmental? In the end, “hesitancy” seemed to be an acceptable catch-all that allowed people



Michael O'Brien

who had no legitimate reason not to be vaccinated to seemingly get a pass.

On the other end of the spectrum, those who refused to be vaccinated were maligned as “anti-vaxxers,” a term often associated with small but vocal groups dedicated to sowing distrust about vaccines, including some who still believe that some vaccines cause autism, a long-dispelled myth. Associating all of those who do not get a COVID vaccine with a fringe group is unfair. Some of these people cannot get vaccinated. They could be under 12 years old, or have conditions contraindicated for the current vaccines, or truly not have access to a vaccine. To demonize these people by comparing them to conspiracy theorists and carnival barkers promoting debunked scientific theories and faux claims of personal freedom isn’t helpful.

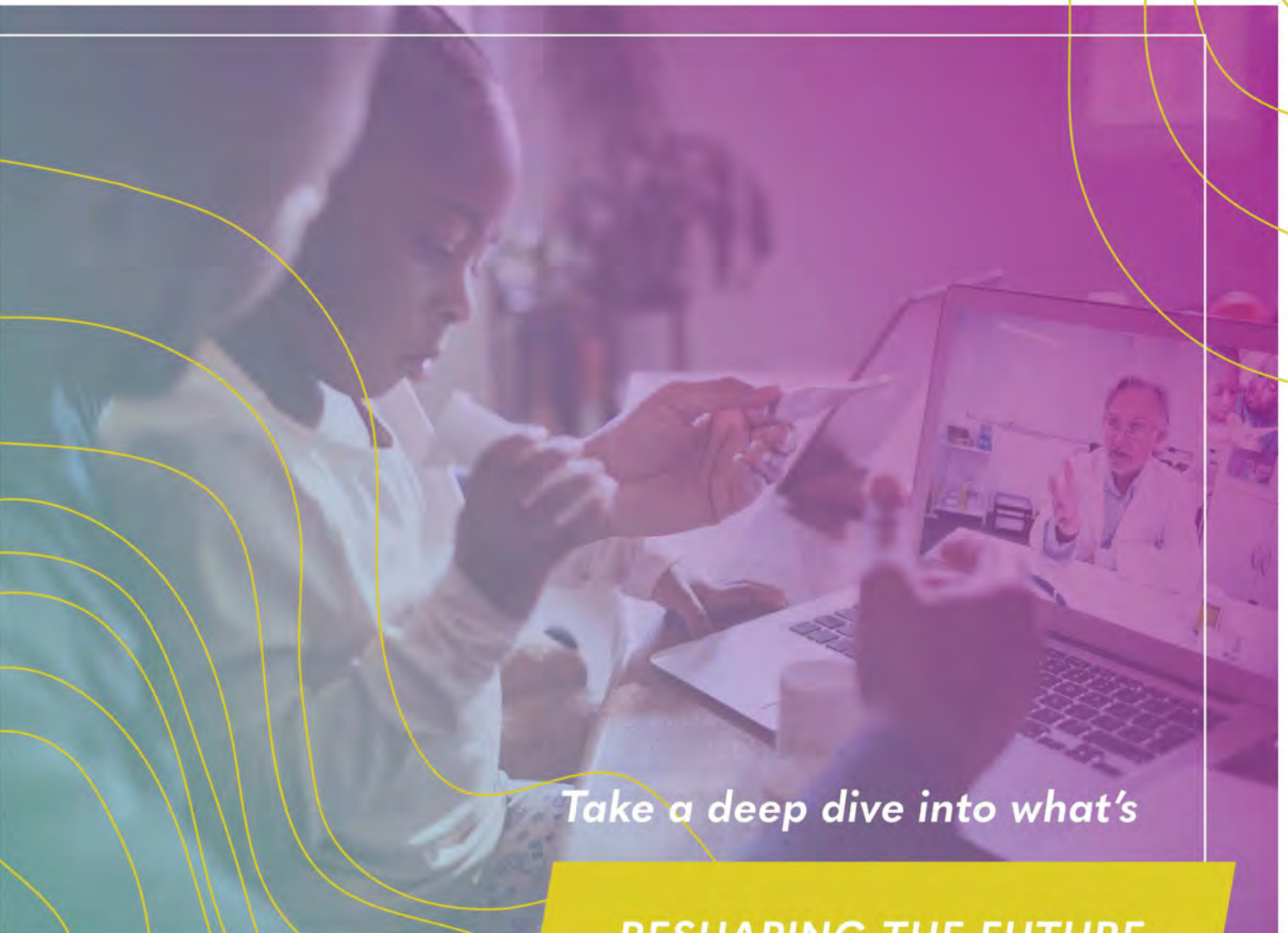
There are undoubtedly endless other terms we could analyze, and with the benefit of hindsight make other choices. This column isn’t intended to criticize, as government, public health and pharmaceutical companies were working night and day to save our lives. We owe them all a debt of gratitude. There certainly was no ill intent. Regulatory and pharmaceutical nomenclature was never created with a public health crisis in mind or to be easy to understand by the general public. And maybe that’s the problem.

In the heat of a global pandemic, with nearly 670,000 lives lost and over 41 million people contracting a deadly disease in the United States alone, the general pub-

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Pharmaceutical marketing in a hybrid world

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an opportunity for the pharma industry to rethink how it handles business, marketing and communications.

By Ritesh Patel and Kristie Kuhl

It's a well-known fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many industries to re-evaluate how they market, sell and engage with their customers and other stakeholders. We've seen words like "contactless" become a brand attribute and "curbside pickup" a norm. Customers have begun to accept and expect a hybrid model of digital and analog (safely) engagement for products and services. We live on our mobiles. We buy more from ads on social media and expect things to be delivered to us at the press of a button.

The healthcare industry hasn't been immune to this new world. Between March and June 2020, we began to see lockdowns. Clinical trials came to a grinding halt as people weren't able to visit the investigator sites. Hospitals, suffering under the weight of the influx of COVID patients, began to lock down the buildings. Meetings and events were cancelled. All the things the pharmaceutical industry relied on were being shut down and locked down.

This accelerated the use of digital tools and also the focus on Omnichannel, with almost the entire pharma and biotech industry adopting "Veeva Rep Triggered Emails" as the new communications and sales tool. Then came Zoom/Teams calls, virtual meetings, use of video and investment in digital advertising (mainly banners).

Fast forward to 2021, the pharma industry is coming to terms with this new world and the words "Omnichannel strategy/Roadmap/Capability" are permeating throughout. So, what should we do?

We should focus on a number of things for this new world:

Experience: Defining and designing an optimal customer experience.

Data: Collecting and using data to inform our activities.

Content: Creating relevant, contextual and engaging content.

Channels: Engagement in the right platform or channel, at the right time.

Technology: Tools for managing omnichannel engagement.

Experience design

Gone are the days of a basic healthcare provider persona with prescribing behavior. Today, marketing and sales should truly understand their HCP customers—and their behavior—in order to create HCP pro-

files, using data that will enable an understanding of the day in the life of a customer, their workflow, their channel preferences, their referral behavior, their brand sentiment, their specialty and their prescription habits at an individual level. Once we have a true understanding of the day in the life of our customers, we can design experiences that fit into their workflow and meet their needs, as opposed to interrupting them. This experience design model will give pharmaceutical companies the opportunity to derive value; however, to realize it, they will have to build advanced digital experience capabilities similar to those deployed by leading retailers, airlines, telecom companies and consumer goods companies.

Data

Digital technologies have opened up a new world for the pharmaceutical marketer. Sales reps, medical-science liaisons and patient-service teams can inform and influence patients, physicians and caregivers, either in person or via mobile devices, using apps or on social media. With the advent of the EHR, healthcare consumers are already starting to use patient portals for their medical records and to communicate with their physicians; and they use apps to fill scripts prescriptions and online patient communities to speak to with other patients with the same disease.

An example of an integrated approach to using data for marketing is none other than Google. Google tracks your search habits (Google), video viewing habits (YouTube), Email messages (Gmail), Internet browsing (Chrome), mobile activity (Android), storage of content (Google Drive) and seamlessly and dynamically uses that data to generate art and copy that feels completely personalized.

This kind of approach, applied in the pharmaceutical industry, should enable the industry to get back to the days of HCP relationship management, where the company knew a lot about their customers for a brand or a franchise, and long before the industry got hooked on the "drug" known as an iPad e-detail.

But before this promise of digital marketing can be achieved, the pharma company must create a strategy for collecting and storing the right type of marketing data. That begins with deciding which type of data to collect and how to store this data

in the most efficient and accessible way. The focus should be on creating something that will enable a universal HCP profile by brand, by the franchise or for the enterprise.

Content

Crucial to the experience is creating content that's relevant, contextual and consumable/usable. It's amazing that in 2021, pharma companies are creating 32-page PDFs for HCPs to review on their mobile devices. Once you've defined the persona and journey, mapping content types and creating content that is relevant for that moment in the journey is crucial. Snackable and sharable content, visual content that educates and informs, and video are increasingly prevalent in our personal lives. Our brains have been

rewired to view visual content first. Creating the right amount of content, managing the content, storing the content and creating an agile methodology and framework for approval of content in the new hybrid world is crucial. Finally, embracing a model of create once, publish everywhere, across owned, earned and paid channels is something we encourage.

Channels and platforms

There's been an explosion of new channels and platforms for reaching and interacting with our customers. It's no longer about broadcasting a message or sending an email with a follow up visit. The personal work should lead to channel preference as one of the major artifacts. Digital is featuring more and more within integrated marketing plans and therefore seamless experiences are emerging, but communicating complex health information across channels, demographics and psychographics is as challenging as ever. While the channels and platforms like WebMD, Medscape and Univadis continue to thrive and social continues to grow, new platforms and capabil-



Ritesh Patel



Kristie Kuhl

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Health isn't about having a moment,
it's about having a *lifetime.*



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Changing the faces, minds and voice of healthcare

How stories that focus on inclusive advancements in healthcare today can help increase access while enhancing much-needed public confidence in America's healthcare system.

By Anne Green

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was a growing priority across many aspects of the American healthcare system before the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent intensified focus on social and racial justice issues. Today, it's difficult to find a healthcare organization that doesn't emphasize its DE&I initiatives, policies and progress to at least some degree. COVID-19 shone a bright spotlight on the systemic and often lethal economic, geographic and racial imbalances in the American healthcare system, and stakeholders of all kinds are demanding tangible change.

Today, one central focus of DE&I efforts among healthcare enterprises is changing the "face" and "voice" of their organizations. This includes taking a critical look at staffing to represent greater diversity in the race, ethnicity and multi-lingual capabilities of their professionals, from front-line clinical staff to vital support functions. This kind of intentional approach is critical to building a foundation for immediate and long-term DE&I change. An important start, but only a start.

Changing the minds of healthcare

A more difficult task is changing the "minds" of American healthcare. That is, the thinking, imagination and behavior of payers, providers, hospitals, clinics, government regulators and ultimately, patients. Innovative thinking is key to delivering more equitable access to quality healthcare to America's diverse populations and patients.

The rapid expansion of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic is one dramatic example of innovative healthcare thinking and behavior in action. While telehealth availability had steadily grown in recent years, adoption lagged due to structural challenges as well as entrenched mindsets about the necessity of in-person encounters. The pandemic was the mother of sudden, accelerated progress.

Recognizing the immediate priority for safety, in March 2020 the federal government announced the temporary expansion of 85 Medicare service items permitted by telehealth. By April 2020, 63 state actions were issued easing their policies and guidance for the use of telehealth services, including a relaxation of requirements for telehealth practitioners to be licensed in-state.

Revised telehealth regulations make remote access a more common and now like-

ly indispensable part of American healthcare delivery. Yet, it also opened the door to expanded access for the 7,200-plus federally designated health professional shortage areas identified by the Association of American Medical Colleges in 2020. Sixty percent of these areas are rural. The rest include economically disadvantaged urban areas and large pockets of non-English speaking individuals. Telehealth means that rural patients may not need to travel 60—or in some cases, far more—miles to consult an internist or specialist. Non-English-speaking patients may have easier access to medical translation services.

Although there's nearly universal agreement that telehealth is here to stay, difficulties remain: varying and conflicting state regulations, clinical availability, medical staff and equipment to meet demand, limited mobile device telehealth capabilities, lack of access to technology among patients in need, and guidelines for in-person versus telehealth visits. The challenge is to make quality telehealth as easy and accessible as possible to reach more patients.

Novel and "refreshed" thinking

Beyond technology, new thinking is needed to meaningfully expand healthcare access. For example, to help solve the growing shortage of rural doctors, well before the pandemic, more than 40 American medical schools had created rural training tracks. Two out of three graduates of the Rural Physician Associate Program at the University of Minnesota Medical School have gone on to practice in that state, and 40 percent of them practice in rural locations. Of the 127 doctors who graduated from the University of Colorado Medical School's rural track since it began in 2005, 35 percent are practicing in communities considered rural or frontier.

Another example of innovative, inclusive healthcare thinking in action is the population health mindset and community-level partnering pioneered by Health Leads, a non-profit organization. They help providers and payers understand that health for many economically disadvantaged patients can include such basic needs as adequate food, decent housing, and refrigerators to store certain critical medicines. They "partner with local organizations to bring together services, treatments, technology, data and resources in new ways to achieve the health goals that matter most to that community."

Refreshed thinking can be seen in recent uses for mobile healthcare models. Mobile blood banks have been successful for many years. In 2020, mobile strategies for COVID-19 testing were deployed all over the U.S. In 2021, many states added mobile COVID-19 vaccine units for underserved communities. These services could easily be expanded to place greater emphasis on mobile primary care—filling a critical gap necessary to manage health at a population level.

Just prior to the pandemic, the mobile physician practice market—old-fashioned house calls—was estimated to be \$350 billion, with an estimated compound annual growth rate of 5.1 percent between 2021-2026. Chances are good that post-pandemic growth estimates will be higher.

Changing the voices of healthcare

As health organizations diversify their workforces and provide more services to expand healthcare access, communication becomes especially critical. It's not enough to "just do it." A 2021 survey by a leading healthcare recruiter indicated that 50 percent of healthcare employers believe that communicating their DE&I efforts offers the most room for improvement.

This is an indication that healthcare organizations of all kinds should double down on building awareness of internal and external DE&I goals, initiatives and progress. Educate and explain accessible services using language and venues familiar to different populations. Leverage other healthcare and community partners to create a united front for communicating important issues and offerings. Be creative about partnering with organizations in touch with key underserved populations. Find ways to communicate with people who are not "plugged in" to current technology. Making communications as diverse and inclusive as core DE&I goals and offerings is critical to achieving changes that are meaningful.

The DE&I urgency of now

The American healthcare industry is at a compelling inflection point in 2021. Healthcare is in the spotlight, but it's also under immense scrutiny surrounding vac-



Anne Green

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What PR professionals need to know about ESG

Environmental, Social and Governance investments have grown in recent years, underscoring the need for PR pros working in the health and science industry to begin incorporating ESG messaging into their communications plans.

By Lisa DeScenza

As momentum continues to build in the health and science industry on ESG investing, public relations professionals must consider ESG as they build their strategic communications plans. Developing a strategy around ESG includes strong environmental initiatives as well as C-suite executives who are committed to building diversity and inclusion as part of their corporate culture.

The Environmental factors in ESG include metrics relating to a company's sustainability, such as energy efficiency, carbon greenhouse gas emissions and water usage. Social factors measure the company's supply chain monitoring, observation of human rights, and workplace health and safety. Governance factors measure how well the company's corporate activities, management, and board are regulated, including metrics such as executive compensation, (minority) shareholder rights, board diversity, accounting, and compliance. ESG investing was developed as an expansion of Socially Responsible Investing, the first type of investing to consider non-financial social and environmental factors alongside a financial return. Unlike SRI, which is based on ethical and moral criteria and uses mostly negative screens, such as not investing in alcohol, tobacco or firearms, ESG investing is based on the assumption that ESG factors have financial relevance.

These three factors are considered when measuring the sustainability and ethical impact of an investment in a company. ESG funds are an enormous factor in the investor marketplace. Even during the worst of the pandemic, when other traditional investments have lagged, ESG investments have grown and now account for more than 30 percent of total U.S. assets under management. Last year, investors poured a record amount of money into funds that aim to help the environment and promote social good—more than double the previous year. And according to Morningstar's Sustainable Funds U.S. Landscape Report, that's the fifth consecutive record yearly amount. This represents a huge opportunity for health and science companies to position themselves to attract this burgeoning group of investors.

In his 2018 Annual Letter to CEOs, Blackrock's CEO Larry Fink wrote "a company's ability to manage environmental, social and governance matters demonstrate

the leadership and good governance that is so essential to sustainable growth, which is why we are increasingly integrating these issues into our investment process."

In his 2021 letter to CEOs, Fink was even more adamant in his views: "We believe that when a company is not effectively addressing a material issue, its directors should be held accountable. Last year, BlackRock voted against or withheld votes from 4,800 directors at 2,700 different companies. Where we feel companies and boards are not producing effective sustainability disclosures or implementing frameworks for managing these issues, we will hold board members accountable."

With the Biden Administration's focus on the environment, growth in ESG investing is likely to continue. Health and science companies, particularly those larger small-cap and mid-cap firms, can no longer ignore the huge pool of funds that these investors represent, as attention to ESG issues is becoming critical to long-term competitive success. Furthermore, institutional investors are making it clear that they expect the companies they invest in to take a proactive approach to ESG policies and messaging. While you might think this role should fall to the investor relations professional, developing the messaging is a clear responsibility of the public relations professional.

As PR professionals developing strategic communications plans, we think about where the company is today and where we're heading in the future or who we want to become. Developing an ESG strategy is a long-term mission with specific attainable goals along the way that must be part of the strategic communications plan. ESG contributes to a company's reputation with many investors incorporating ESG into their financial decision making. PR professionals need to consider all the socially responsible things that companies are doing and use them as an opportunity to increase awareness. As we prioritize our stakeholders, we need to incorporate not only investors but, more specifically, ESG investors.

In June, the Securities and Exchange Commission released its spring 2021 rule-making list, which was full of proposed ESG regulations. The main areas of interest included climate change, which could be proposed as early as October or November. Other areas of focus included board diversity and human capital disclo-

tures. NASDAQ's new rule released in August requiring listed companies to have at least two diverse directors or explain why they don't have them is another example of the heightened awareness around ESG.

Few industries have received more scrutiny over the past year than biopharma. And biopharma, by virtue of its nature—that of improving human health—has a very strong intrinsic ESG focus and appeal. However, it has unique characteristics to address from an ESG standpoint. Probably the most significant are the challenges faced by the fact that research



Lisa DeScenza

and development is the main source of value creation for the industry—where it may take between 10 and 15 years of effort to progress from a scientific concept to an FDA-approved product. This places particular emphasis on human capital management issues (attracting and retaining talent, workplace diversity and inclusion, etc.). The Biopharma Investor ESG Communications Guidance, an important document developed by the Biopharma Sustainability Roundtable—the result of some two-years of interviews with industry executives and investors on ESG—gives a high-level roadmap that identifies ESG topics of unique priority for the industry. These include: access to healthcare and medicine pricing, business ethics, integrity and compliance, clinical trial practices, innovation in therapeutics, diagnostics, business models, pharmaceuticals in the environment and anti-microbial resistance, product quality and patient safety, risk and crisis management and supply chain management, among others. While ESG issues can vary dramatically by industry sector, looking at the biopharma example helps set the stage for thinking about integrated high-priority ESG topics with your overall strategic communications strategy.

So, where do we start? The first step is to do an initial ESG analysis by identifying priority focus areas and gaps with review of current ESG practices, peer practices, ESG rating agencies reports, and ESG reporting and communications frameworks. Next is to research stakeholder perceptions of ESG

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An accountability strategy that meets the moment

PR pros working in the healthcare sector have an opportunity to leverage the public perception of the biopharmaceutical industry to help forge a new, healthier path forward.

By Kim Sammons, Ryan Kuresman and Trey Watkins

One in 500 American lives has now been lost in the war on COVID-19, and the fight shows no signs of ending anytime soon. In fact, most epidemiologists believe the best we can hope for is to eventually downgrade SARS-CoV-2 to a permanent endemic threat.

Yet, in the most literal Darwinian sense, we're adapting. More people are using telehealth to provide quality care to Americans in their homes using technology-enabled remote patient monitoring. We're seeing a commercial explosion of new technology and innovative approaches with the promise to transform drug development and prognostic and diagnostic medicine. Our regulatory system has learned to move faster without compromising safety or efficacy.

Meanwhile, new biotech/biopharma partnerships have married innovation and manufacturing might to speed vaccines and therapies to market as never before. And the pandemic's tragic toll on underserved ethnic and racial groups has forced our nation to open a new dialogue on inequities that have perpetuated poorer health for too many people for too long.

As COVID-19 spread with astonishing alacrity, we've been reminded about just how globalized and interconnected we are. And while the virus has been a great divider as it exacerbated longstanding disparities and injustices, it also leveled the field as it ravaged communities and systems, regardless of GDP. It has reiterated the core of global health security: none of us is healthy until all of us are healthy.

Yet even that word itself—"health"—has taken on a more expansive meaning. No longer limited to its more classic definition of "lack of disease or ailment," health has become synonymous with the human experience, simultaneously social, economic, political, medical and emotional in nature.

Healthcare communicators and public affairs leaders are now on the front lines to add our skills and experiences to perhaps one of the biggest global public health campaigns of our lifetime: to vaccinate the world, educate our fellow global citizens to help save lives and elevate the reputation of an industry more crucial than ever to human survival.

Progress demands sustained actions

In 2019, the biopharmaceutical industry was at a reputational low point: Americans

were more than twice as likely (58 percent) to rate the pharma industry negatively than positively (27 percent), according to a Gallup annual industry ranking poll. However, as the world battled a pandemic and drug companies worked to discover and test crucial diagnostics, therapies and vaccines, positive sentiment soared. A Harris Poll released this May found that 60 percent of consumers now rate pharma companies favorably.

Yet, the pressure on the industry remains intense. While progress has been made, fresh scrutiny builds in Congress, with a sharpened focus on health policies that have left too many behind. And, as policymakers consider the meaning of infrastructure and what constitutes a system, global leaders find themselves reconsidering the value of intellectual property at the World Health Assembly and in the halls of the European Commission.

The new normal of COVID-19 requires a new social contract focusing squarely on the comprehensive needs of all societies—one that leverages value chains across the board to ensure the health and safety of our people, our economies and our environment. Such a contract must maintain a long-term commitment to yield real impact, beyond image or reputation.

Pre-pandemic, we saw a growing expectation of investors and the public that industry do more to demonstrate its commitment to the public good. A substantial majority of biopharma industry players answered that call through myriad corporate social responsibility programs and philanthropic investments that have improved the health and well-being of communities around the world.

Today, however, our global social contract requires a new level of corporate social *accountability* in which companies are answerable for their actions. It means integrating purpose with day-to-day goals and commercial opportunities, as well as connecting industry efforts to a higher mission that creates an authentic connection between the work and the well-being of a world under siege.

Biopharma is uniquely equipped to deliver a healthier future

Health communications professionals find themselves at a historic juncture, with an opportunity to leverage the unprece-

dent public perception of the biopharmaceutical industry to broker a new path forward—one that unites industry, communities and policymakers together in service of a collective vision: a healthier future for all.

By bringing traditionally separate functions together, organizations can more agilely work toward a set of shared goals, rather than being divided by brand, function or discipline.

The Public Affairs Trifecta model is built on the premise that global health, advocacy and public policy should exist interdependently, whenever possible. As in a horse racing trifecta, every horse runs the race, but when bet on together, they have the potential to yield a far greater return.

A trifecta strategy

Global public health:

In an increasingly globalized world, we've seen that what happens in Wuhan, China impacts what happens in Lincoln, Nebraska. Our health and well-being—physically, emotionally, societally and economically—are more intertwined than ever, and without resilient systems in place, they face the threat of buckling entirely. Companies must ensure that their efforts are grounded in a true public health need validated by epidemiological trends, one that drives a global agenda and transcends borders, whether that be a community, a population or the world. Now is the time to revisit that focus to ensure we acknowledge the vast intersection of experiences and determinants of health.

Advocacy: Knowing the problem you want to solve goes a long way in aligning on an agenda. As critical as having those



Kim Sammons



Ryan Kuresman



Trey Watkins

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ACCOUNTABILITY STRATEGY

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impacted at the table, regardless of disease, gender, race, identity or geography, we should also look to non-traditional voices to find unique opportunities for meaningful change. We must work directly and deeply with communities to ensure that efforts are aligned with needs, and that the paths we take to address them produce measurable results.

Policy: Long-term change is solidified through policy. By identifying and overcoming the policy barriers and gaps that can lead to sustainable change, we can

ensure greater public health impact for more people. If we always think with policy goals in mind, asking first what solution is needed and what role we can play as citizens and corporate partners, we can better anticipate the human infrastructure required, bring the right people to the table and activate communities.

A winning way forward

Companies are no longer beholden to their shareholders alone; they're accountable to their stakeholders across a broad ecosystem—from their employees and consumers to the societies and environments in which they operate. People expect more, and their demands for cor-

porations to be held accountable for their commitments and actions will remain.

As public perception—and expectation—continues to rise, public affairs and communication teams in the health space have never held a greater opportunity or responsibility to help their clients' deliver on their bottom lines by helping humankind weather this season of strife.

Kim Sammons is Executive Vice President, Advocacy Patient Engagement at GCI Health. Ryan Kuresman is Executive Vice President, Global Public Affairs and Health Policy Lead at GCI Health. Trey Watkins is Executive Vice President, Global Health and Corporate Responsibility at GCI Health. ○

ESG

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practices and the material issues that matter most through a series of internal and external interviews and surveys. From there, you're ready to develop your ESG messaging. Think about where your risk management and ESG priorities overlap with your vision, mission and purpose. Then integrate ESG messaging into all relevant communication channels. Also consider adding

a customized sustainability website section or entire microsite, as well as bespoke videos for company management that set the tone and humanize your ESG mission.

In looking at the overall growth ESG investing, 2021 could round out as a watershed year for companies in the health and science industry to begin to embrace these principals and incorporate ESG into their strategic communications plans.

Lisa DeScenza is Vice President of Integrated Communications and Head of BD and Marketing at LaVoieHealthScience. ○

POLITICIZED HEALTHCARE

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While politics are deeply intertwined with the delivery of essential healthcare services, communicators can play a role in combating the stigma that creates barriers to care and results in poorer health outcomes for our most vulnerable communities.

Amy Rosenfeld is Vice President of the Public Relations and Crisis Communications practice at Cerrell. Megan Kay is a Senior Account Executive at Cerrell. ○

THE VOICE OF HEALTHCARE

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cines, unequal access, cost and trust.

Within the last year, both the American Medical Association and the Center for Disease Control declared racism to be a serious public health threat. The Associ-

ation of State and Territorial Health Officials, Harvard University and others have conducted research indicating that health inequality impacts both health outcomes and the economic wellbeing of the country.

This presents an enormous opportunity for the healthcare industry to enhance

public confidence with positive, emotional stories in plain language about DE&I progress. Real DE&I progress—internal and external—isn't only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do.

Anne Green is Principal and Managing Director of Business Consulting at G&S Business Communications. ○

COVID NOMENCLATURE

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lic's interest in this little-known world was brought to the fore like never before.

Like so many other lessons we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic—the need for better chronic disease management,

bolstering our public health infrastructure, the possibilities if government and pharmaceutical companies can join forces to rapidly address other health issues, and on and on—we need to consider how language and words impact patient behavior.

We know more now than we did 19 months ago, so let's put those learnings into practice by considering how certain words

and terms will land with intended audiences. In our zeal to deliver life-saving vaccines to people, we need to ensure that our words aren't getting in the way.

Yes, crazy as it may seem, words can save future lives.

Michael O'Brien is a Managing Director at ICR | Westwicke. He can be reached at michael.obrien@westwicke.com. ○

PHARMACEUTICAL MARKETING

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ities like point of care and account based targeting need to be explored. For example, Tik Tok has done an incredible job of creating Gen Z and Millennial digital KOLs, yet not many pharma companies engage on that platform.

Technology

A truly integrated marketing approach requires the right technology to manage the process that will be required to execute the strategy. A robust CRM solution such as Salesforce or Veeva, Nurturing solutions such as Marketo, Email Marketing, a Content Management Solution and integration with a master data management platform for managing customers. The pharma in-

dustry is replete with silos of technology from disparate data sets, to point solutions. A modern, connected, integrated, open API based Martech stack is crucial for this to succeed.

Ritesh Patel is Senior Partner-Global Digital Health at Finn Partners. Kristie Kuhl is Managing Partner and Global Health Practice Leader at Finn Partners. ○

Healthcare opportunities for 2021 and beyond

Five trends that will matter most in healthcare marketing communications in the coming year.

By Bob Pearson and Michael Roth

Innovation is often the unintended consequence of a situation we find ourselves in during a period of significant change. Like the COVID-19 era.

In response to the pandemic, the healthcare industry pivoted to reshape the way that we think about health and wellness. We only need to look as far as the normalization of telemedicine as an example of how far we have come. Entire medical practices and live treatment paradigms, like psychiatry, shifted to virtual as we all tried to contend with a corresponding mental health pandemic.

For the remainder of 2021 into 2022, the healthcare industry will be breathtaking, frustrating and inspiring as we collaborate in new ways to promote access, understand social determinants of health and work tirelessly to bring the latest scientific advances and innovations to consumers.

Our communications industry is also being reshaped due to the massive shifts in technology applications and consumers' full embrace of digital solutions, from how we consume content to how we order goods and services to how we expect to interact with brands and companies. We believe the answer is to stay one step ahead via analytics and technology, to create new media models that both protect and promote our clients.

Here are five key trends that represent new models for the years ahead.

Planning for the "new age of reputation." Companies, communities, citizens and countries are under relentless attack from bad actors, ranging from ransomware to disinformation to counterfeiting of products and services. Communications leaders will become experts in understanding how valuable information is stored and sold in the dark web, where threats are initiated and products and services are being sold in a manner that could create harm for companies and patients alike. To build the best reputation for a leading company, we must become experts in both protecting ourselves in the cyberworld and telling the positive story of those same companies in the mainstream world.

Imagine walking into the C-suite and explaining how adversaries are using the dark web, which country they're staging material in for a future attack against your company, how this group works and why you recommend new training based on this knowledge. That is all possible today.

Shifting to a disease-based media planning model. Why continue to build traditional media plans when we can utilize algorithms to create disease-based media models that offer targeted precision? Imagine creating a media planning model for a disease that shows us which towns are most important, as well as which influencers, channels, words and content matter to reach patients with important health information. Today, a communications firm can deliver a more accurate model that leverages the best of earned, shared, owned and paid media. We all need to swim in this direction.

Analytics unlocks an entire era of precise media planning. This is incredibly helpful to reach the people who will benefit the most vs. always having a goal of "getting the most coverage."

In our work with Johns Hopkins supporting two clinical trials related to COVID-19 and convalescent plasma, it's this level of precision that has been key to nearly completing enrollment in both trials during a time of incredible "noise" in the market. We can figure out exactly who to reach in Houston, for example, by geo-location, media channel and time of day. This type of knowledge completely changes how we plan our media efforts, whether earned, shared or paid.

Making a difference in people's lives will require more precision in the future as we shift to a disease-based model vs. the standard "here is who I know in the media" model. We all surely agree that patients and providers deserve our highest level of efficiency.

Building "search media relations." Search engines (mainly Google) are the largest and most untapped media platform on earth. Approximately one-third of the digital advertising spend worldwide goes to Google. We search for answers all day long, particularly when we're in need of important information.

Did you ever wonder if the people who have the most influence in media have the same sway in search? Turns out that it's not quite the same. We can use analytics to identify which people, organizations and content are prioritized by search vs. what we hear via media coverage. Through analytics, we can identify a new group of people to reach out to for briefings. Search media relations will soon become a media relations staple.

Imagine having a Venn diagram on your desk that shows the most influential people in the physical world, the most influential in shared media and the most influential in search. That's a future media grid worth spending time on.


Unlocking historical data to find new insights. Ever wonder how you can analyze an entire disease area in seconds? We have, which is why our team-built queries that empower us to look at five to 10 years of publications and trials for a specific disease and quickly see which investigators are trending in importance, which medical centers are doing the same, how clinical trial design is evolving and more. We take in this data to identify who the best spokespeople and advisors may be, as well as who to follow and learn from. History is ready to teach us if we're ready to query it properly.

Storytizing is replacing coverage. It's important to get great coverage of our clients' stories. It's more important to ensure the audience they want to reach hear that same story. And this requires expertise in understanding their audience ecosystem and how it works. We're continually developing new audience architecture techniques that show us how the audience interrelates, so we can see who has influence, who to follow, where to share content and when utilizing paid media, how to ensure our story is arriving at the right virtual doors at the right time.

We're taking a story and ensuring it's being delivered effectively, which we think of as "Storytizing."

The good news is that advances in technology are making it possible for our teams to innovate at an unprecedented pace, all with the spirit that our models may improve healthcare for the patients and providers we all serve together.

That's plenty of motivation for us.

Bob Pearson is CEO of The Bliss Group and Chair of The Next Practice. Michael Roth is Managing Partner and Owner of The Bliss Group. 



Bob Pearson



Michael Roth

A woman with dark hair is holding a clapperboard. The clapperboard has the word 'ACTION' illuminated in red lights. The background is dark and out of focus.

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The gamechangers of healthcare

The art of embracing culturally relevant topics and conversations in an effort to stand out in a sea of sameness.

By Allie Tozzi

Let's talk about the ever-elusive challenge we healthcare marketers face: effectively cutting through digital clutter to capture the attention of target audiences in engaging ways. At imre, we strongly believe that in order to strategically differentiate brands in crowded markets and influence consumer decision-making, we must first take a moment to listen.

Déjà vu when consuming content in the digital space is a given. For example, an ambiguously aged woman looks distressed. Perhaps she's trying to go for a walk, play with her children or is struggling to complete a simple task. Then suddenly, she's transformed from sad and defeated to happy, getting back to "doing what she loves." We've all seen this. It's vague enough to not promise too much, and if you were to watch these TV spots on mute, you might not even know which condition this treatment or product is associated with.

This sea of sameness is the reason some pharma brands are throwing the traditional marketing rule book out the window. While the risks they're taking aren't *drastic*, at least there's a possibility of standing out when so much is lost in the noise of the digital space.

Pharma, but make it POP ... culture

Pharma advertising doesn't have to be just one thing (usually being an ambiguous TV spot, copied and pasted for every channel). One way brands are taking this on is by leaning into pop culture and bringing personality to their product.

Imvexxy is empowering its patients to feel grand, not unlike a duchess or queen who would be invited to a summer ball in Bridgerton, fusing beauty and relevant cultural tie-ins to highlight its estrogen treatment for menopause. This campaign is pushing women experiencing menopause to continue to wear their crown, rather than take a backseat during this period of transition.

Talking to patients, rather than at them

Vyleesi, an imre client, took current "dating slang" to educate women about HSDD and loss of sexual desire through their «Ghosted by Desire» campaign. To better connect with audiences, we drew inspiration from direct-to-consumer brands by tapping into a shared cultural experience and emotion. Not only did this campaign embrace the symmetry between a term and experience so many women resonated with, it made the condition intuitive, memorable and a part of the cultural moment.

To further amplify and build a dialogue around the campaign, we leveraged influencers across social channels and blogs as a means to encourage women that it's okay to speak confidently and openly about their sexual health. Instead of just saying "you may have low sexual desire, here's a possible solution," this campaign translated the condition through a metaphor that made it easier for women to equate their symptoms with how they talk about other complicated situations in their life.

Not taking risks is the riskiest thing you can do

Traditional pharma campaigns might have people who they consider "influencers" give a less than commanding performance that comes across as scripted, rather than genuine to the brand or the spokesperson. It basically shouts "this is another paid transaction."

But one way some brands are changing that narrative is by enlisting influencers that have a recognizable and distinct personality, even if it may come at a risk.

Birth control brand Annovera enlisted comedian Whitney Cummings to bring awareness to "Vagina Appreciation Day" in April. Whitney famously doesn't mince words and this partnership was definitely a gamble that paid off.

One of Nurtec's newest campaigns features Whoopi Goldberg; while the TV spot falls a bit flat, her personal Instagram post didn't. Instead of posting a cut down version of the TVC—been there, done that—Whoopi shared a "blooper reel" of her cursing, and messing up the "ODT" language. The post copy connects back to the brand, but this video really conveys her tone of voice.

Move fast or get left behind

What all of these brands have in common is that they're willing to move fast and try something new. If they fail, they fail fast and keep going. The pharma arena might not necessarily be the industry that comes to mind as a cultural epicenter or a place where brands flood their channels with a constant string of comedians and TikTok trends. However, by embracing culturally relevant topics and conversations, and talking to patients as people, brands have the opportunity to create deeper, more genuine connections with their intended audiences. Meeting people where they are and talking to them in a way that they can understand.

How does one accomplish this? There's no one-size-fits-all approach and, depending on your brand and current goals, approaches may change over time.

Holding a portion of your budget and resources for ad hoc opportunities can allow you the time and space required to act quickly when an unplanned opportunity to test something new presents itself.

If you're the first to do it, be comfortable without a precedent to follow. The wonderful thing about being the first to try something is there's no right or wrong way. It's an opportunity to forge more effective, creative marketing solutions and become something more than that often sought after case study.

Just because there's a new trend, platform or ad unit, that doesn't mean it fits with your overall objectives or audience. Listening is key here. What do your audiences and communities care about? What are they thinking, feeling and doing while engaging with your brand? This is a fundamental barometer in assessing whether or not your test has a strong foundation.

Moving fast and breaking down previously-held beliefs about what can and cannot be done in the pharma space can be a daunting task. Realistically, it won't happen quickly—or without some strong persuasion—but brands and marketers alike should partner together in an effort to push the goalposts of what can be done. If pharma is going to continue to strive to make genuine connections with consumers in the digital space, they must be willing and brave enough to try.

Allie Tozzi is Senior Program Manager at imre Health. ○



Allie Tozzi

PR news brief

Edelman powers Fluence IPO

Edelman handles Fluence, clean energy storage technology company, as it files an S-1 statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission ahead of its initial public stock offering.

The Arlington, VA-based company is a venture created in 2018 between Germany's Siemens battery-based storage group and AES Corp. power generation company.

The leading pure-play provider of energy storage globally, Fluence chalked up \$430 million in revenues for the nine-month period ended in June and a \$75 million net loss.

Edelman's Julia Fisher handles media for Fluence Energy, while Alison Mickey is the company's director of communications.

Fluence's shares will trade on the NASDAQ.



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Tips for healthcare communications in a COVID world

What the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us and how we move forward into healthcare communications' new era.

By Brianne Miller

In the immortal words of ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "the only thing that is constant is change." That was true in 500 B.C. and it's a vital guiding principal today.

The worldwide healthcare industry has been irrevocably changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare communications changed along with it; but no one could have predicted at the start of COVID that we'd be struggling with this continuing crisis today. The first cases of COVID were reported in the U.S. in January of 2020. Here we are almost two years later. What have we learned? How do we continue to deal with ongoing change in healthcare communications?

We've learned that constant and continuing change is a given. Predictions of "when COVID ends" have morphed into "how the pandemic will evolve." There's no in-between, just a journey. That's a good lesson for any communications team, especially those that will need to shift from a milestones/launch mentality to on-going integrated programming. It's vital to get comfortable in a new mindset that measures metrics all along vs. "at the end of the program." COVID has taught us that programs morph and sometimes there's no end in sight.

Another important lesson is that you must meet your audience where they are. How we work changed in the blink of an eye and there's no going back. While you may previously have expected emails and phone calls to slow down by 5:30 p.m., the 24/7 clock is the new reality. The appetite for information doesn't follow an antiquated nine-to-five work week. If a journalist can count on you to get them vital information for a digital piece that posts at 9:00 p.m., you're a reliable source.

And that leads to ... setting boundaries. Just like everyone else, I fell into a constant-work cycle when my office no longer provided a framework to the day. Being a good example for your team means setting boundaries and defining crisis. If a client or colleague calls at 7:30 p.m. with a task that provides value and has to be completed by 8:00 a.m., fine. If they call/text/email with something that could have waited until the morning, protect your valuable home/family time.

Here are my top 10 tips for moving into the next phase of healthcare communications in 2021:

Resource up. Whether you're an agency serving healthcare clients, an in-house team or a vendor to the industry, you're understaffed. If the past two years taught us nothing else, we know that predicting the volume of need for healthcare communications is futile. Resources need to be fluid and flexible. The rise of remote work and robust freelancer communities creates a pool of on-demand help. Find your matches. Marshall your troops. Dip into the pool when needed.

Don't overcommunicate. COVID information fatigue is high. Guidelines change week to week and confusion is the only constant. Communicate when necessary, with complete and compact information. Create a resource for up-to-date information that's user-friendly and dated. Today's Google search of COVID fact sheets for three U.S. markets yielded out of date information each and every time. Don't be that confusing brand or service. Look at your content as a conversation, not as a one-way bullhorn.

Proactively highlight non-pandemic news. All forms of healthcare continue during this worldwide crisis. Maintain outreach to specific condition-related communities, celebrate new hires, launch the product. Create the digital footprint that will serve the organization during and post-COVID. While it's not business as usual, don't ignore the business at hand.

Embrace paid + placed. A fractured media landscape necessitates a paid-plus-placed model, especially in healthcare trades. Support the businesses that report your news. You become a partner in everyone's success.

Test and learn. This is a pivotal time for healthcare and an opportunity to test new methods of communication with little downside. What works and what doesn't varies by brand/client/organization. Now is the time to experiment. Beta test an app. Get more active on a social network. Create video content with a point of view. Media train and test new spokespersons. Embrace storytelling. Put time and effort behind the methods that perform. Forget the others. Exit COVID with new tools in your belt.

Measure. ROI/KPI/LMNOP ... whatever acronym you use, use that measurement method often. You can't assess the effectiveness of any effort without understanding if it worked. Start at the beginning with goals,

find a metric to measure against them and report. Even if results were dismal, you learned something.

Support your teams.

The workforce has had to embrace—and sometimes adhere to—new work styles and methods. What used to be a quick five-minute conversation in the break room is a full screen of back and forth on Slack. Annoying? Maybe. Everyone struggles from time to time. Compassion is a must. Celebrate as often as you can.

Find the story. COVID unearthed stories of amazing courage and resilience, especially among frontline workers. Any brand/organization with people has stories. Find them and share appropriately with your audiences. There's never been a better time to present an organization as a collective of smart and thoughtful people. The rise of "good news journalism" presents another opportunity for media outreach.

Redefine healthCARE. What does your client do for people that makes their lives better? Are you struggling to answer that question? That's your first sign of trouble. Create something that benefits all, whether it's as simple as a branded calming music playlist for chemo patients or a partnership with a food co-op to deliver to the underserved. If a corporate social responsibility program doesn't exist, start one now.

Constantly generate ideas. I have a folder on my computer called "harebrained schemes." If I think of some crazy pitch or stunt or partnership, I put it in there. When I'm struggling to come up with creative concepts, I open those files and invariably come up with something new. It's the pandemic version of "no such thing as a bad idea in a brainstorm meeting." Encourage others to think creatively.

Find the opportunities in chaos. Celebrate your successes and learn from methods that underperform. Thank your teams; they're working harder than ever. And in the words of World Health Organization Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, "Be safe, be smart, be kind."

Brianne Miller is Senior Counselor at Landis Communications, Inc. (LCI). ○



Brianne Miller

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The power of patient storytelling

Why member storytelling plays such a critical role in healthcare association communications.

By Rachel Bowen

Ira Glass, host and producer of the series “This American Life,” once said: “Great stories happen to those who can tell them.” This a reality that the National Society of Genetic Counselors enjoys thanks to its extraordinarily engaged membership and the stories its members are telling about their growing profession.

Utilizing top-to-bottom support from its members, NSGC has become a constantly sought-after expert source for national media and has seen continued success in tackling its priority issues. Although, this was not always the case for the association.

In 2010, NSGC turned to our agency, Public Communications Inc., to support its efforts in advancing the genetic counseling profession. At that time, the Society had low consumer awareness, no social media presence and great potential to position itself as a leading voice in the personalized healthcare conversation.

Among the most important goals for NSGC over the years have been to educate the public about genetic counseling to generate further diversity in its workforce, make consumers familiar with genetic counseling services and build a stronger awareness among political decision-makers to bolster advocacy efforts. Through robust integrated communications strategies and storytelling, our teams have worked side-by-side for more than a decade to address these areas.

Today in the U.S., the genetic counseling profession comprises more than 5,000 masters-level professionals, a total that has more than doubled since 2010. That number—along with salaries, diversity and autonomy—is expected to continue a similar consistent growth in the next 10 years as additional training programs become accredited and awareness of the profession rises.

This is not only thanks to the thriving genetics industry, but also to the increased clarity that PCI has provided for consumers on the important role that genetic counselors play in our healthcare today.

When working with healthcare associations, the utilization of their members has continued to be one of PCI’s most powerful tools for successfully attracting and being prepared for media attention, and amplifying awareness and online presence. While all association clients are different, there are common strategies applied by PCI that have proven fruitful time and time again.

Fostering media-expert relationships

PCI’s healthcare sector constantly monitors news outlets and social media to stay on top of the of the latest healthcare trends and news. This allows us to identify opportunities for our clients to be thought leaders and join timely conversations by adding their unique perspectives. When these opportunities come about, PCI works closely with clients to follow up with reporters and offer experts within the organization to weigh in.

NSGC and its members have become key go-to sources for reporters when they’re writing or in search of content about genetic counseling, genetics and related topics. PCI has helped establish this status through years of building media relationships by coordinating inbound requests, frequently pitching story ideas and maintaining daily contact with key journalists and influencers.

NSGC is always well-equipped to handle media opportunities due to its reputable Expert Media Panel, a group of genetic counselors who each play a special role with their unique expertise in the field. PCI has worked with NSGC to enlist these members and continuously prepare them to be effective voices for the Society through media training sessions so they can convey the organization’s most important messages during any given interview. We’re proud to hear from media contacts how impressed they are with NSGC’s experts and that they’re eager to work with them again.

Social media authenticity

Building an effective social media presence for professional associations requires a full understanding of its membership and key consumer audiences. PCI helps generate successful content for these organizations through continuously engaging with current and potential members, building awareness of the association’s brand and generating website traffic. As important as knowing who the content will speak to is the quality and tone of the content itself. Authenticity should always be a target when it comes to social media presence and it’s one that can be hit by activating members to convey that message on behalf of the organization.

Each year, PCI has recruited and given the tools to NSGC members to share their stories through hashtags and Twitter chats on observances like Genetic Counselor Awareness Day, Black History Month and National Disability Employment Aware-

ness Month. Addressing the need for more diversity in the profession, NSGC’s “I am a Genetic Counselor” social media series gives a visual representation and voice to genetic counselors from different backgrounds and career settings. In this series, members have recorded videos and shared photos of themselves expressing why they love being a genetic counselor and the daily impact they make in the lives of their patients.

Hearing these stories can make a life-altering difference to someone who’s just learned that a family member has a genetic condition, a person who is or plans to be pregnant, or an aspiring healthcare professional deciding on a specialty to pursue. These personal narratives bring a new dimension to how viewers relate to genetic counselors and open the door to continued future interactions with NSGC and the profession.

Owned media storytelling

With total and cost-effective control of messaging and how it’s delivered, owned media channels continue to be one of the most efficient ways for associations to engage members and reach consumers. PCI approaches these opportunities by closely working with clients to publish compelling stories through these channels that are deliberate pieces of the organization’s overall strategy.

Hosted on its website, NSGC’s owned media channels include a consumer-facing blog, podcast and member-facing articles that have become valuable homes for meaningful content that consumers and genetic counselors can access to learn more about niche topics put together by knowledgeable experts. PCI has set up NSGC to collaborate with its membership on this content by tapping its Expert Media Panel, patients and leaders in the Society and has helped build these communications into the core strategy of NSGC’s messaging.

It’s important for associations to be versatile communicators among the constantly changing healthcare landscape by using an integrated communications strategy to ensure a unified message. These strategies are what set the stage for successful storytelling and are truly the keys to open dialogue with members and consumers.

Rachel Bowen is Senior Account Supervisor at Public Communications Inc. ○



Rachel Bowen



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Driving an agenda to close health disparity gaps

When it comes to closing health disparity gaps, healthcare communicators need to go big or go home.

By Gloria M. Janata

We all know that health disparity gaps have been blown open by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like the heartbreaking video of George Floyd's last breaths widened our collective aperture of the horror of police violence endured by Black men, the data and visual stories told about how communities of color have been ravaged five times more than white communities in the wake of this unrelenting coronavirus have blown open the reality of the gaps in our healthcare system. And it's just the tip of the iceberg.

I'm drawing this parallel because while we can't and should never look away at what happened to George Floyd, my fear is that we'll lose focus on health disparity gaps and what we can do as healthcare communicators to close them.

The data clearly show health disparities are steeped in economics and poverty, burdened by conscious and unconscious bias, widened by disease-causing pollution and climate change and exacerbated by lack of education and misinformation.

Zip codes make more of a difference in the health disparities gap than genetic codes. And today more than ever, lines of communication get crossed and turned, making healthy dialogues impossible and diminishing the ability for any of us to pursue health and happiness, which is our right as people living on this shared planet.

The statistics are shattering:

- Black Americans are almost twice as likely as White Americans to lack health insurance.
- Black Americans live, on average, five years less than White Americans.
- The rate of COVID-19 infections is approximately 10 percent higher among Black individuals, and 30 percent higher among Hispanic/Latino individuals, compared with White non-Hispanic individuals.
- Black and American Indian Alaska Native women have pregnancy-related mortality rates that are over three and two times higher, respectively, compared to White women.
- When compared to White Americans, racial and ethnic minorities have less access to mental health services.
- Transgender people face numerous health disparities as well as stigma, discrimination and lack of access to quality care, resulting in higher rates of HIV infection—especially among transgender

women of color—and lower likelihood of preventive cancer screenings in transgender men.

- Facilities emitting dangerous particulate air pollution disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color. Particularly, communities living below the poverty line have 35 percent higher particulate matter emissions in their air.

- Pollution is the largest environmental cause of disease and death in the world today, responsible for an estimated nine million premature deaths, and further exacerbating chronic conditions and diseases including asthma, cancer, neurodevelopmental disorders, birth defects in children, heart disease, stroke and lung disease.

So, now what? We can pontificate about the problem, play the blame game, stay so steeped in the minutia that nothing really changes or, as healthcare communicators, we can make a concerted effort to change the way we think, talk and mobilize.

From what I know, many of us who've been around for a few decades fell into communications or public relations before they were even subjects to take in night school.

It was only in the 1990s when Syracuse Newhouse School of Communications—which began as a journalism school in 1971—recognized PR as a legitimate career path. And even with this pedigree, more often than not, we tend to be saddled with unflattering descriptors such as spin doctors, propagandists, hacks, and thanks to the era of anything goes nonsense we are left with an overwhelming cleanup call on every aisle in the store.

The facts remain clear. Vaccines are healthcare. Women's dominion over our own bodies is healthcare. Gender identification is healthcare. Stopping domestic violence is healthcare. Stopping gun violence is healthcare. Stopping police brutality is healthcare. All mental health issues are healthcare. They aren't political. They aren't amorphous. They aren't exclusive. They aren't a zero-sum game. They impact all of us and they require a dedication not only to excellence in communications but a commitment to courage, creativity, craftsmanship and community.

How can healthcare communicators understand and close health disparity gaps?

- Understand and address how unconscious bias may impact communications.

Action: Go to Harvard's Project Implicit to assess your own potential unconscious bias and develop a go-forward plan.

- Look through the lens of specific individuals, take time to walk in their shoes, and develop communications accordingly.

Action: Get out of your comfort zone to expand experiences, challenge critical thinking skills, and create new pathways to conquer age-old problems.

- Champion individuals, organizations, and efforts that are focused on closing the gap of health disparities, especially those providing resources during the COVID pandemic.

Action: Seek out individuals, organizations, and efforts that align with these objectives, including Black Women's Health Imperative, The Loveland Foundation, The Trevor Project and others.

- Elevate the fact that we are all interconnected, and that viruses, pollution, discrimination, and prejudice know no borders.


Action: Speak out and take actions every day to further diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our lives.

Healthcare communicators are a special lot. We know what works and we have a privileged and important responsibility to drive healthy conversations on every level that are based on science, facts and good will for all.

As Father McShane said to the incoming Fordham University Freshman Class of 2025, quoting what he called the "scariest scripture there is": "to those who have been given much, much is expected." He repeated it three times.


We all have a job to do to make the world a healthier and happier place and to drive a reality of equitable abundance. And the only way we do this is to keep opening our own apertures, instilling equity and inclusion in our hiring practices and through all our strategies, messaging and programs, leading with science and attacking misinformation with a vengeance.

We all have a job to do, and there's no doubt we can make a healthy impact together.

Gloria M. Janata, JD, is President, CEO and Owner of TogoRun. 



Gloria M. Janata



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Strategies to succeed in a crowded market

Pfizer's vaccine branding victory delivers lessons for marketers everywhere.

By Karen Strauss

It might seem like ages ago, but when the COVID-19 vaccines were in development in late 2020, Johnson & Johnson had the biggest advantage with U.S. consumers. After decades of successful branding of its baby products, the company had established a halo of trust with people across the country.

Since the vaccines became available, J&J has also outspent its rivals, Pfizer and Moderna, on digital advertising.

Yet Pfizer has been, far and away, the big winner in vaccine brand popularity. In an M Booth Health survey of 1,000 demographically diverse adults—conducted online by independent market research and advisory firm Savanta in April 2021—three-quarters of American consumers said they prefer one vaccine over the others. The top three cited preferences were Pfizer (36 percent), Moderna (19 percent) and J&J (17 percent).

How did this happen? Doctors and public health officials, after all, have advised people to get any of the vaccines and that none is inferior. But Pfizer won with the help of marketing communications savvy, offering crucial lessons for healthcare marketers and communicators and, frankly, marketers from any industry.

Don't rest on first-mover advantage

Pfizer was the first vaccine to be approved for use in the United States for people aged 16 and older. But Moderna came along just a week later. And both approvals were in December, long before most Americans could access either of them, since limited supplies went to people in certain categories. The J&J vaccine received approval in February, just as vaccines were becoming more widely available.

So, while Pfizer may have impressed some consumers by being first, by the time most people were getting vaccines, all three were available. And the first-mover advantage doesn't automatically breed lasting success. Just look at Uber, which was not the first ride-hailing app. Pfizer strategically built on its early momentum, and was careful never to cede ground.

Be visible, transparent and human

Our survey shows that Americans have heightened awareness of pharmaceutical brands. With so much attention focused on drug makers, people have come to think of them in more familiar terms, akin to consumer lifestyle brands such as Nike and Amazon. And while this newfound interest

has its most immediate impact on the vaccine makers, we found it extends to other pharma brands as well. Bayer, AstraZeneca, Merck, BMS, Lilly, GSK and Novartis have all seen increases in unaided brand recall.

We call this shift the Pharma Brandemic, a veritable epidemic of Pharma brand familiarity. It's no exaggeration to say that the COVID-19 vaccines have changed healthcare marketing forever. These brands' achievements and upheaval of the pandemic have fundamentally altered consumer understanding of pharmaceutical brands in ways that are enduring.

Consumers absolutely want to feel a connection to a brand and the people behind it. Nearly half of respondents said they want to hear more from leaders of pharmaceutical companies. Nearly a third of Latinos, and slightly smaller numbers of Blacks and Asians, said they want more videos from CEOs on social media channels to help them understand medicines and vaccines and how they work.

And one-third said that when pharma companies talk openly about challenges they're facing, it makes them more likeable.

This helps explain Pfizer's success. From CEO Albert Bourla on down, company officials posted open letters, took part in interviews and wrote columns. They were open about setbacks and triumphs. Pfizer showcased its people at work in a documentary with National Geographic.

Bring consumers inside your product

Consumers today want to know and understand what's in the products they use. They're increasingly Googling skincare ingredients and identifying as clean eaters.

So, it's no surprise that they want to understand what's in vaccines. In our survey, more than half (57 percent) of respondents said they're now more likely to explore the science behind any medication they take in the future. Of interest, more than six-in-10 (61 percent) Black respondents polled said they're more likely to ask or learn about the science behind a medicine before they request or accept it, several points higher than other demographic groups.

Pfizer succeeded by explaining its vaccine in digestible, human terms.

Align your messaging

Pfizer also benefited from a rebrand that was already underway before the pandemic. It stepped up the launch, with the new "Science Will Win" slogan, along with a new logo designed to, as the *Wall Street*

Journal put it, "demonstrate the company's elevated scientific mission."

This was exactly the message consumers wanted to hear. When your corporate message and your product message are in unison, the stars have aligned.

Deploy the right influencers

Black respondents self-identified as being among the most informed about the vaccines. More than half (52 percent) described themselves as "active" or "super active" in their approach to staying informed. Only Asians reported a higher figure, at 56 percent. Among Latinos, 46 percent said they are "active" or "super active" in staying informed, just edging out white respondents at 45 percent. For minority audiences, online influencers played an especially important role. More than three-in-10 Latino and Black people polled and 19 percent of Whites polled, said they're most interested in hearing from the health and wellness influencers they follow on social media. In fact, minority audiences are twice as likely as white audiences to turn to Instagram and YouTube to learn about vaccines.

Pfizer deployed influencers effectively.

Win the hashtag war

Pfizer also benefited from something that's a sign of the times. While the J&J ampersand can't be used in a hashtag (and #TeamJohnsonAndJohnson is long), #TeamPfizer and #PfizerGang caught on across social platforms.

Our estimates in May showed that Pfizer had about 8.6 million engagements related to the vaccine on Twitter, TikTok and Instagram, while Moderna had 1.7 million and J&J had fewer than 100,000.

Through all these steps, Pfizer also successfully rode a wave of earned media, including, effectively, endorsements from celebrities who shared their experiences getting shots. It became the so-called "status vax," without ever claiming to be superior, which would've been a turnoff.

Of course, anything can still happen. There's no guarantee that Pfizer will maintain its dominance as COVID-19 variants and booster shots spark a new wave of debate and personal decision making. And all the vaccine makers have powerful marketing communications campaigns underway. But Pfizer remains in the lead, and we should all take note.

Karen Strauss is Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer at M Booth Health. ○



Karen Strauss



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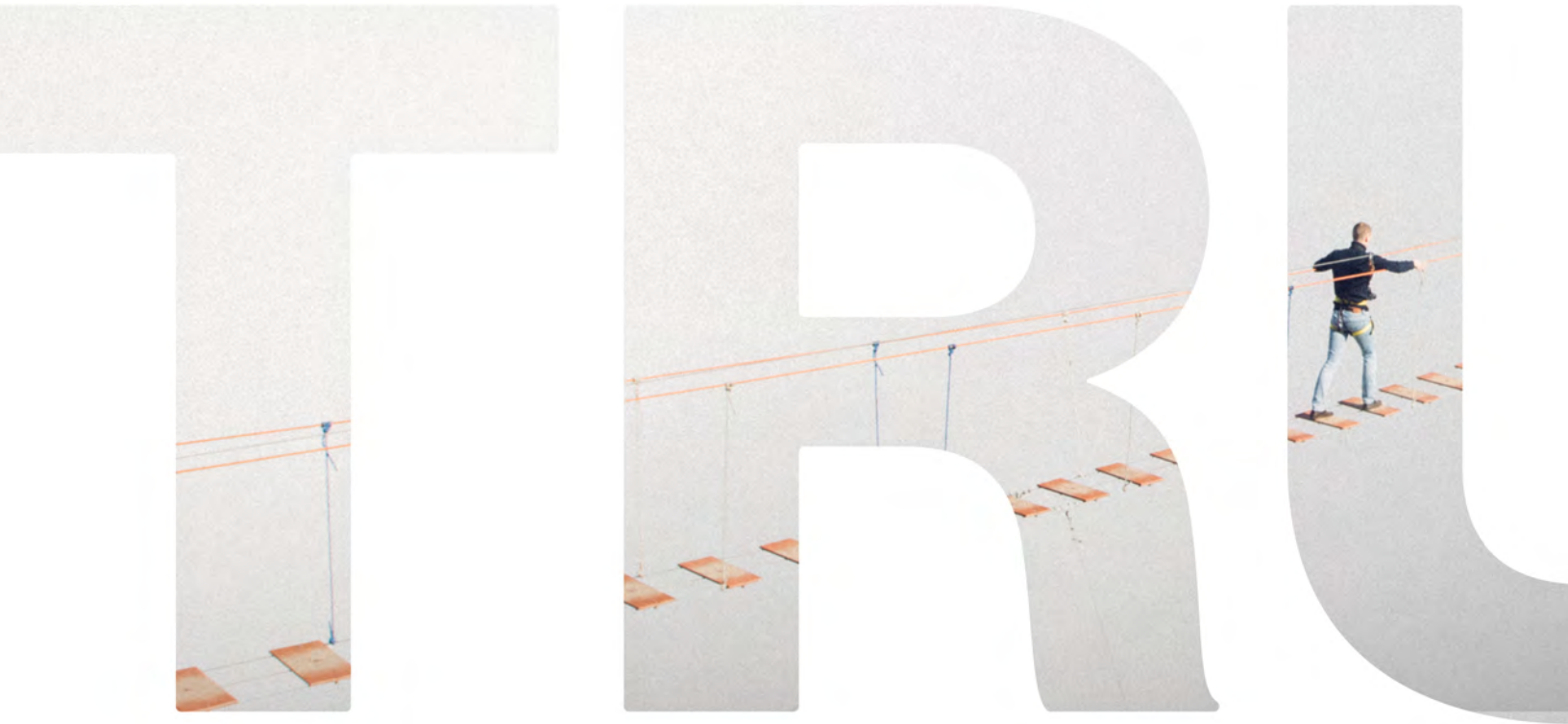
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Elevating healthcare provider communications

Making communications skills a priority for healthcare providers is critical to addressing vaccine hesitancy.

By Katherine Nicol

Health professionals remain the most trusted influencers of vaccination decisions, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and related vaccine hesitancy, a recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation confirmed.

When respondents were asked who they trust to provide reliable information about the COVID-19 vaccines, 83 percent of adults said they trust their own doctor a great deal or a fair amount, and 85 percent of parents said the same about their child's pediatrician.

Doctors, nurses, physician assistants and nurse practitioners are essential to increasing acceptance and uptake of vaccines—from delivering information and answering questions, to administering vaccines, increasing vaccination rates and reducing hesitancy.

It's therefore critical that health professionals have the communications skills necessary to recommend vaccines effectively and to acknowledge and discuss patients' questions and concerns in a confident and knowledgeable manner.

The benefits of and focus on effective provider-patient communications are not unique to vaccination. In 2017, the American Society of Clinical Oncology issued guidelines to improve provider communications with patients. Particularly in the context of a diagnosis like cancer, providers must have the ability to support patients by effectively building rapport, providing information in a manner that the patient understands, and addressing patient concerns in a complete yet concise way. The ASCO guidelines include recommendations for core communication skills and training, and strategies for communicating effectively, particularly when barriers exist. There are, of course, parallels with using effective patient-provider communication to overcome barriers to vaccination.

Upon release of the ASCO guidelines, the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* noted that, "Good interpersonal skills are not a substitute for strong health care communication skills." ASCO is one of many professional organizations that have come to recognize that communication is not a "soft skill" for providers, but is, in fact, a critical element of their profession. Health professionals must have the knowledge and understanding of both the clinical topic as well as the patient's own barriers—perceived or otherwise—to inform and influence their patients' decisions. Providers must have the confidence and ability to communicate effectively with patients and their caregivers.

In recent years, more and more provider organizations, public health entities, and federal agencies have developed guidance, tools, and resources to elevate and enhance provider-patient communications and make the most of the often limited time a provider has to spend with a patient. Most recently, vaccine hesitancy in the context of the COVID-19 vaccine as well as other pediatric and adult vaccines, has created an urgent need for a focus on effective patient-provider communication.

How can these standard communication guidelines be applied in a manner that maximizes patient trust and effectively addresses vaccine hesitancy? There are five core elements of effective patient-provider communications that are consistent across clinical practice, specialty area, and diagnosis that are of particular relevance to health professionals working to overcome vaccine hesitancy. These elements provide useful and essential guidance for healthcare providers.

Use clear, plain language. Whether taking a medical history, sharing test results, explaining a diagnosis or treatment plan, or responding to questions about vaccines, health professionals should avoid medical jargon, abstract concepts and long, complex sentences. Additionally, remember that illness, uncertainty, and stress—including the unprecedented stress of a global pandemic—can affect comprehension and a person's ability to process information.

Educate as well as inform. A provider's role goes beyond simply reporting test results or a diagnosis, or recommending a vaccine. The provider must help the patient understand what they mean. In some cases, this means providers can use visual aids to "show" in addition to "telling". Providers should share evidence-based resources and materials with patients and be aware of digital resources that can be shared during telehealth visits. Focus on the benefits of vaccinations, and clearly and concisely explain the health risks of getting and of not getting vaccinated. Be open, direct, and honest. Bring cultural competence to the discussion. Remember that transparency matters—state the

knowns and unknowns in this ever-evolving situation. Providers should not hesitate to share their own stories of why they chose to get vaccinated and/or vaccinate their family, backed by the science that informs that narrative.

Make a strong, confident recommendation. Building on the trust that already exists, and mindful of the health professionals' well-established position as trusted messenger, use affirmative language that conveys confidence. Be reassuring and use science and current, trusted data to inform and shift inaccurate perceptions of social norms. Leave space for patients and/or parents and caregivers to feel comfortable asking questions.

Listen not just to "hear," but to understand. Particularly in the case of vaccination, acknowledge that this is a personal decision. Listen to what the patient or caregiver is saying, carefully and with empathy. Then, formulate a response. This can be a challenging exercise when a patient has a lot to say, particularly with regard to vaccine misinformation or disinformation. Many professional organizations and federal resources offer communications tips and time-savers or Q&As to help guide these types of patient-provider discussions.

Ask the patient to share their understanding. Can the patient briefly and accurately share their understanding of the recommendation, diagnosis, or medical orders? Providers should ask patients to repeat key points back to make sure they have a clear understanding, particularly when it comes to correcting inaccurate perceptions based on vaccine misinformation or disinformation.

Increasing the overall quality of communications skills among providers is worth the time and investment that many professional organizations are dedicating, and when implemented will no doubt improve health outcomes, including the uptake of potentially life-saving vaccines. And that benefits everyone.

Katherine Nicol is the Executive Vice President, Health Practice Director at Hager Sharp. ○



Katherine Nicol

An aerial photograph showing a two-lane asphalt road that curves through a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. To the right of the road is a calm body of water, likely a lake or a wide river, reflecting the sky. The road has white lane markings and a yellow center line. The forest is lush and green, with some trees showing early autumn colors. The overall scene is serene and natural.

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Creating the 'perfect fit'

The art of knowing what to communicate in an effort to tell a coherent, holistic story that raises public interest in an organization and positions it for future success.

By Gary Grates

The “Perfect Fit” is what an organization needs to be communicating at a specific moment for its story to unfold properly. Communicators are often blessed—or plagued—with multiple choices to communicate to the world that are plucked from myriad business functions, product and service areas, announcements, events, processes, geographic areas and personnel moves.

At the senior-most levels of the company, where there's often an eagerness to build momentum, executives want to tell a variety of stories at once, often a hodgepodge of news about products, services, technologies, environmental initiatives and investments, among other topics.

What's often missing is the apparent linkage among the stories.

As chief storyteller, however, the communicator must identify the Perfect Fit: the next chapter in the organization's evolution that both strategy and logic dictate deserves to be told now in order to build or sustain organizational momentum. And it's important that the communicator know how to identify each successive chapter.

Think of a puzzle that reflects your company's value, purpose and future direction. And with each moment or milestone, a puzzle piece so to speak is identified and communicated to continue filling out the picture.

Identifying the perfect fit

Knowing that you need to create the Perfect Fit is different from knowing how to identify it. Sometimes it's easy: if your industry's leading trade publications or national business media claim you're the best at what you do, you'll probably want to build on that reputation. But for most organizations, the Perfect Fit is harder to come by, particularly in transformational or change efforts when all bets are off with regard to past practices, brand image or corporate reputation. Fortunately, identifying the Perfect Fit requires the same skills and strategies that many corporate communicators leverage every day.

The process

An integral objective to achieving alignment in narrative is the ability to view and manage communications—both internal and external—in a synergistic manner. Establishing a Situation Room is a key approach that demands a frequent coming together of all communication areas comprising internal and external stakeholders. It's here that a disciplined—yet fluid—method-

ology is employed to guide discussion and inform decisions regarding the business and the right sequence, channel and cadence for communications. The purpose: a coherent, clear and believable story that allows people to follow the organization, increasing both interest and affinity in its success.

Powering the Situation Room process is an analytics-based system that continually identifies stakeholder needs, concerns and interests to allow communicators to view the business from the “outside in” and “inside out” in order to best determine how the story needs to evolve.

A look ahead

A critical component of the business' context is a look forward, trying to anticipate external events that may have a positive or negative effect on the business. Anticipating these events can establish an understanding of impact to help in contingency planning.

Answering these questions—certainly not a simple task if approached seriously—allows communicators and managers to inform decisions and plot priorities. The act of answering these questions also facilitates an open, ongoing dialogue between all communication functions and ensures that internal and external communication are in sync. A complete picture of the company, its audiences and its marketplace is painted, often for the first time.

Ultimately, the answers are the only things that truly enable a company to develop a cohesive story inside and outside the organization: who we are, where we're going, how we define the future, short-and long-term goals and how success is defined and measured.

Thinking differently

To identify the Perfect Fit, it's imperative that organizations do several things:

- Integrate functions and departments that currently exist in solos.
- Gear communication toward whatever is promoting momentum and growth in the marketplace.
- Understand the factors critical to the organization's success, such as quality, cost reduction and an ability to deliver cutting-edge products.
- Take a realistic view of consumer opinions and media interest.

Acting on the information: telling the story

It's critical that someone—preferably the company's chief communicator—serve as a mediator to keep the storytelling process moving. The chief communicator acts as chief strategist. They're in sync with leadership, defining the Perfect Fit for vital segments of the organization, constantly reiterating why it's the priority message, mapping out how this chapter will be told inside and outside the company—from media, investor and employee perspectives—and putting measurements in place to ensure the story is received as planned. Ultimately, the chief communicator determines when the next piece of the puzzle must happen to make sure the story stays on course and sustains momentum.

Staying on course is about sensing and responding, rather than force-feeding. Too often, companies make the mistake of telling or selling stakeholders instead of allowing people to discover the story for themselves in a manner that reflects their interests, needs, concerns and satisfaction.

Gary Grates is Principal at Real Chemistry. ○



Gary Grates


FTI report warns of 'unforgiving scrutiny'

More than eight in ten (83 percent) executives at large companies across the G20 countries say their firm is either under investigation or expects to be during the next 12 months, according to FTI Consulting's Resilience Barometer.

“A new era of unforgiving public scrutiny, outdated business models and the repercussions of the pandemic are some of the diverse—yet interlinked—risks that are driving C-suite concerns today,” according to the RB.

While executives worry about the emergence of a new strain of vaccine-resistant COVID-19, the greater worry is about the longer term socio-economic issues exposed by the pandemic. The RB also gauged the impact of the “great resignation” of employees re-assessing their careers due to the impact.

Thirty percent of companies experienced a talent shortage during the past year, while 68 percent cited an upswing in mental health issues since the start of the pandemic. ○



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Communications strategies for the COVID era

How healthcare providers can improve their reputations and reestablish trust as they navigate the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 crisis.

By Tom Faust

U.S. healthcare providers have been under incredible pressure since March 2020, when COVID lockdowns began. Nearly a year and a half later, just as things appeared to be improving, the Delta variant has again caused cases to surge, renewing the challenge for frontline medical professionals.

While it may pale by comparison, these organizations' communications teams have also faced unprecedented challenges. In addition to managing day-to-day communications associated with the pandemic, an entire new front has emerged, driven in large part by the same vaccines that are our best chance to mitigate the crisis. Here are a few approaches healthcare providers can employ to sustain their reputation as they navigate these challenging times.

Show community connection

Skepticism about the vaccine has fractured ties to a number of the patient populations healthcare providers serve. To re-establish those connections, it's important to demonstrate your commitment to the community and narrate the ways that you're collaborating to beat COVID together by:

- Announcing partnerships with community groups, schools, houses of worship and local businesses who provide a critical pathway to reaching local residents.
- Using your website to tell stories about families' decision to get the vaccine.
- Inviting respected community leaders to take part in press and public events to foster confidence.
- Attending local community board meetings to field questions.

The key is to demonstrate that you're an active and integral part of the local community, rather than an opaque institution dictating how things must be done.

Go beyond COVID

It's easy to be consumed by pandemic-related communications, both because it's the most critical health issue the world is facing and because of the sheer volume of developments that must be communicated. But healthcare providers shouldn't lose sight of the many other health issues they're addressing, especially if they haven't been able to dedicate as much attention to them as in the past due to COVID. Showcase these developments by:

- Maintaining a presence in local media on non-COVID health issues from seasonal allergies to new medical breakthroughs, to reinforce your organization is an author-

itative voice across the full healthcare spectrum.

- Promoting digital channels telehealth to deliver the medical information patients need when in-person visits are not always desirable.
- Celebrating non-COVID successes. Chances are that your physicians are saving and improving lives every day, and it's important to not let these inspiring stories fall through the cracks.

Introspection and dialogue

One of the most surprising stories to emerge around the pandemic in 2021 is the resistance of some healthcare professionals to getting the vaccine. The federal mandate that employees working in healthcare facilities receiving Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement must be vaccinated has put a new spotlight on the issue. This is a tough challenge where emotions can run high, but it also cannot be ignored.

The communications team—in partnership with HR—should look for ways to ensure that the organization is taking a proactive approach to internal communication that focuses on information, fosters dialogue and avoids judgment. Elements of that approach could include:

- A series of one-on-one or small group dialogues where employees can ask questions and voice concerns.
- Easy access to the latest vaccine information and guidelines online and via staff-wide emails, newsletters and other channels.
- A "Vaccine Fact and Fiction" document—online and made available in print—that corrects misinformation, debunks conspiracy theories and directs people to reliable sources of information. With this audience, it's critical that any claims be backed up with citations to the source material for those continuing their own research.

Stay above the fray

Finally, in an already politically divided country, COVID responses have only deepened divisions. It can be difficult to not let communications wade into murky ideological waters that do nothing to serve your community or strengthen your organizational reputation. Your communication should be focused on bringing sympathy, maturity and clarity to the table.

To ensure spokespersons don't fall into these traps, media training is essential. Even seasoned spokespersons—both administrators and physicians—have never faced an environment where doing the right thing from a medical perspective is perceived negatively. Prior to any media interview—particularly broadcast or online video—spokespersons should undergo serious training complete with mock interviews to prepare for aggressive or uninformed questions about COVID and the vaccine. One only need watch daily White House press briefings to understand why this is needed.

COVID has asked a lot of healthcare communications professionals, and it may feel there's no way to win, but the moment demands that we try. By taking a broad and thoughtful view of your organization and demonstrating commitment to the people you serve, you can craft a strategy that addresses today's challenges and takes your organization forward to when better days return.

Tom Faust is Managing Director at Stanton, a strategic communications firm working with businesses across the spectrum of healthcare and life sciences. ○



Tom Faust

Marketers plan to up spending in 2022

Almost nine out of 10 marketing execs say their companies plan to increase marketing spend in 2022, according to a survey from 360PR+ and Engine Group.

Only two percent say they aren't planning to up their marketing spend, with 10 percent saying that it's too early to make a prediction.

A large majority of those surveyed said that they have gotten better at their jobs in

response to the demands posed by the pandemic. The biggest lesson they've learned: how to prioritize. More than three-quarters (76 percent) said the pandemic has helped them get more focused and better prioritize their objectives.

More than half (57 percent) said they have become more open to new approaches, 47 percent said they are more likely to think holistically, and 42 percent thought they had become more nimble. ○



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Connecting campaigns, constituents and Congress

How health communicators can cut through the noise of politics and capitalize on opportunities to engage audiences and help our clients achieve their communications goals.

By Ryan Shucard

As communicators, we thrive in the vast complexities of our audiences, always striving to capture the right eyes and ears to bolster our campaigns and drive meaningful results. Our work has never been easy; however, the dynamics of reaching target audiences amid the constant flow of COVID news is more complex than ever before.

But how, with a global pandemic and on the eve of yet another contentious election cycle, can we capitalize on opportunities to engage audiences and also confront the ever-present and often overlooked obstacle of politics and policymakers?

For many PR practitioners, policy matters are happily left to lobbyists, lawyers and government relations professionals. The consternation of dealing with the volatility of politics and the minutiae of policymaking is radioactive and a constant threat to derailing and distracting from the execution and ultimate success of our earned media campaigns.

As valid as those concerns are, they ignore the power of a constituency. A constituency is broadly defined as a body of citizens in an electoral district or group of people that patronizes, supports, or is involved with an institution, organization or business. You would be right to wonder how far off that definition is from how we as communicators define an audience; a term we also take for granted in our daily work yet is widely known to simply mean members of the listening, viewing and reading public.

So, the similarities between constituencies and audiences far outweigh the differences between them. Therein lies the opportunity for us to elevate our thinking and our campaigns.

COVID has forced elected officials to grapple with how they respond to their many overlapping constituencies from the geographic areas they represent to congressional leadership and special interests. Their actions—or inactions—also have direct impacts on every facet of our campaigns from paid and earned media to patient and provider mobilization, not to mention the economic conditions affecting the bottom lines of private sector, nonprofit and public health clients alike.

Interestingly, there's a certain closeness that exists between policymakers and their constituency in the health sector which is

easily attributed to the personal and passionate issues tied to one's health.

While our campaigns stand to benefit from that inherent closeness, helping our clients achieve their communications goals is as daunting as ever. COVID has generated a renewed interest and priority in both public health and the private sector's critical role in the administration and delivery of healthcare. As public relations professionals, it's our job to condition the communications environment so our client's issues and objectives are seen, heard and acted upon by key constituencies.

One of the most powerful ways we can do that is by mapping audiences, conversations and media using the millions of data points and our team of experts in analytics, media and advocacy to quickly zero in on the influencers and partners that will enable our clients to reach and engage their customers and communities.

Enter GRETTEL, JPA Health's proprietary tool which has powered countless campaigns to identify the influence of an outlet, individual or organization based on how frequently it's referenced or shared by specific audience segments within a specific issue or topic. GRETTEL tracked the seismic shifts to the healthcare landscape as a result of COVID and allowed us to chart new territory in the universe of health influencers, from reporters and advocates to healthcare professionals and individuals that can help change the minds of thousands around a given issue or topic.

Want to know which reporters influence coverage of an issue across other media outlets? How about knowing which Members of Congress drive conversations about public health issues? Or what about gauging the resonance of an important healthcare issue in the lead up to the midterm election?

These are all essential questions we are able to answer by merging our professional mastery of audience communications with our understanding of communicating and leveraging constituencies.

As a divided Congress battles to pass an infrastructure bill, a debt ceiling extension and stave off cuts to Medicare, it seems like the midterm elections of 2022 have already begun. Republicans are vying to take control of the House of Representatives as Democrats look to pad a 50/50 split in the Senate with a clear majority. Leaving the

forecasting of those outcomes to the politicians, the most salient point for healthcare communicators is to leverage the positive change our clients are seeking to make in the lives of patients by which policymakers can also communicate and champion with their key constituencies about the substantive progress being made in healthcare, a topic millions of Americans continuously rank among the top issues motivating them at the ballot box.

Now is the time for health communicators to begin the planning process for how they're going to cut through the noise of politics and prove to their clients that the best campaigns are integrated ones. A maxim our industry lives by but that's rarely heeded shouldn't be ignored either: clients shouldn't wait until a crisis arises to begin building out your communications capabilities.

Looking ahead, 2022 will be another pivotal year for the health industry and though the consequences of our politics are as unpredictable as the pandemic, certainty can be found in our industry's ability to not only recognize the opportunities to advance positive change in the health sector but reveal new ways to communicate and engage within a complex and dynamic ecosystem.

Ryan Shucard is Vice President of JPA Health's Public Affairs practice in Washington, D.C. ○



Ryan Shucard

PR news brief

Finsbury makes move on Sard

Finsbury Glover Hering is discussing a takeover of Sard Verbinen & Co, a deal that would create a firm with more than 1,000 staffers and \$350 million in annual revenues.

Golden Gate Capital, which owns a 40 percent stake in Sard, would retain a five percent stake in the new company.

WPP, FGH's parent, would own a little more than 50 percent of the company while existing and future partners would own the balance.

The Financial Times reports the combined business would likely pursue an initial public offering in 2023.

George Sard and Paul Verbinen, who were at Ogilvy Adams & Rinehart, launched their financial/strategic communications shop in 1992. It has more than 200 staffers.

Sard will become a co-chair of FGH/SVC, joining Roland Rudd, founder of Finsbury; and Carter Eskew, co-founder of Glover Park Group.

Verbinen is expected to take on the co-CEO of North America post.



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A purpose-driven model that addresses health equities

Advancing health equity as a strategic priority to reach audiences, build reputation and engage with the community and partners.

By Brandon Skop

Health inequality existed long before COVID-19, but the pandemic magnified vulnerabilities in our healthcare system that now simply cannot be ignored. Many organizations have had health equity as a focus area, but the pandemic has made it clear that health equity needs to be a strategic priority for the healthcare industry.

There are a lot of high-profile organizations involved in the conversation around health equity, both within the health industry and outside of it. However, there are too many people and organizations admiring the problem and not nearly enough doing anything about it.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black and Latinx Americans, for example, are roughly four times more likely to be hospitalized with complications from COVID-19 than non-Hispanic white people. Data from the CDC also shows that, in the U.S., people in these two groups who contract COVID-19 are roughly three times more likely to die from it than non-Hispanic White Americans. Asian Americans and Native Americans are at higher risk as well.

Long-standing systemic social and health inequities, including some that have been made worse by bad policies, have put BIPOC groups at increased risk of getting sick, in addition to having overall poor health, and having worse outcomes when they do get sick. These disparities exist due to a number of factors, including lack of access to quality health care and checkups, residential segregation, and higher poverty and stress rates among BIPOC groups.

Health equity is no longer just a concern for public health departments and non-profit organizations only—it has become a national imperative that centers around a strong foundation of communication.

Healthcare organizations have increasingly acknowledged the presence of healthcare disparities across race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, but significantly fewer have made health equity for diverse patients a true priority.

While healthcare organizations alone don't have the power to improve or solve all of society's health barriers, they do have the power to address disparities directly at the point of care, and to impact many of the factors that create these disparities.

The business case for achieving health equity has never been more evident.

Health equity can be a reputation driver. It leverages relationships, demonstrates culture and citizenship, and if done well, can be measured over time, but it needs to be done with purpose. Acting with purpose matters, and expectations to deliver are higher than ever, particularly in light of competing health priorities and shifting socioeconomic factors that have adversely affected BIPOC, rural and other communities.

Meaningful ways to connect and resonate with diverse communities are critical to making an impact. Why? Because we want to feel we're making a direct impact when we donate dollars, seek support and partner with experts for discovery and improved care.

It starts at the top, too. Health equity needs to be a leader-driven priority. Senior management must not only articulate the vision, but also act on it by building it into all high-level decision making.

Without a proper understanding of the problem, messages around health equity can go unnoticed or may lead to unfavorable actions.

Language in communication should reflect and speak to the needs of the people in the audience of focus. Health equity is also intersectional, with individuals belonging to more than one group, who may have overlapping health and social inequities or certain strengths.

Public health programs, policies and practices are more likely to succeed when

they recognize and reflect the diversity of the community they are trying to reach.

Health inequities do not have a single cause, so one organization alone cannot address them.

That's why it's critical for organizations to collaborate if they are serious about addressing health equity in the populations they serve. This includes relevant partnerships with advocacy groups, as community engagement is critical to developing culturally relevant, unbiased communication.

Making an impact

At Padilla, we're working with a wide range of purpose-driven organizations at the intersection of population health, health equity and disparities in BIPOC communities and other underserved populations.

From consensus-building, grassroots outreach, thought leadership and employee engagement, we're working to advance conversations that drive awareness and action to make healthcare accessible and equitable for all. We help organizations pursue important initiatives within their communities, cultivate their social license to operate and communicate their corporate-responsibility programs. It starts with purpose.

Brandon Skop is a Vice President, Health at Padilla. ○



Brandon Skop

PR firm growth sunk to record lows in 2020

It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic battered the marketing and communications world. As a result, revenue growth in the PR sector fell to a record low last year, according to an annual industry survey conducted by PR merger and acquisition consultancy Gould+Partners.

The Gould+Partners survey, which is focused on net revenue growth—calculated as fees plus mark-ups—found that PR industry growth stalled at 3.1 percent in 2020, down 2.2 percent from the 5.3 percent the industry produced in 2019.

According to Gould+Partners, it's the lowest growth year since Gould+Partners began tracking PR industry growth rates in 2013.

Among the PR agencies surveyed in the study, only the largest shops—or agencies

boasting more than \$25 million in net revenues—showed positive growth. Among the remaining firms—agencies with net revenues between \$10-\$25 million, agencies bringing in between \$3-\$10 million and those with under \$3 million in net revenues—all showed decreased growth.

"I was not surprised at all to see the growth at just 3.1 percent," Gould+Partners managing partner Rick Gould told *O'Dwyer's*. "I thought it would possibly be 'negative' industry growth, based on the other four surveys we took during the 2020 pandemic year."

Gould+Partners' "2021 Net Revenue Growth Report" was based on responses from 211 PR agencies located in ten regions across North America. ○

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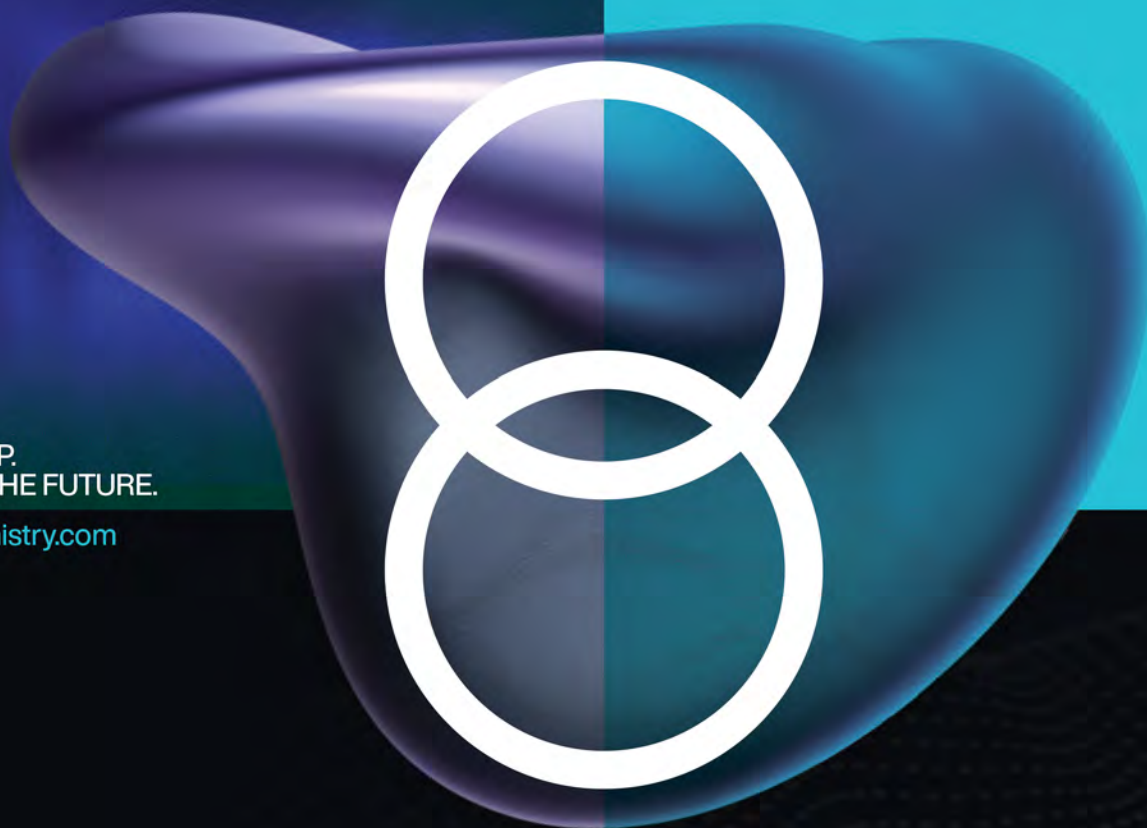


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Healthcare communication is critical to public health

Accurate public health information can literally be the difference between life and death.

By Thomas Graham

If ever healthcare needed intensive care, it's now.

Trust in authoritative public health voices is on the decline and under attack. Miscommunication, misinformation and, in some cases, flat-out misdirection has an anxious public seeking answers to complex and deeply personal questions.

Meanwhile, elected leaders find themselves backtracking on public health guidance so frequently the recommendations more resemble a patchwork of suggestions, further fueling a partisan media hum raising further doubt.

Our industry, comprised of those who help craft, communicate and shape public communications around health issues, should take note and consider its implications.

Now is not the time to lose heart. Instead, we must embolden to be more proactive with our clients, with policymakers and providers to guide their strategy and influence engagements.

Throughout history, we have seen far too many entrepreneurs—some starry-eyed innocents, but many calloused fraudsters—peddle useless, untested potions and cures to a gullible American public. Unfortunately, it wasn't until the passage of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the eventual creation of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that the national government first intervened in a meaningful way to interrupt the nonstop American carnival of false cures and hoax remedies.

Many of today's most cautious purveyors of foods and medicines had darker origins in the time before the FDA. Dr. John Kellogg, founder of the vast food empire that still carries his surname, proclaimed without evidence that his flaked cereals were a "health cure" for some "ailments" and also shamelessly hustled any number of other useless palliatives to the American public through newspaper ads and lectures.

Coca-Cola was once quite proud in its early days of the cocaine it included in its understandably quite popular "tonics."

Today, equally zealous health hucksters have used the addictive power of social media to push foolish, often dangerous "alternatives" to life-saving vaccines, leveraging America's political divide to get additional bounce and cover. This tragic trend is being further catalyzed by the fading ranks

of professional journalists and independent publishers that can no longer afford to compete to properly investigate and expose false claims of disease cure and prevention.

In our own day of panic and pandemic, The Department of Justice has become more aggressive in chasing down fraudsters who are exploiting vaccine scares with fraud schemes. Investigations of fraudulent claims of effectiveness of Ivermectin for COVID protection, for example, are also finally underway.

However, promoters of unproven health formulations still easily navigate through FDA loopholes to create a multi-billion-dollar industry in unregulated potions and supplements that are presented not as "cures" for anything, but slyly advertised as "foodstuffs" and "nutraceuticals," natural substances believed to have imagined but unproven health benefits. The FDA can't even examine the manufacturing facilities of these products unless evidence is independently brought to them of harm caused.

I'm not advocating that additional regulatory power be granted to the FDA. Instead, I believe we should invest in supporting independent truth-telling communications channels that can help us survive in this vast "alternative care" universe. We should also welcome the scrutiny that challenges our own work as a critical role in the marketplace of ideas.

The oldest of our independent truth-telling institutions are, of course, libraries. Wikipedia, to the surprise of many, has emerged as a powerful and mostly unbiased communal source of reliable factual information, although it too has its challenges along the political spectrum.

STAT, the independent health-oriented digital-only news service launched in 2015, has also made great strides—and seems to have retained solvency—in investigating medical developments and independently monitoring healthcare marketers for fraud and deception. In my estimation, our industry could use more committed outlets like STAT. The independent ProPublica journalism co-op has also won public notice for its pursuit of healthcare fraud and agency malfeasance.

Other institutions, such as the Consumer Reports organization, based in Yonkers, New York, organized as a 501(c)(3) charity with 50 testing labs, are proactive and

may have a role to create a nonpartisan "Medical Consumer Reports" that would operate like the existing Consumer Reports organization with funded laboratories but focus exclusively on claims of the thousands of unregulated substances claimed as "healthy" yet lacking any responsible form of investigation and documentation.

Having financially interested tech giants like Facebook, Google and Twitter serve as the arbiter of truth-in-science is a dangerous, freedoms-encroaching path that I am not convinced serves our national interests well, nor do I believe it serves our health interests.

Effective health care communication is critical to public health, as are effective communication's professionals. In these times of misinformation, our responsibility is to the public's health and well-being—bringing clarity, supporting accuracy and instilling earned public confidence.

Let's see if we can encourage and create more partners and advocates in the effort to provide the disclosure, communications and protections to keep Americans safe.

Thomas Graham is Founder and President of Crosswind Media and Public Relations, based in Austin, Texas. ○



Thomas Graham

News brief

Employees say employer aligns their values

About two-thirds (64 percent) of employees think that the organization they work for reflects their values, according to a new survey from The Harris Poll and employee activation agency Integral.

The study of 2,000 employed people found that employees who had a clear sense of their organization's values were more likely to have a positive view of that organization, a view that translates to an increased likelihood they will take beneficial action on behalf of their employers.

Benefits of an alignment between employee values and those of the companies they work for include an increased sense of loyalty and a greater likelihood that those employees will become online advocates for their organization. Employees who feel that their organization performs poorly in areas that are important to them are more likely to change jobs.

However, there is less agreement on the value of sharing political views in the workplace. Less than half (48 percent) said that "people should have the ability to express their political views in the workplace," with slightly more (51 percent) saying that they are comfortable sharing their own political views at work.

Employees from families with children placed a greater emphasis on their organization's values than did those from those without kids.

Effective healthcare PR means more than awareness

Federal, state and local governments should move beyond merely raising awareness of important healthcare information and should instead embrace emotional messaging that motivates audiences to change their attitudes and behaviors.

By Guy Antonioli

Communications around the necessity for COVID-19 vaccinations haven't only been inconsistent and unclear, but more importantly, the content behind these messages has failed to explain the acuteness of the threat and has missed critical audiences.

As a result, federal, state and local governments have proceeded with mandates or guidelines that are similarly inconsistent, creating confusion resulting in an increase in the spread of the virus; and unfortunately politicizing the worst pandemic our country and the world have seen in more than 100 years, affecting all ethnic and socioeconomic segments of the population. It's not enough for the messaging to create awareness for the topic, if it doesn't strike a chord that makes the consumer change their behavior.

Successful communication must convey rational information while at the same time have an emotional effect on the audience that will motivate them to react and change their attitude and behavior. In advertising, it's known as creating a credible reason with an emotional appeal that culminates in a *Call-To-Action* for the consumer.

Unfortunately, public healthcare messaging that addresses topics which would benefit from a change in consumer behavior has often been done in a tone that's too

mild, resulting in little impact. Two examples are Anti-Smoking and Weight Loss that affect multicultural populations alike.

There were many ineffective Anti-Smoking campaigns, but it wasn't until the famous "Body Bags" campaign showing the hundreds of deaths to smokers, that people began to take notice and government regulations were put in place that prohibited smoking in public places. Since then, anti-smoking campaigns have been very graphic, showing photographs of people when they were young and beautiful to video images of them now on ventilators, using oxygen tanks and even voice assistance devices, or missing part of their face lost to cancer, and even stating that the person in the advertisement died.

In other words, scaring people away from smoking!

Today, after several years of strong, impactful consistent messaging, we are finally witnessing a drop in the number of people who smoke, and smoking is viewed by a majority as a nasty habit.

On the other hand, the United States is the country with the most overweight population, despite multiple campaigns addressing its consequences—diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, strokes, etc.—and companies selling products and systems to help people lose weight.

Unfortunately, many Americans continue to indulge in behavior and eating habits that only worsen the problem. In my view, the reason is the messaging, while backed by rational statistics, hasn't been emotional enough to call people to action and make them change their eating habits, activities or to exercise more.

Until the CDC and governments at all levels—Federal, state and local—are communicating the same message about the need and reasons to get vaccinated against COVID by clearly explaining the benefits of doing so and the consequences of not getting vaccinated, the confusion, distrust and, unfortunately, political polarization will continue.

Perhaps the communications strategy needs to change and be more demonstrably graphic showing the damage COVID causes, the reliance upon ventilators and clearly stating the number of deaths—soon to reach 700,000—due to COVID. I might even go one step further and even include a statement that one's liberty exists as long as it doesn't hurt others.

Guy Antonioli is President and Founder of GCA Consulting / Focus Latino. ○



Guy Antonioli

Fewer Americans get their news from social media

The percentage of Americans who get their news from social media networks has gone down since last year, according to a new Pew Research Center report.

By Jon Gingerich

Social media platforms have taken a lot of criticism in recent years for being hotbeds for disinformation and fake news. Perhaps as a result, a recent study released by the Pew Research Center finds that the number of Americans who get their news from social media has now declined.

Pew's study analyzed Americans' use habits of the 10 most popular social media sites. It found that, overall, less than half of Americans now get their news from social media sites at least sometimes (48 percent), a five-percent decline from a year ago (53 percent). 19 percent of Americans said they rarely get their news from social media sites, compared to 18 percent in 2020. 24 said they never get their news from social

media platforms, compared to 21 percent last year.

Facebook remains the giant of social media platforms, being used by two-thirds of all U.S. adults (66 percent). In terms of sheer numbers, Facebook also remains the social site where Americans regularly get their news the most, yet the share of Americans who now regularly use the site for news has declined as well, from more than a third last year (36 percent) in 2020 to less than a third (31 percent) in 2021.

Video app TikTok, on the other hand, has seen a surge in the percentage of users who regularly turn to the site for news, rising from 22 percent last year to 29 percent in 2021.

The Pew report found that some social media sites are uniquely more "newsy" than others. For example, Twitter's total audience remains relatively small, used by only about 23 percent of the U.S. adult population. However, among those who do use the site, more than half (55 percent) regularly use it as a news source. YouTube, on the other hand, while more popular (used by 72 percent of all U.S. adults), reveals a smaller portion of its users regularly turn to it for news (30 percent).

The Pew report surveyed 11,178 respondents drawn from the center's American Trends Panel, a nationally representative list of randomly selected U.S. adults. The survey was conducted between July and August. ○

From stigma to solution

Activating the workplace community to help mitigate America's current mental health crisis.

By Kelly Dencker

If there was ever an urgent health issue that had the punch to share headlines and mindshare with the likes of COVID-19, it's the current waning state of mental health in America. Over the past year, we saw a significant surge in self-reported depression and anxiety—especially among younger people—as we grappled with issues like isolation and job security, in addition to COVID-related exposure fears and loss of life within our communities.

Poor mental health doesn't just affect a person's quality of life; it can also have a profound impact on the workplace. According to the National Alliance on Mental Health, \$193 billion in earnings is lost each year because of mental illness. Unaddressed, mental health issues and stress can affect workplace performance and productivity, interpersonal engagement and collaboration, and an overall ability to function physically.

However, there was a silver lining from the past year that we can collectively nurture if we are to help turn this crisis into a better state of control: people were willing to talk openly about their mental health struggles, which experts say is an important step towards care.

World-class champions Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka sparked global conversations on mental health in recent months when they courageously spoke out about their personal struggles with anxiety. In fact, according to Axios, Simone's comments drove a greater discussion on mental health than either Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, or Naomi Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open. Her message was simple: "It's ok to not be ok."

Promoting mental health wellness in the workplace

Unlike other chronic illnesses like heart disease or diabetes, there's no "simple lab test" for mental illness, which makes education and conversation critical catalysts for dialogue, diagnosis and treatment. As October is National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month, there's no better time to explore and adopt year-round workplace strategies that can help combat stigma, promote awareness and provide resources for help.

Some simple, cost-effective considerations include:

Show that mental wellness matters. Many companies offer workplace well-

ness programs, but few go deep on mental health alone. A number of organizations provide free tools and resources for use in the workplace. Of note, the American Psychiatric Association created the Center for Workplace Mental Health that aims to eliminate stigma, reduce barriers to care and raise broader mental health awareness through turn-key programs, toolkits, case studies, publications and more.

Suppress stigma through sensitivity. Stigma in mental health can be exacerbated by insensitive comments in the workplace. While passing comments like, "She can be so bipolar sometimes" or "He must be mental if he thinks that idea will work" may not be malicious, these words can be offensive to people managing a mental illness, or caring for someone who does. Companies should consider adding sensitivity training on the way we talk about mental health into all employee training programs.

Maintain year-round mindshare. There are a number of annual observances that businesses can support each year, including World Bipolar Day (March 30th), Mental Health Awareness Month (May), World Schizophrenia Day (May 24th) and World Mental Health Day (October 10), to name a few. These and other observances can provide timely opportunities to bring in outside speakers, host an office-wide mental health fair, provide mental health days off or offer meditation events.

Amplify access to the experts. Many times, people with mental health issues are reluctant to seek help or don't know where

to turn. In addition to highlighting a company's own Employee Assistance Program, there are many excellent organizations that can provide direction, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness or Mental Health America. In crisis situations, employees can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 741741).

Consider content for caregivers. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, as many as 8.4 million Americans are providing care to an adult with an emotional or mental health issue. The pressures of caring for and seeing a friend or loved one work through a serious mental illness can greatly affect a person's own mental health. Therefore, it's important to consider content and resources for caregivers (e.g., support groups and other resources) when developing programs and materials for your employees.

We're living in extraordinary and uncertain times. While we may feel powerless in preventing the surging needs for mental health care in America, we have a unique opportunity to make a difference in someone's life by activating the credibility, influence and reach of our collective workplace communities to drive education.

It's easy to do, often free of cost and can deliver priceless value to someone in need.

Kelly Dencker is Executive Vice President and Director of Health and Academics at Coyne PR. ○



Kelly Dencker

Consumers prefer great products over purpose

Marketers have been inculcated to the idea that brands build value through purpose-driven stories that reflect their commitment to social causes. But according to a PAN Communications study, consumers' buying decisions are still mostly influenced by the product or service a company provides.

PAN's study, which sought to analyze the challenges and trends affecting marketers' content marketing strategies, suggests that purpose, for all its perceived importance in marketing today, has its limits. While most customers agree that a company's mission and values influence their purchasing decisions, it doesn't replace exceptional prod-

ucts and services. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of consumers polled said that, when making a buying decision, they prefer a company with a great product/service over a company that stands for something.

The PAN study also suggests that marketers may have a content problem. It appears that marketers produce a lot of branded content: more than a third (38 percent) said they produce between six and 10 pieces of content per month, and nearly a third (29 percent) said they produce between 16 and 20 pieces of content per month. However, consumers ingest far less than what marketers create, only between one and five pieces of brand content per month. ○



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Healthcare leaders can be catalysts for change

How healthcare leaders can adopt a “pandemic mindset” that paves the way for the next wave of life-saving innovations.

By Emma Lynn

Equitable access to healthcare. Climate change. The need for innovation. The cost of innovation. Urgent. Complex. Debated.

All of the above.

As health communicators, we can all admit that these phrases were components of any recent statement we’ve drafted. And it’s logical, as the healthcare industry faces new challenges and compounding issues brought on by the global pandemic and global warming.

Yet we can also admit that while these statements of support and commitment are important, it’s time to move beyond just saying it. To have a real, life-saving impact, across stretched health systems, health inequities and the climate emergency, we need to take decisive and collective action now.

For the skeptics who think “easier said than done,” we know it can be done because it has already been. The pandemic was a catalyst for many firsts—vaccines, medical breakthroughs, deliveries of care, private and public collaborations—with no single entity able to claim this success. In all of these examples, there were multiple stakeholders pulling in the same direction to make things happen.

As expectations increase for global institutions to prepare for and prevent future health crises, we must use the lessons of the “pandemic mindset” to pave the way for the next innovations. This needs to play out in a number of ways:

Increased collaboration and trust

During the pandemic, we witnessed how institutions came together in new ways with astonishing results. Governments, health systems and public health bodies were working with businesses on a daily basis to solve a shared, existential threat. Trust and transparency were essential to those partnerships, and because of it, they were able to protect and save lives.

We need to maintain the momentum we saw during the worst of times. We must take a moon-shot approach to tackling misinformation and lack of trust, key issues that stand in the way of human and planetary health. The health industry can lead by continuing these partnerships, with transparency on both accomplishments and hurdles, to keep building on the public trust needed for success. Mobilizing action with those who share your interests is the key to progress.

One thing is certain: No organization can solve these problems alone. We need to gal-

vanize the often-siloed efforts of healthcare organizations to be more disruptive and to deliver true impact.

Tipping the balance to prevention

Governments and health systems across the world are in constant search for ways to “fix” the growing list of issues related to healthcare costs versus population and environmental demands. We continue to plug the holes, making endless time-bound target commitments on specific health issues, rather than taking a more holistic view of the lifelong health journey.

Healthcare has long been a bastion of innovation and challenging the status quo, and this mindset must be applied broadly to the protection of health. There are incredible emerging data capabilities, digital tools and technological advances that put together could transform population health, improve the reach and accessibility of health information, support healthier lifestyles, improve patient outcomes, reduce burden and costs to health systems and overall help people live healthier more productive lives.

Yet communities must trust these tools in order to adopt them, and in order for them to succeed. We must make sure people are hearing from those they relate to, and that we’re tapping into a diversity of voices and experiences.

Embracing new responsibilities

Edelman’s 2021 Trust Barometer highlighted Business as the most trusted institution for the first time ever. Business leaders have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to be catalysts for change. This isn’t just an

opportunity but an expectation; globally, 86 percent said they expect CEOs to speak out societal matters.

Healthcare has an advantage here. Nobody has more experience of delivering life-changing innovation and enacting transformation than the people who have spent years and millions or billions of dollars researching and developing solutions to our problems. Healthcare leaders must take this mindset beyond the products and solutions their companies create and apply it to the bigger issues of societal and community health needs.



Emma Lynn

This is a critical and an historic moment for bold systemic action, fueled by an urgency to create a healthy world for the next generation. It’s time to build trust across all institutions. Governments, health systems, businesses all need to be courageous enough to re-create a landscape that more fundamentally and strategically solves the many social and economic challenges of our time. Focused through the lens of a global pandemic that has had unimaginable impact on our people, our freedoms and our economies.

During the height of the pandemic, we didn’t have time to question, debate or work in silos. In the face of mounting health threats, we still don’t have time to spare. We must move forward together, with trust in each other to do what’s right and what’s needed.

Emma Lynn is Deputy of Edelman Global Health. ○

Media relations unfazed by pandemic

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic’s economic impact on newsrooms, PR and communications professionals generally don’t believe that earning media coverage has gotten any more difficult in the last year, according to a recent media relations report by Agility PR Solutions.

Agility’s survey found that fewer than a third (30 percent) of PR and communications professionals reported experiencing more difficulty earning press coverage since last year. A majority of respondents (38 percent) said their media outreach success was about the same as it was in 2020, and more than a third (35 percent) said that earning coverage has actually become easier in 2021.

The survey also found that a majority of PR and communications pros (69 percent) regularly send their pitches to lists containing up to 100 media contacts. A quarter of all respondents said they stick to lists of 25 contacts or fewer. About the same number said they pitch between 101 and 250 journalists at a time.

When it comes to the extra content communicators add to their pitches, 45 percent said they think video footage increases the chances their story will land coverage. 44 percent said exclusive interviews help their story get picked up the most. 38 percent cited links to web pages or documents, 35 percent cited high-quality images, and 2 percent cited research data. ○



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O'Dwyer's guide to HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS

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Bospar: Working From Home Since 2015.



While the opioid epidemic continues to dominate headlines, the conversation neglects to address the surgical gateway to addiction and dependence. Pacira and Coyne PR set out to find real people with real stories who humanize this issue. The result was a moving documentary, GATEWAY, which looks at how overprescribing of opioids can lead to downstream consequences.

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There is nothing more precious in life than health. And there is perhaps nothing more personally rewarding than helping someone in need. Parents, caregivers, volunteers, medical professionals, researchers, advocates—they all share a common purpose: to help people. We embrace that purpose and believe we can make a difference by connecting people in need to a treatment, service, or solution that in some way helps improve their life.

In partnership with our clients, we embrace the opportunity to change lives by guiding health journeys through information, insights and inspiration. Data tells you what's happening, stories tell you why it matters. Insights inform new conversations, frame new perspectives, and inspire people to think differently. Storytelling brings them to life through compelling narratives and inspirational tales of triumph that turn data and content into meaningful connections. That's why we get up in the morning.

Because when it comes to health, everything else comes second.

CROSBY

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Raymond Crosby, President
Denise Aube, Executive Vice President, Healthcare Practice Leader
Joel Machak, Exec. Creative Director

For more than 40 years, Crosby has helped healthcare clients Inspire Actions That Matter™—actions that positively impact people's lives and contribute to the greater good—while building their brands and business.

Crosby's Healthcare Practice serves hospitals and health systems, health plans, physician groups, technology and service providers, seniors housing, health advocacy groups and federal government agencies.

Services include marketing research and planning, brand development, experience design, public relations, social media, partner and community mobilization, digital marketing and web development, multicultural outreach, PSAs, and behavior-change campaigns.

Clients include the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Kaiser Permanente, OrganDonor.gov, Refuah Health, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, United Urology, and Veterans Health Administration.

Crosby ranks among the top health communications agencies in the country and is a member of the PR Council, American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As), and the Diversity Action Alliance. The firm has offices in Maryland's capital of Annapolis and in Washington, D.C. To see case studies and capabilities, visit www.crosbymarketing.com.

The November issue of O'Dwyer's will profile technology PR firms. If you would like to be profiled, contact Associate Editor Steve Barnes at 646/843-2089 or steve@odwyerpr.com

CROSSWIND

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Since 2008, Crosswind Media & Public Relations has helped healthcare leaders across the country stay at the forefront of conversations that matter. As a full-service communications and public relations agency, our experts bring decades of experience to brand enrichment, effective messaging and compelling public dialogue. We use our innovative approach in public relations, traditional and digital media, research, brand enrichment and marketing to develop fully integrated and multi-channel campaigns that make a difference. We believe in fashioning purposeful and impactful conversations that build pathways to success for more people, more often.

EDELMAN

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Edelman is a global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations. Our 6,000 people in more than 60 offices deliver communications strategies that give our clients the confidence to lead, act with certainty and earn the lasting trust of their stakeholders. We develop powerful ideas and tell magnetic stories that move at the speed of news, make an immediate impact, transform culture and spark movements.

Once considered the business of patients, physicians, pharmaceutical companies and hospitals, health is now everyone's business. This is a responsibility and an opportunity that applies to individuals, organizations and societies alike. Health is beyond purely physical. It's everything from self-care to prevention, diagnosis to treatment, caregiving to cure. It must be inclusive and representative.

At Edelman Health, we believe trust makes the difference at every touchpoint—it brings science to life, drives health technology adoption, fuels the health of real people

and is essential to fix the broken parts of our healthcare ecosystem. Our goal is to help our clients confidently rise to the challenges of our changing world. We counsel our clients to embrace the new demands of a wider set of stakeholders—and to act boldly to earn and keep their trust. For more information, visit www.edelman.com.

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Global Health Chair

Finn Partners champions health innovation, helping clients navigate payer, provider, patient advocacy, health policy and product innovation ecosystems. Since our founding, a decade ago, FINN has grown steadily. With more than \$120 million in fees, and some 1,000 collaborative team members working from 23 offices across three continents, we're now one of the world's largest agencies.

Named "Healthcare Agency of the Year" by PRovoke and health-sector trade group HITMC, FINN demonstrates extraordinary service and value through product communications, thought-leadership, investor relations, issues management, key opinion leader engagement, clinical-trial recruitment and traditional and digital media support. Our more than 170 health clients include innovators

and game-changers from across the health industry, including several top-20 pharmaceutical companies, some of the nation's largest hospitals and payer systems, and many of the world's boldest companies in artificial intelligence, health/technology, and medical devices. From medical innovations to breakthrough health/tech to services that improve care, our clients are united in their focus on the most important part of the health system: the patient.

Across the health ecosystem, FINN is best known for its work in changing the lives of people with pressing health challenges. Whether we are introducing new medicines and technologies that improve and extend life, uniting patient communities by way of digital platforms, or raising awareness of illnesses and how they can be better managed, FINN engages with our client partners on the products and ideas that have the power to transform people's lives.

FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN

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

Founded in 1997, French/West/Vaughan (FWV) is the Southeast's leading public relations, public affairs, advertising and digital media agency, a distinction it has held since 2001.

FWV's category acumen includes private and clinical practices, research labs, health IT companies, laboratory and medical device manufacturers, drug development firms, weight loss centers, medical schools and large pharmaceutical manufacturers. The agency specializes in helping its healthcare clients increase brand awareness among key decision makers for their product lines and services through targeted media outreach, advocacy marketing campaigns, public affairs, special events, trade show support, emerging media applications and crisis communications.

FWV's healthcare and medical marketing experience includes work done on behalf of: Istari Oncology, Locus Biosciences, Quest Diagnostics, Avmacol, the V Foundation for Cancer Research, O2 Fitness, Pfizer, GlaxoSmith-

Kline, Isagenix, New Hope Fertility Center, bioMérieux, Structure House, Wellspring, University of North Carolina Institute for Pharmacogenomics and Individualized Therapy, Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine, A4 Health Systems, Cardinal Health, CeNeRx, Foresight, MDeverywhere, Medcryption, Proctor & Gamble (Prilosec), Southtech, Sterling Healthcare and WakeMed.

In addition to its diverse range of healthcare and medical marketing clients, FWV's passionate team of expert storytellers works with many of the world's leading companies and brands, including Wrangler, ABB, Proximo, Melitta, Volvo Trucks North America and the N.C. Department of Transportation, just to name a few.

Among FWV's operating divisions are: FWV Fetching, a pet and veterinary PR and marketing agency; AMP3 PR, a fashion, beauty, luxury and lifestyle PR firm based in New York City; CGPR, an active lifestyle, outdoor, ski, fashion, technology and travel PR and consumer brand marketing agency based in Greater Boston; and Prix Productions, the company's long-form content feature and documentary film division, with offices in Raleigh and L.A. FWV employs more than 130 public relations, public affairs, social media, advertising and digital marketing experts between its Raleigh, N.C., headquarters and other offices around the country.

FTI CONSULTING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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Mark McCall, Global Segment Leader

C-suites, boards of directors, and business leaders from around the world come to FTI Strategic Communications with their most complex, business-critical issues that require diverse skill sets and integrated disciplines. As part of a global business advisory firm, we help these organizations manage change, mitigate risk and enhance their market position by combining decades of deep subject matter expertise with functional and disciplinary experience.

Our financial communications

— Continued on page 58



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Come collaborate with our
hive of healthcare experts
to build ideas that stick.

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Healthcare Public Relations
Creativity, Service, Results

FTI CONSULTING

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professionals serve as trusted advisors to management teams on a range of capital markets events as well as other stakeholder issues throughout the corporate life-cycle. We help clients navigate their most pressing challenges and opportunities around M&A, IPOs, restructuring, capital raising, corporate governance, ESG strategy, proxy fights, and shareholder activism. Our integrated capabilities in financial communications, corporate reputation and public affairs help clients protect and drive business value.

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Caryn Caratelli, Managing Director, Client Service
Stephanie Moore, Managing Director, Client Service
Kate Threewitts, Managing Director, Human Resources

G&S Business Communications helps innovative companies change the world. Our Healthcare practice is powered by critical thinkers who have mastered the media landscape and are able to tell powerful stories that address specific issues in the industry. Our team meets each client at the intersection of business and communications. We have a distinct focus on healthcare systems, non-profit, medical technology and healthcare organizational communications.

Our strategies help B2B clients meet their business goals, and our work produces meaningful results

that move markets. Our commitment to measurement ensures that we are constantly learning and improving to make programs better.

Our mission is to inspire people to take action, and our vision is to fuel transformation, resulting in business growth for our clients.

GCI HEALTH

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Kristin Cahill, CEO

GCI Health is a global integrated communications agency inspired by People. We ground our approach to communications in looking at all stakeholders—patients, caregivers, healthcare providers, policymakers, reporters and payers—as people with distinct perspectives that shape how they think and act. As a result, we craft compelling communications strategies and creative campaigns that resonate with people and deliver tangible results to our clients. Our culture is catalyzed by the belief that people should be as successful in their personal lives as they are in their professional ones. Follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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Phil Greenough, Founder & CEO
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Scott Bauman, EVP & General Manager

Greenough is a brand strategy agency that builds integrated PR and marketing storytelling platforms for healthcare and life sciences leaders, from hospitals and health systems to health information technology (HIT), medical device, diagnostic and therapeutic companies. Through constant and strategic interaction with health leaders, physicians, technology experts, regulators, policy makers and, of course, patients, our team connects clients' brand strategies and stories to new opportunities and enduring market leadership.

Whether we're engaged with a hospital launching a new specialty, a HIT provider advancing telemedicine, or a diagnostic company

thrust into the raging COVID-19 pandemic, we are expert at identifying what moves audiences and then reaching them with integrated PR and marketing services. We also understand that context matters, and our team closely tracks the evolving technology, science, policy and societal issues that shape how healthcare and life sciences brands are perceived, enabling us to develop cutting-edge strategies to effectively influence audiences across earned, owned and paid media channels and do so with measurable business impact.

HAGER SHARP

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Jennifer Wayman, MHS, President & CEO

At Hager Sharp, we have dedicated nearly 50 years to creating strategic communications and social marketing initiatives for organizations that are committed to fighting for equity in education, improving the health of people and communities, and empowering vulnerable populations. We are a full-service, integrated marketing and communications firm with deep expertise in public health, disease prevention, health promotion, and behavior change strategies. As an employee-owned small business, we have provided communications leadership across a wide range of health issues, including COVID-19, chronic and infectious diseases, cancer, vaccine promotion, genetic diseases, environmental health, women's health, food safety and nutrition, and substance abuse prevention. Hager Sharp's strategists, researchers, creative specialists, media experts, and public health professionals bring award-winning, research-driven, behavior-changing health communications services and social marketing campaigns to life. Our focus is, and always will be, working with mission-driven institutions, businesses, foundations, and nonprofits to create and execute ideas that make a difference.

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As a full service strategic public relations and integrated communications agency, The Hoyt Organization (THO) creates strategically designed programs to meet the goals of its clients. The firm is known for its deep bench of knowledge in real estate, architecture, construction, technology, healthcare and the consumer lifestyle markets. In addition, as the Los Angeles area partner of the Public Relations Global Network, (PRGN) the firm has global partners in more than 50 cities around the world.

Specialized services include brand awareness programs, media relations, influencer outreach, social media, digital media, content generation programs, media training and crisis communications.

With more than 25+ years in the industry, the agency received more than 110 awards and was named as one of the top agencies in the US by *Forbes* in 2020.

Representative Healthcare Clients have included: Aesthetica Medical Spa, Charles Drew University, Medical Asset Management, Torrance Memorial Medical Center, Dr. Kenneth Kim (COVID testing), Health Ultimate Global, Heartfulness Institute, New Vista Behavioral Health, Niznik Behavioral Health, PatientPop, Pinnacle Treatment Centers, South Bay Independent Physicians, Inc., Mission Hospital, Veterans Administration San Jose, Mobile, Lubbock, Shanghai Pudong Hospital and Lackland Reid Medical Clinic.

HUNTER

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Grace Leong, CEO
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Contact: smormar@hunterpr.com
Samara Farber Mormar, Executive Vice President, Business Development

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

Today more than ever, consumers' mindsets about overall wellness have shifted and they are focused on finding ways to prioritize their health. Our HUNTER: Health and Wellness team is on a mission to ensure that consumers find brands and products that help them live healthier, happier lives. By collaborating with experts, media properties, influential voices, and target-right partners, we ensure that brand messages get to the right audience in the places consumers are looking for wellness information. HUNTER employs a powerful blend of marketing solutions including strategic planning, social and digital media, talent and influencer engagement, media relations, experiential, multicultural, and content creation and distribution for all platforms and channels.

In partnership with some of the world's most respected consumer health companies and retailers including Johnson & Johnson, Church & Dwight, Reckitt and The Vitamin Shoppe, HUNTER's work has covered the medicine cabinet from oral care, allergy, sanitary protection, pain and pregnancy, to digestive health, vitamins, supplements, weight-loss and heart health.

ICR WESTWICKE

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ICR Westwicke, the healthcare division of ICR, has established itself as one of the leading providers of integrated Public Relations, Investor Relations and related services for healthcare companies. ICR Westwicke's healthcare practice works with more than 150 clients across life sciences, medical device/diagnostics, services and healthcare IT. With complementary services in digital branding, capital markets advisory, IPO advisory, crisis communication and corporate governance advisory, ICR Westwicke offers a full suite of strategic communications and advisory services for startups and mature public companies alike. Whether the emphasis is on corporate, scientific and marketing communications, patient education and advocacy, preparing for an IPO or raising additional capital, we understand that every client is different, and so too, is their story. With an innate understanding of the many complex dynamics and influencers within the healthcare ecosystem and a clear lens on the

financial impact of all communications, ICR Westwicke takes a hands-on approach to understand both the science and the sentiment behind your business, ensuring that your message goes beyond simple clarity to resonate and make a lasting impression with the audiences that matter most.

IMRE HEALTH

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Dave Imre, Partner & CEO
Mark Eber, Partner & President
Crystallyn Stuart, Partner & President, Innovators
Jeff Smokler, Partner & President, Imre Health

At imre Health, we believe that taking a moment to listen can change everything. That means practicing empathy and compassion in our interactions with patients, physicians—and our clients—in ways that keep people at the center of our programs while challenging the conventions of traditional life sciences marketing.

By emphasizing these values alongside services that span creative, brand strategy & insights, medical & scientific affairs, analytics and activation strategy (social media, digital marketing

and earned communications), our 210+ employees are able to deliver imaginative orchestrated ideas for the pharmaceutical and biotech brands of tomorrow.

imre Health is a fiercely independent, LGBTQ-founded agency working with many of the world's leading life science brands across Alexion Pharmaceuticals, AstraZeneca, BioCryst, Genentech, GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, and ViiV Healthcare, among others. To learn more, please visit: www.imre.com/health.

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Chowning Aguilera, Healthcare Practice Lead

Glen Jackson, Co-founder
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Jackson Spalding's team of thinkers, creators and achievers creates breakthrough results for brands seeking measurable audience attention, affinity and action. Founded in 1995 on the premise that there was a better way to serve our clients, people and communities, our vision is to be the most trusted and respected agency in our

industry.

We are uniquely positioned to propel healthcare clients in driving meaningful connections with audiences, from patients to members of the C-suite, based on our team's in-depth dedicated healthcare expertise that is bolstered by boundary-pushing consumer marketing and communications strategies learned from our experience in other industries. Our roster of healthcare brands spans the full healthcare continuum from provider and health systems to public health, research and HIT.

We are proudly independently owned and work from coast-to-coast with leading brands, exceptional organizations and people that inspire us every day. To learn more about how we achieve excellence for our clients, visit www.jacksonspalding.com.

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Carrie Jones, Principal

JPA Health works behind the scenes for many of the most innovative and rapidly growing health companies in the world. Our impressive portfolio is made up of life science, medtech and public health companies. Through our integrated model, we provide seamless public relations, marketing and advocacy services. JPA's exclusive focus on health means that clients can count on a team with experience and perspective to deliver results. Our clients will benefit from our collaborative expertise as we synchronize insights, ideas and incredible execution for impressive results. Our approach incorporates a proprietary tool that enables us to understand how conversations take place within the health sector. JPA's Gretel® brings together news media, organizations, and individual influencers to show precisely how they intersect, revealing insights for reaching and engaging audiences. Importantly, at JPA, we share our clients' commitment to improving and protecting lives. This ideology inspires our work. We have global reach with offices in Washington, Boston, New York City and London.



To generate coverage for the new claim that LISTERINE can help prevent oral diseases for people living with diabetes, HUNTER enlisted a credentialed physician, Dr. Lauren Powell, to serve as a brand advocate. Dr. Powell authored a series of sponsored articles on Diabetes Self-Management and Next Avenue, explaining LISTERINE's essentiality to target consumers where they are seeking relevant information.



M Booth Health partnered with Penn State University to create its award-winning "Mask Up or Pack Up" campaign that built awareness of COVID-19 guidelines and consequences, inspired compliance, and commitment to community responsibility, and enabled the 24-campus university to limit disease spread and students learning on campus.

LANDIS COMMUNICATIONS

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At LCI, "We believe in ideas that create change. We craft compelling stories. And, we communicate." Named America's #1 Healthcare PR Agency (Ragan's Ace Awards) and annually listed on *O'Dwyer's* list of top Bay Area agencies, San Francisco-based Landis Communications Inc. (LCI) is celebrating more than 30 years in business. Healthcare clients include: Centre for Neuro Skills, Altais (healthcare for physicians, patients and the clinical community), Sutter Health, Frontier Medicines (biopharma), On Lok Senior Health Services, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), PRC, Global Alzheimer's Platform Foundation, Brain Health Registry, Merck, Johnson & Johnson, Planned Parenthood, Crestwood Behavioral Health and more. LCI has won PRSA SF's "Agency of the Year" and "Campaign of the Year" awards. We've also won two IABC Gold Quill awards, a national PRSA Silver Anvil award, numerous Bulldog Awards and have

been named the #1 social media agency in the U.S. by TopPRAgencies.com. LGBT-owned and a certified member of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, LCI is a full-service public relations, digital marketing, social media and marketing communications agency. Our PR specialties include: healthcare, pharmaceuticals, biopharma, clinical trials, technology, biotech, consumer, environmental, consumer technology, retail, real estate, hospitality, design, B2C and B2B programs. LCI's Promised Results® return-on-investment program provides tangible metrics addressing clients' identified goals. Headed by President Sean Dowdall, LCI also is the San Francisco member of the Public Relations Global Network, with 50 affiliate agencies worldwide. For information: www.landispr.com.

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Founded in 2001, LaVoieHealthScience advances health and science innovations through strategic communications. We offer fully integrated public relations, investor relations, marketing and digital services and are ranked among the Top 30 independent healthcare communications agencies in the United States according to *O'Dwyer's* 2021 public relations firm rankings. We are certified in healthcare communications compliance and serve commercial and pre-commercial clients both domestically and globally. Through our alliance with Omnicom Public Relations Group, we bring our global clients a broader set of health and science teams offering over 2,000 health experts worldwide. We are committed to serving health and science clients offering domain experience in animal science, CAR-T, rare disease, cell and gene therapy, immuno-oncology, oncology, CNS, neurodegeneration, medtech, medical devices, ophthalmology, precision medicines, RNA, autoimmune diseases, CRISPR, regenerative medicine, and lysosomal diseases. We have been in business for 20 years, have won over 50 public relations

and investor relations awards, developed over 325 communications plans, and have doubled the size of the agency since 2017.

LOVELL COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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Rosemary Plorin, President and CEO
Dana Coleman, **Robin Embry** and **Susanne Powelson**, VPs

Lovell Communications protects health care brand reputations and supports providers and the companies that serve them with award-winning communication strategy and stakeholder engagement.

For more than 30 years, Lovell Communications has served as strategic counsel and trusted partner to health care providers and suppliers across the country.

Publicly traded companies, not-for-profit systems, early-stage and mature companies draw upon our vast communications expertise to support them through phases—or just moments—when it's crucial to persuade audiences or influence decision makers.

We help organizations optimize opportunities, manage challenges and navigate changes and crises of all size. Our in-depth, results-oriented communications strategies focus on business-to-business marketing, consumer engagement, internal communication programs and stakeholder persuasion campaigns.

We specialize in:

- Transaction Support
- Crisis Communications
- Thought Leadership
- Internal and External Communications
- Marketing Strategy

Our firm—and the talented individuals who make it remarkable—has been recognized with hundreds of national, regional and local awards over the past three decades.

M BOOTH HEALTH

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Nickolas Vajda, Director of Finance & Operations

M Booth Health offers decades of experience leading communications for important milestones in medical and pharmaceutical innovation and public health combined with the award-winning creative and digital talents of consumer PR powerhouse, M Booth. We are experts in sparking the conversations and connections that unlock better health for people around the world.

Companies and organizations turn to M Booth Health to advance care, access, and understanding; spark attention and conversation around new therapies; speed research and innovation; shape health policies; and reduce stigma to improve health outcomes.

What truly distinguishes the M Booth Health team is its track record navigating the complex commercial, policy, and advocacy environments. We established one client's global HIV treatment access program as the gold standard; boosted the profile and currency of the leading cancer association; turned the launch of a rapid flu test into an infectious disease stand-out; created an engaged patient community to support a new Parkinson's disease drug launch; and established HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis as worldwide priorities for action.

Services include research, strategic planning and analytics; creative campaign development; earned/paid media and social media strategy and engagement; content design for visual storytelling; science writing and data communications; and experiential activations.

MARKETING MAVEN

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Lindsey Carnett, CEO & President

With offices in Los Angeles and New York City, Marketing Maven's combination of PR, social media, influencer marketing and market research helps provide a competitive edge to their clients. Marketing Maven helps businesses grow their revenues by developing campaigns that engage a target audience, generate sales then utilize advanced metrics to measure ROI.

Named to the 2018 and 2017 *Inc.* 5000 List of Fastest Growing Companies in America and *Entrepreneur* magazine's 2016 Entrepreneur 360 List as one of the Most Entrepreneurial Companies in America, their services aid national marketing campaigns and product launches with reputation management, organic SEO tracking, competitive analysis reports and online product reviews to help increase revenue.

Marketing Maven is a federally recognized Native American Owned 8(a) and WOSB certified company. They are also a certified Small Business (SB) with the California Department of General Services (DGS) and a certified Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) with the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC).

Specialties include: Multicultural, beauty/fashion, professional services, travel/hospitality, home furnishings, financial PR/investor relations, healthcare, food & beverage, entertainment/sports, technology, environmental/public affairs clients and social media.

MCS HEALTHCARE PUBLIC RELATIONS

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For more than three decades, MCS has remained a constant fixture in an ever-changing media marketplace by adapting and innovating as rapidly as the science itself. As an independent specialty shop solely focused on healthcare, we think of ourselves as a swift boat among battleships: small but sturdy; nimble and reliable; and best-suited for operations that are difficult, demanding and unique.



Marketing Maven CEO & President Lindsey Carnett.

Together, we turn strategy and creativity to action, resulting in solutions that specifically, comprehensively and robustly address your current needs.

We are experts in all facets of communications, including digital; social media; and paid, owned and earned channels. As your partners, we will bring new integrated ideas and real solutions to the table, and feel empowered to raise our hand when we have an idea on how to improve your business.

We take measurement seriously. We evaluate impact and proactively answer the questions, "so what?" and "what now?"

We are a highly collaborative bunch that believes in the pollination of ideas across all brand communications. We welcome the opportunity to partner with your creative agencies, co-marketers and cross-functional colleagues to deliver results more efficiently and with a holistic vision of the brand's success.

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Shahed Ahmed, SVP, Partner
Michelle Schafer, SVP, Partner

Merritt Group is an award-winning, woman-owned strategic communications agency with a dedicated focus on healthcare with locations in McLean, Virginia, San Francisco, California and North Texas. Merritt Group specializes in public relations, content creation, marketing, social media, demand

and lead generation, analytics and measurement, and marketing infrastructure consulting.

Our philosophy starts with intrinsically understanding our healthcare clients' target audiences, which leads to the development of powerful messaging and creative PR programs that drives high impact awareness, engages audiences and accelerates sales around their innovations.

We help our healthcare clients achieve their goals and meet the needs of today's patients, providers, physicians, insurers and influencers across a complex healthcare continuum. Our team deeply understands the transformative world of healthcare. With a more consumer-driven healthcare marketplace and constant changes to the healthcare policy landscape, Merritt Group can be your sentinel to navigate how to market to your core audiences.

For more than 15 years, we have worked with leading and emerging healthcare brands including RapidAI, Medisafe, Infermedica, GoHealth Urgent Care, Samsung Health, InnoCaption, Avizia, MedGenome and more.

MERRYMAN COMMUNICATIONS

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Betsy Merryman, President and Managing Partner
Ashley Cadle, Account Director
Joni Ramirez, Account Director

Merryman Communications is a full-service healthcare agency providing integrated marketing, communications, public relations and digital marketing, and we offer a wide range of capabilities and special expertise to ensure we have all clients' needs covered. Our team is a passionate and diverse group of highly committed senior communications professionals possessing wide-ranging, real-world experience. Serving as an extension of our clients' teams, we've worked with companies ranging from exciting healthcare start-ups to large medical technology companies. Our virtual model helps your budgets go further. Since our founding in 2010, Merryman Communications has won nine awards

and managed communications surrounding 37 product launches, four mergers/acquisitions and two IPOs. We believe that the successes we deliver are due to collaborative and collective efforts of our clients and our team, and that's what makes us Successful Together.

PADILLA

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Fred Lake, Senior Vice President/
Health Lead

Pa/dilla is an independently operated, globally resourced public relations and communication company with offices across the United States. The agency helps clients transform by building, growing and protecting their brands and reputations worldwide 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.

Health clients include 3M, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, CommonSpirit Health, Lupus Foundation of America, Mayo Clinic, Medtronic, Purdue, Sanofi, VBI Vaccines and others.

Padilla's Health team consists of seasoned health and science strategists spanning the health care ecosystem, specializing in:

- pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies
- device makers, vaccine manufacturers
- hospital and health systems
- insurers, payor groups
- nonprofits, government

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. Transform with purpose at PadillaCo.com.

PAN COMMUNICATIONS

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Philip A. Nardone, Pres. & CEO

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PAN COMMUNICATIONS

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Darlene Doyle, Executive VP, Client Relations
Gary Torpey, Executive VP, Finance
Gene Carozza, Dan Martin, Nikki Festa O'Brien, Meg Kessler, Senior VPs
Gareth Thomas, Managing Dir., UK

PAN Communications is a leading integrated marketing and PR agency servicing B2B tech and healthcare brands. With 25+ years of experience, PAN helps companies transform ideas into captivating stories that align to emerging, mid and late-stage growth strategies through the firm's NXT Stage approach. Recognized as Technology Agency of the Year and Best Mid-Sized Agency to Work For, PAN has office locations in Boston, San Francisco, New York, Orlando and London, as well as a growing virtual community in the US and UK. The agency is positioned to help brands emerge in new markets and scale globally, with experience driving integrated strategy across a variety of brands like Citrix, Radial, GYANT, athenahealth, OneStream and Payoneer. PAN strives to help today's modern marketers by integrating a combination of services to better engage with target audiences and move markets.

Connected Content—Creative Storytelling—Results that Matter!

Clients Include: 908 Devices, Absolute Software, airSlate, Amdocs, App Annie, athenahealth, Bazaarvoice, ByMiles, Cedar, Citrix, CloudBees, Definitive Healthcare, Degreed, Human, Hyperscience, Igloo, MediaMath, NTT Data, OneStream, Payoneer, Patients-LikeMe, Quantarix, Quorum Software, Radial, Rapid7, Smartly.io, Sailpoint, Software AG, UPS Capital, VEEAM and Waters.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS INC.

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Public Communications Inc. (PCI) is team of experts passionate about healthcare and healthy communities. As we approach our agency's 60th year, healthcare communication strategies that deliver client solutions and results remain at the core of our national, independent agency. We create communication solutions for national and international healthcare companies and associations in every sector. PCI continues to expand its environmental health expertise during increasing public interest and desire for fact-based information on climate change and its impact on human and animal health.

Our agency consistently delivers award-winning programs and campaigns for clients ranging from advocacy organizations and medical and allied health associations to *Fortune* 100 corporations; healthcare technology innovators and device makers; biotech and hospital suppliers; hospitals and health systems; service providers; accrediting agencies; and consultants. PCI also knows healthcare and association audiences first-hand. We use research to understand what makes them tick, how to reach them, and how to prompt engagement.

Healthcare represents more than half of PCI's client work. Our clients include more than 20 medical and dental associations, start-ups looking for communications and marketing strategy and visibility, and university health systems. We launch products and manage life-cycle communications; run consumer awareness and screening programs on a turn-key basis; develop professional relations campaigns designed to draw referrals; and develop digital media strategies, campaigns and platforms including efficient online newsrooms and content-rich websites.

Many of our healthcare clients have stayed with us 10 years or more with some exceeding 20-year partnerships. Our success grows from truly listening to, and talking with, our clients. We then create solutions and deliver quality service and results that meet or exceed our clients' goals.

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Phil Chadwick, CFO
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Society has always been propelled forward by technology. There is a growing expectation, however, that innovation must serve humanity—there must be a higher moral purpose than innovating only because we can.

We believe that the complex challenges we face as a global society can only be tackled by embracing creativity and innovation fueled by purpose. Every company in every category is in some way using technology to sustainably change the way we work, live and play.

At Racepoint Global (RPG), our mission is simple: We help our clients navigate and succeed in the new communications landscape by shaping the conversations that matter. We live at the intersection of conversation and innovation and we serve clients with channel-agnostic communications strategies that engage their target audiences in authentic and meaningful ways. Our work with clients establishes competitive differentiation and drives business impact. In 2021, RPG was named a *PRWeek* Top 100 U.S. integrated communications agency, a Top 15 U.S. Technology PR Agency by *O'Dwyer's*, a *PRovoke* Global Top 250 agency and ranked in the Top 25 of *Boston Business Journal's* Largest PR Firms in Massachusetts list.

Clients include: ACD/Labs, Atmosic Technologies, CHIPS Alliance, The Commission on the Future of Mobility, Consigli Construction, Duck Creek Technologies, eClinicalWorks, E Ink, Huawei, Infinix, MediaTek, Mythic, Panasonic System Solutions Company of North America, Qlik, RISC-V, Semtech and Tapcheck.

REAL CHEMISTRY

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Jim Weiss, Founder & CEO
Jennifer Gottlieb, Global President
Richard Neave, Chief Financial Officer

Real Chemistry (previously W2O) is a global health innovation

company with an alchemic mix of nearly 1,700 people and hundreds of clients and partners working from bench to bedside to make the world a healthier place for all. Purpose-built by Jim Weiss to address modern healthcare challenges, Real Chemistry is the culmination of 20 years of intentional, fiercely independent, sustained growth.

We are committed to improving health outcomes across today's ecosystem by partnering with companies who want to reimagine healthcare. We have built a home where the best health experts collaborate and innovate to deliver commercial, clinical and corporate solutions that put patients at the core, through data, proprietary technology and powerful creativity.

With offices across the United States and Europe, Real Chemistry believes that the way to real, transformative change is through our uncommon combination of talents, disciplines and technologies.

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Full-service communications for health, medical, science, and social issues.

The Reis Group is a small, woman-owned public relations agency specializing in health care, science, and social causes. Established in 2016, we were named Best New Agency of the Year by The Public Relations Society of America's National Capital Chapter. We are proud to work with a wide range of clients who are committed to improving the health of our nation, including nonprofits, foundations, federal agencies, associations, health systems, corporations, and universities.

Our team of more than a dozen seasoned communications professionals has decades of experience working closely with clients as their communications partners, offering services including message testing, earned media outreach, thought leadership, issues management, and content development.

Our goal is to provide every client with the skills and capabilities of a highly specialized agency, along with the commitment and dedication of a small business.

Partial client list includes: American Gastroenterological Association, Banner Alzheimer's Institute, Blue Shield of California Foundation, Digestive Disease Week, Nemours Children's Health System, National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America and Society of Interventional Radiology

REVIVE

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Revive, a Weber Shandwick Company, works with brands who lead the way in health. Founded in 2009, Revive is one of the fastest growing healthcare agencies in the industry, currently with 140 employees and offices in Nashville, Santa Barbara, Minneapolis, and Boston. Revive's employees are pathfinders and future-builders, uncovering and creating opportunities using distinctive insights about people navigating health. Clients have included some of the top brands in the health and healthcare space, with agency services including branding, marketing, advertising, communications, media strategy and buying, issues management, and data-driven marketing and analytics. Revive has won dozens of industry awards, including Healthcare Agency of the Year in 2020 and Best Agency to Work For in North America in 2021. For more information, visit www.reviveagency.com

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Ruder Finn is one of the world's largest independent global communications and creative agencies. Founded in 1948, Ruder Finn has defined and refined PR for more than 70 years, shaping commu-

nications that help move industry-defining brands, companies and leaders from what's now to what's next. Headquartered in New York, Ruder Finn provides clients with bold communications strategies based on a global perspective and localized market knowledge to tell dynamic stories powered by new data streams and technologies. As future thinkers, Ruder Finn pushes the boundaries of innovation to facilitate genuine connections across socio-cultural boundaries, inform breakthrough scientific discoveries and create game changing leadership, all with a 'what's next' mentality.

The agency is organized around four core areas of expertise: Health & Wellness, Corporate Reputation, Technology & Innovation and Consumer Connection. Specialty practices include RF Relate, RFx Studios, ICX and RF TechLab. Ruder Finn's capabilities include expert guidance regarding corporate reputation and media counsel, healthcare communications, adoption of new technologies, content creation, C-suite thought leadership, business transformation, stakeholder engagement, financial communications, crisis and issues management, employee engagement, technology communications, digital and interactive, social media, research and analytics, community building and experiential marketing.

Ruder Finn has offices across 4 continents including the U.S., Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Wholly owned agencies within Ruder Finn Group include: Ruder Finn Inc., RLA Collective, SPI Group, Osmosis Films and jacobstahl, leading RF Bloom and Bloom Health. For more information visit www.ruderfinn.com.

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Justin Rubin, Chief Creative Officer
Dan Zaret, Chief Operating Officer
Andrea Sessler, Chief Human Resources Officer
Tim Goddard, President, GLOBALHealthPR

Spectrum Science is an independent, integrated agency hyper-focused on science. As the name implies—yes, the agency took its name from Pink Floyd's seminal album Dark Side of the Moon—our expertise spans the entire spectrum of marketing, communications and media solutions. With a focus on offering the right solution based on each client's goals, the agency's interwoven model integrates specialists across client service, strategy, creative and innovation to put clients at the center. Combined with our fearless scientific spirit and an unquenchable desire to go beyond the realm of the possible, we not only dream it—we do it.

As scientific communicators, we know every great breakthrough is enabled by the rigor of the scientific process and people who are experienced, curious, purposeful and driven—just like every Spectrumite. Fueled by our proprietary, strategy-first methodology, the Spectrumite MethodSM, we deliver the indispensable ingredients to take clients across the entire health and science product lifecycle beyond the science quo.

Spectrum is taking on the world with a geographically fluid, hybrid model that allows every employee to determine when and where they work—from home, our headquarters in Washington, D.C., or offices in New York, Chicago and Atlanta. As chair of GLOBALHealthPR, the largest network of independent health and science communications agencies worldwide, we provide global reach with local market

insights.

For more information, visit www.spectrumscience.com or follow @SpectrumScience on Twitter and Instagram.

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James Koppnenal, Mng. Director, Digital Comms.
Morgan Baden, Exec. VP, Comms. Strat. and Editorial
Sonali Munjal, Exec. VP, Application Development
Heather Norian, COO

The employee experience has never been more important than it is in today's hybrid world. At SPI Group, a Ruder Finn company, we manage every aspect of internal communications and employee engagement for a variety of clients around the world, grounded in our expertise in communications technologies and our ability to tell compelling brand stories that keep employees informed and inspired.

Whether it's building custom digital tools (intranets, apps, gamification programs, and more) or developing pitch-perfect editorial content and thought leadership programs, our work—all complemented by an outstanding creative services team—helps businesses see how a thoughtful approach to internal communications can nurture a thriving corporate culture and convert employees into brand ambassadors.

SPI Group has been delivering smart, innovative communications

Continued on page 64



Spectrum Science's Strategic Council at an off-site in Napa Valley, CA. From left to right: Dan Zaret, Tim Goddard, Michelle Gross, Justin Rubin, Rob Oquendo, Andrea Sessler, Jonathan Wilson and Michelle Strier.

THE SPI GROUP

Continued from page 63

solutions to enterprise clients for almost 25 years, racking up a suite of industry awards and recognition along the way. Visit us at spigroup.com for case studies, services, and a robust blog featuring practical tips and strategic insights for today's communicators.

STANTON

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Stanton works with a wide variety of emerging and established organizations across the spectrum of healthcare and life sciences, from providers and management organizations to services and insurance, senior care, treatments, and technologies. This is why growing healthcare organizations turn to Stanton. We excel at helping healthcare innovators grow their businesses by raising company profiles, building reputations and capturing mindshare.

With offices in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, Stanton is a full-service agency that supports our clients across a variety of communications disciplines including media relations, brand messaging, content development and marketing, executive visibility, thought leadership, digital and traditional marketing, reputation & change management, executive counsel, and social media. Our senior professionals spend the majority of their time on client work, ask tough questions, challenge assumptions, and suggest bold solutions. Clients find a home at our firm because we deliver a unique blend of smart strategy, strong relationships, innovative thinking, and first-class execution that produces business-changing results.

TEAM SALUD

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Team Salud is a diverse collaborative of seasoned marketers who

have worked on numerous successful national and regional branding and communication campaigns for *Fortune* 500 companies and governmental and nonprofit entities. We believe that listening, using research to guide our strategies, and collaborating with the target audience and key stakeholders are fundamental pillars of success. Our extensive experience with multicultural audience segments ensures that all campaigns we produce are relevant to multicultural audiences and not translations or adaptations done as an afterthought. Team Salud is the best of the best in health communications.

TOGORUN

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Dawn Maniglia, Sr. VP & Partner, Global Media Relations
Brittany Rayburn, MS & Partner, Women's Health & Wellness
Shafali Shah, VP & Partner, Global Ops.
Jon Tilton, Sr. VP & Partner, Digital Innovations, Public Affairs & Business Dev.

TogoRun is an award-winning, full-service strategic health care consultancy specializing in global health and well-being. Now woman-owned and independent with a legacy of more than a decade of success as a prior Omnicom global agency, we are committed to closing the health disparities gap by harnessing the power of science-based branding and messaging, corporate communications and IR strategies, commercialization and market access, data analytics, clinical development and regulatory support, digital innovation, and earned media. With an unrelenting focus on creating high-impact solutions that directly impact your triple bottom line, we occupy a unique position in the industry for clients seeking both global reach and personalized services of a specialty agency primed to provide a team of experts to meet our clients' most complex challenges.

We focus on telling your untold story and are inspired every day by our clients who are forging breakthroughs in science and the status quo. We live the values—Courage, Commitment, Creativity, Crafts-

manship, and Community—of our namesake Togo, a 12-year-old, undersized sled dog who saved an Alaskan village from a diphtheria outbreak in 1925 thanks to his unrivaled speed, unbounded energy, and uncanny navigation over uncharted territory to deliver a life-saving vaccine.

We know there is nothing more powerful than unleashing an untold story that moves people and communities to think and act differently. Uncovering and telling these stories across multi-media channels via insight-driven creative is our specialty. Uncharted territory doesn't scare our clients and it doesn't scare us. Together, we are strong and determined to beat the odds, go the extra mile, enhance and save lives, and, ultimately, make the world a healthier, happier, and more beautiful place.

Clients Include: Adaptive Testing Technologies, Candesant Biomedical, Conservation Legacy, EOM Pharmaceuticals, Inovio, Jaquar Health, Mission Plasticos, Napo Pharmaceuticals, Obagi, Preprogen and Pure Earth.

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Ranked #1 in Healthcare in Atlanta, Trevelino/Keller continues to see its healthcare practice outperform all practices. Its long-standing base of experience with the CDC and United Healthcare, coupled with one of the country's deepest technology practices and Atlanta's leading lifestyle practice, has advanced its healthcare work across Health IT, retail health and healthcare. The world's pandemic crisis shined a spotlight on firms with extensive disease-related work and Trevelino/Keller became Georgia's go to firm, representing Georgia's Covid-19 Health Initiative on both COVID-19 awareness initiatives that would eventually transition to Covid-19 vaccine programs. This important work, coupled with a base of experience with Ebola, Zika and other health crises, has made the firm one of the country's established health firms.

Some other highlights of recent engagements include groundbreaking work in the cancer treatment segment with SpecCare, a first mover in Live Tissue Science™, 360 reputation marketing for SOC



Trevelino/Keller shined a spotlight on Georgia's COVID-19 awareness and vaccine efforts using popular venues like the Fox Theatre which opened its doors to support the vaccine effort in Midtown Atlanta.

Telemed, as well as the Q4 launch of Mossa's Movement Health initiative to address both the sedentary market and health club crisis through virtual, accessible programming. Independent of its client work, the agency was a founding partner in GeorgiaALIVE, a public awareness, education and support organization in response to COVID-19. While the firm's public relations discipline continues to grow, it's seeing greater demand for its 360 reputation marketing approach which leverages its integrated marketing group as well as its creative arm, Groovy Studios. Its suite of services includes public relations, integrated marketing, demand generation and creative services.

Unrelated to healthcare, but an important new initiative for the firm was the recent launch of Voice4Change Project, the firm's ongoing anti-racism platform acknowledging racism in America and encouraging education and action. Owning the industry's number one retention rate, having lost two staffers to an agency in 17 years, the firm is known for its progressive, culture-rich programs like Red with Ted, Cooleaf Pro, Read to Lead, Farm to T/K, GeorgiaALIVE and Voice4Change Project. For more information, visit trevelinokeller.com. ○

O'DWYER'S RANKINGS

TOP HEALTHCARE & MEDICAL PR FIRMS

Firm	Net Fees (2020)	Firm	Net Fees (2020)
1. Real Chemistry , San Francisco, CA	\$349,187,000	40. G&S Business Communications , New York, NY	\$1,004,771
2. Edelman , New York, NY	168,838,000	41. Gregory FCA , Ardmore, PA	964,375
3. Ruder Finn Inc. , New York, NY	35,988,000	42. Rasky Partners, Inc. , Boston, MA	955,731
4. Finn Partners , New York, NY	34,129,000	43. LaunchSquad , San Francisco, CA	900,000
5. Spectrum , Washington, DC	32,900,000	44. Agency Ten22 , Cumming, GA	867,365
6. APCO Worldwide , Washington, DC	32,660,000	45. L.C. Williams & Associates , Chicago, IL	832,094
7. Evoke KYNE , New York, NY	30,984,000	46. Racepoint Global , Boston, MA	727,285
8. Crosby , Annapolis, MD	28,214,934	47. Landis Communications , San Francisco, CA	516,800
9. imre, LLC , Baltimore, MD	24,123,700	48. Bospar , San Francisco, CA	515,573
10. ICR , New York, NY	22,932,982	49. French West Vaughan , Raleigh, NC	508,797
11. JPA Health , Washington, DC	14,818,927	50. FrazierHeiby , Columbus, OH	487,357
12. M Booth Health , New York, NY	14,433,794	51. Merritt Group , McLean, VA	428,820
13. Zeno Group , New York, NY	10,799,226	52. Bellmont Partners , Minneapolis, MN	402,540
14. Coyne PR , Parsippany, NJ	10,100,000	53. Ehrhardt Group, The , New Orleans, LA	376,113
15. Sam Brown Inc. , Wayne, PA	8,001,820	54. Rosica Communications , Fair Lawn, NJ	370,737
16. Padilla , Minneapolis, MN	7,548,984	55. Serendipit , Phoenix, AZ	356,741
17. McCabe Message Partners , Washington, DC	6,407,087	56. Fish Consulting , Fort Lauderdale, FL	347,900
18. Kivvit , Chicago, IL	5,878,498	57. Singer Associates PR, Inc. , San Francisco, CA	334,159
19. Hunter , New York, NY	5,500,000	58. Standing Partnership , St. Louis, MO	311,038
20. Matter Communications , Boston, MA	5,004,000	59. Brownstein Group , Philadelphia, PA	305,702
21. Bliss Group, The , New York, NY	4,811,473	60. Perry Communications Group, Inc. , Sacramento, CA	305,237
22. LaVoie Health Science , Boston, MA	4,459,686	61. Hoyt Organization Inc., The , Torrance, CA	300,000
23. MCS Healthcare Public Relations , Bedminster, NJ	4,405,889	62. Butler Associates, LLC , New York, NY	290,176
24. 5W Public Relations , New York, NY	4,300,000	63. Buchanan Public Relations , Bryn Mawr, PA	201,698
25. Moore, Inc. , Tallahassee, FL	4,179,000	64. BoardroomPR , Fort Lauderdale, FL	200,000
26. PAN Communications , Boston, MA	3,620,030	65. TruePoint Communications , Dallas, TX	178,319
27. MWWPR , New York, NY	3,482,345	66. WordWrite Communications LLC , Pittsburgh, PA	170,000
28. Public Communications Inc. , Chicago, IL	3,083,928	67. Marketing Maven Public Relations , Camarillo, CA	163,087
29. Lovell Communications , Nashville, TN	3,066,369	68. Greentarget Global LLC , Chicago, IL	163,000
30. MP&F Strategic Communications , Nashville, TN	2,747,711	69. Pugh & Tiller PR, LLC , Annapolis, MD	152,599
31. 720 Strategies , Washington, DC	2,520,210	70. IW Group, Inc. , West Hollywood, CA	151,316
32. Citizen Relations , Los Angeles, CA	2,263,389	71. Pierpont Communications , Houston, TX	148,814
33. rbb Communications , Miami, FL	2,189,682	72. BizCom Associates , Plano, TX	104,914
34. Tunheim , Minneapolis, MN	1,649,525	73. J Public Relations , New York, NY	101,000
35. Inkhouse , Waltham, MA	1,509,211	74. Hodges Partnership, The , Richmond, VA	100,000
36. Jackson Spalding , Atlanta, GA	1,471,455	75. Peppercomm , New York, NY	87,550
37. Trevelino/Keller , Atlanta, GA	1,300,000	76. Champion Management Group , Dallas, TX	20,000
38. Havas Formula , New York, NY	1,284,762	77. Lawlor Media Group , New York, NY	3,000
39. Beehive Strategic Communication , St. Paul, MN	1,244,679		

Memo to the President: avoid 'wishful thinking'

By Fraser Seitel

After less than a year in office, it's already clear that the Biden Administration will go down in history, with an emphasis on "down."



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*.

Consider the disaster that was September: deadly chaos in Kabul, Haitian horse-whipping at the border and France recalling its ambassadors over a sneaky sub deal.

But rather than simply rub salt in a wound that becomes more gaping each day, it's better to offer instead some time-honored public relations

advice in an effort to limit the damage over the next three-plus Biden years.

That advice: No matter the subject, steadfastly fight the temptation to be overly optimistic or self-assured in predicting results. In other words, avoid wishful thinking.

There are many egregious examples of the dangers of wishful thinking. Two famous sports examples from decades ago remain relevant.

In 1999, Boston Celtics' star Reggie Lewis is collapsed during an NBA game and was diagnosed with a potentially fatal heart arrhythmia. Unhappy with the diagnosis, Lewis consulted eminent Boston cardiologist, Dr. Gilbert Mudge, who said Lewis, in fact, suffered a benign fainting disorder and would eventually be able to play basketball "without limitation." Two weeks later, Lewis collapsed at the Celtics' practice facility and died.

Two decades earlier, Los Angeles star Roy Campanella crashed his car on a snowy Long Island road and ended up in surgery for more than four hours. Afterward, the head of the surgical team dubbed the operation "a success" because Campanella's spinal cord had escaped injury, opening up the possibility that the catcher might one day resume his baseball career. Roy Campanella remained a quadriplegic for the rest of his life.

In both cases, the hopefulness of physicians clouded the reality of other potential,

less positive outcomes. And the physicians' wishful thinking ultimately ruined their own distinguished reputations. This is one reason why smart public relations advisors, faced with crisis, always begin with "worst case" scenarios.

In the same spirit of over-optimism, let's look at the travails of the Biden administration.

First, has there ever been anyone in a position of power as dull as Secretary of State Antony Blinken? (No fair counting Homeland Secretary Mayorkas or Defense Secretary Austin!)

Blinken is a lifelong bureaucrat, generally meticulous in the bureaucratic art of talking much and saying little. He's circumspect in his speech, careful not to extend himself to a point from which he can't recover.

But when he spoke to Chuck Todd on "Meet the Press" first before and then after the fall of Kabul, even the ultra-cautious Blinken lapsed into misdirected "wishful thinking" rather than acknowledging failure.

In July, Secretary Blinken assured the NBC host the American departure from Afghanistan would be orderly. Said the Secretary, "I don't think it's going to be something that happens from a Friday to a Monday. So, I wouldn't necessarily equate the departure of our forces in July and August or by early September with some kind of immediate deterioration in the situation."

By September, of course, when his prediction proved disastrously wrong, Blinken's tune with Todd had changed. He repeated the Biden talking points that the Trump Administration's flawed agreement with the Taliban had tied the new Administration's hands and that no one expected the Afghan army to give up so quickly. But then, he let fly yet another "wishful thinking" comment about U.S. expectations about the Taliban, which may yet come home to roost.

"The Taliban have a certain self-interest in this. They know what happened the last time they harbored a terrorist group that attacked the United States. It's not in their self-interest to allow a repeat of that," the Secretary said, thus inviting future Monday morning quarterbacking if/when the Taliban reopen their borders to future terrorists.

Second, there's Gen. Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Gen. Milley, a career soldier, is immense-

ly self-confident, articulate and political. Whereas Secretary Blinken and Milley's ostensible "boss," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, are halting, unsteady communicators, Milley is brutally blunt.

This was on full display when the general testified before Congress in late September and gave rankled Republicans little quarter in terms of criticism. "Yes," he said, he recommended leaving 2,500 troops in Afghanistan. "Yes," he said, he was gladly interviewed by anti-Trump book writers. And "yes," he said, the rushed evacuation from Kabul was a "logistical success but a strategic failure." Gen. Milley batted back every damning advance.

But earlier, even the take-no-prisoners Milley had been guilty of one memorable slip into wishful thinking that will cost his reputation forever.

In the final September days of Kabul chaos, Milley famously labeled a U.S. drone attack that killed 10 people a "righteous strike."

A week later, the general was made to retract his pronouncement. The drone strike, in fact, was botched, killing a family of civilians, including seven children. There was nothing virtuous or worthy or "righteous" about it. It was a tragedy. Once again, the usually-careful Gen. Milley was eternally guilty of wishful thinking.

Finally, there's the President himself, the most guilty of letting wishful thinking cloud his thinking and sink his speech.

By now, President Biden's ill-chosen words on Afghanistan are well-known:

"The withdrawal was an extraordinary success."

"The troops will stay until every American who wants to be out is out."

"The likelihood there's going to be the Taliban overrunning everything and owning the whole country is highly unlikely."

Anyone who's ever advised a leader in crisis understands that the most difficult thing to deliver is "bad news." A leader, understandably, wants to be optimistic and confident and upbeat that "this will all turn out good in the end."

Your job, as public relations counsel, is to encourage your client to focus instead on what we plan to do and how we plan to do it. You must disabuse him or her of "wishful thinking."

From historic highs, Joe Biden's approval ratings have tumbled to levels descending toward Donald Trump's. Part of the blame lies with advisors who succumbed to the President's wishful thinking. ●

Are you leaving ERC money on the table?

By Dominic Rovano

Many business owners have looked at the Employee Retention Credit program to secure up to \$33,000 per employee, but some may not have looked at it closely, leaving very valuable dollars on the table.



Dominic Rovano, CPA, is a Co-Partner in Charge of Janover LLC's New York City office. He leads the Professional Services group, and helps its clients satisfy their financial-reporting requirements successfully by providing assurance, tax and other advisory services.

In March 2020, the world changed. Almost overnight, business owners were concerned about health, the economy and the sustainability of their operations. With great fanfare, the government came out with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, better known as the CARES Act, which contained many programs for business owners. The most talked about program,

by far, was the Paycheck Protection Program, or PPP, which proved to be valuable for many PR and marketing businesses. As projects and retainers were put on hold—especially for those working with the hospitality and travel industries—PPP funds provided the life vest needed to weather the storm.

Another significant program to debut under the CARES Act was the ERC, a refundable credit based on wages paid to eligible employees. Under the CARES Act, companies couldn't claim the ERC if they were awarded PPP funds. Businesses also initially were only able to claim the ERC if they had no more than 100 full-time employees in 2019, with certain exceptions. Subsequent updates to the ERC, which were signed into law in late 2020 and early 2021, expanded ERC eligibility requirements. Key changes included the definition of eligible employers to include those with no more than 500 average full-time employees in 2019 for the 2021 ERC. The changes also retroactively allowed businesses that received PPP loans to now apply for the ERC.

Businesses that obtained PPP may now be able to receive ERC money up to \$5,000 per employee for 2020 and \$28,000 per employee for 2021.

Have you taken advantage of this credit program? If yes, congratulations! Many owners are still unaware—nine months after the change in law—that their business may qualify. Many also incorrectly believe they don't qualify, which begs this important question ...

How do you qualify?

Qualifying can be a bit complex. Let's start with 2020. If you averaged 100 or fewer full-time employees in 2019, you've passed the first test! Next, did any COVID-related government orders interrupt your operations? For many PR and marketing firms, this answer is no. While your offices may have been closed, you generally were able to serve your clients in a remote environment at near full capacity. If, on the other hand, you were forced to close and were unable to operate, you may be eligible on wages paid during this shutdown period. The 2020 ERC is calculated as a 50 percent credit on qualifying wages and certain benefits up to \$10,000, per employee, resulting in a maximum credit of \$5,000 per employee for the year.

Can I qualify if my business wasn't shut down?

Yes, you can! The pandemic hit many PR and marketing firms hard, especially in the second quarter of 2020. If, in any quarter of 2020, you experienced a decline in gross revenue of 50 percent or more as compared to the same quarter in 2019, you may qualify.

Example: Your business earned \$2.5 million in the second quarter of 2019. This is top line, gross revenue. Fast forward to the second quarter of 2020. Your business took a hit, and its gross revenues were \$1 million for the quarter. This represents a 60 percent decrease in revenue and, as a result, makes your business eligible to claim the ERC in that quarter. Your credit would be 50 percent of qualifying wages and certain benefits paid in that quarter, up to \$10,000 (or \$5,000 per employee).

There's a catch. If you received PPP funds, you can't take the ERC on any wages used for PPP forgiveness. However, wages in excess of those allowed for PPP forgiveness, or those otherwise not used for PPP forgiveness, could qualify for the credit. In addition, if you experienced a decrease in revenue during a quarter of 2020 compared to the same quarter of 2019 of 50 percent or more, you automatically qualify for the next quarter, and any wages paid in that following quarter could

also qualify for the ERC. For 2020, this credit is capped at \$5,000 annually.

If you averaged more than 100 full-time employees in 2019, you are only able to take the ERC on wages paid to employees on leave for COVID-related issues (in other words, you continued to pay employees who were not working). The credit is calculated the same way as shown above.

How do you qualify in 2021?

You could still qualify if you paid wages to employees during a government-mandated shutdown or to those on leave for COVID-related issues.

It's easier to qualify for the 2021 ERC based on a decrease in gross revenue, so many PR and marketing firms may be eligible. Businesses that averaged 500 or fewer full-time employees in 2019 now qualify if they experience a 20 percent decrease in top line gross revenue in any quarter 2021 compared to the same quarter in 2019.

Example: In the second quarter of 2019, your business earned \$2.5 million in gross revenue and \$1.975 million in the same quarter of 2021. This represents a decrease in gross revenue of 21 percent, which means you qualify for the ERC in that quarter. The credit for 2021 increases to 70 percent of qualifying wages and certain benefits up to \$10,000 per employee resulting in a maximum of \$7,000, per quarter, per employee. That equates to a maximum credit of up to \$28,000 per employee for the year. Remember, if you received a PPP loan in 2021, you can't use the same wages for the ERC.

If you had more than 500 fulltime employees in 2019, the credit is only available on wages paid to employees not providing services during the qualifying period in 2021.

Key takeaways

The ERC can be obtained by amending payroll tax filings or making certain elections on current payroll tax filings. There are a lot of other complexities to the program, such as more detailed rules around governmental orders, related entities, majority ownership rules, automatic qualification for subsequent quarters, the definition of full-time employees (this is different than the PPP definition) and the tax consequences.

It's best to speak to your accounting advisor to learn more about the program and find out if you qualify. Most importantly, don't put yourself in the position to leave money on the table! ●

WPP to pay \$19M to settle SEC corruption charges

WPP in Sept. agreed to pay \$19 million to settle Securities and Exchange Commission charges that it violated anti-bribery and internal accounting controls measures of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

The SEC alleges WPP carried out an aggressive acquisition push in high-risk markets and failed to apply its internal accounting controls and compliance policies, allowing financial autonomy to the founders/CEOs of the target companies.

The federal watchdog claims that due to structural deficiencies, WPP failed to promptly respond to warning signs of corruption at various subsidiaries.

It cited a WPP India unit that continued to bribe government officials in return for advertising contracts, even though WPP received tips about that misconduct.

The SEC order also covers control deficiencies in China, Brazil and Peru.

Neither denying nor admitting the SEC findings, WPP agreed to cease and desist from committing violations of the anti-bribery, books and records, and internal accounting controls provisions of the FCPA.

It will pay \$10.1 million in disgorgement, \$1.1 million in pre-judgment interest, and an \$8 million penalty.

"A company cannot allow a focus on profitability or market share to come at the expense of appropriate controls," said Charles Cain, the SEC's FCPA unit chief. "Further, it is essential for companies to identify the root cause of problems when red flags emerge to prevent a pattern of corrupt behavior from taking hold."

WPP notes the SEC probe covered activities that occurred under the leadership of founder/Martin Sorrell, who stepped down in 2018.

"The Commission's findings relate to control issues as well as the acquisition and integration of companies in high-risk markets until 2018, it noted in a statement. "As the Commission's Order recognizes, WPP's new leadership has put in place robust new compliance measures and controls, fundamentally changed its approach to acquisitions, cooperated fully with the Commission and terminated those involved in misconduct." ○

Public interest groups rap Cuomo on PR rep

Former New York governor Andrew Cuomo's decision to use campaign funds to pay the salary of PR man Rich Azzopardi violates the state's election laws, according to Susan Lerner, executive director of Common Cause New York.

Her group, with the League of Women Voters, NY Public Interest Research Group and Reinvent Albany, want the New York State Board of Elections to investigate whether paying Azzopardi is an appropriate use of campaign funds.

They contend contributors to Cuomo's \$18 million campaign fund intended the money to be used for his political campaign, not for his personal spokesperson.

Azzopardi, who joined Cuomo's staff in 2012, told the *New York Daily News* that it is "permissible" for him to serve as Cuomo's spokesperson on matters related to questions concerning legal reviews and about his time in office.

He allegedly played a part in a smear campaign targeting Cuomo's political opponents and sexual harassment victims, according to the report compiled by attorney general Letitia James. ○



Schwartz signs on at FTI's PR unit

Former Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz has signed on as Senior Advisor at FTI Consulting's strategic communications unit. She will counsel clients on healthcare policy and how to navigate the regulatory thicket.

The Pennsylvania Democrat served on the Ways and Means and Budget Committees during her 10-year stint on Capitol Hill.

Schwartz, who was Commissioner of Philadelphia's Dept. of Health, led the Congressional push to reform the doctor payment system and promoted primary care and integrated care delivery.

Most recently, she was CEO of the Better Medicare Alliance lobbying group. ○



Allyson Schwartz

Livingston seeks justice for Sikhs

Former House Speaker-designate Bob Livingston is representing New York-based Sikhs for Justice on issues related to the intimidation and harassment of US citizens of Sikh ethnicity by individuals and entities outside of the US for expressing their personal and political views.

In an open letter to president Biden and vice president Harris that was published in Politico on Sept. 23, SFJ said "India has been criminally charging American Sikhs who have been advocating for the Khalistan referendum from US soil."

A separatist movement wants to establish Khalistan as a homeland for Sikhs in India's Punjab region.

The letter alleges that threats were made against Meena Harris, niece of the VP, for her support of striking farmers in India.

Harris, who is Hindu, tweeted the farmers' protest was not just against India's agricultural policies but "also about the persecution of a vocal religious minority."

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, general counsel for SFJ, told *O'Dwyer's* his group has launched an email campaign directed at UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and member countries urging them to hold India prime minister Narendra Modi accountable for 1) the use of unbridled and brutal violence to crush the farmers' protest and the use of sedition charges against overseas Sikhs for supporting the protesters, and 2) India's heightened attempts to curb the freedom of speech of diaspora Sikhs who support the Khalistan referendum.

The Livingston Group has Livingston, who was a Republican Congressman from Louisiana; Allen Martin, Managing Director and ex-Chief of Staff for Livingston, and Cathryn Kingsbury, international practice area director, working the SFJ business. ○



Bob Livingston

Qorvis makes PR calls for Cambodia

Qorvis has picked up a \$70,000 monthly retainer pact for strategic communications and media relations services for Cambodia.

The D.C.-based firm also will work to promote public awareness of Cambodia along with the opportunities for travel and tourism.

The contract went into effect Sept. 1. It is an open-ended pact that may be terminated by either party with 30 days written notice. Under the agreement, Cambodia is responsible for the “accuracy, completeness and propriety of information” that it supplies to Qorvis.

It notes that Qorvis can guarantee neither that the media will use the PR material nor report it in a way that Cambodia intended. The Publicis Groupe unit also retains the right to reject any material that it considers “untrue, indecent, libelous, unlawful, or otherwise prejudicial” to its interests of that of the client.

Chum Sounry, Cambodia’s Ambassador to the U.S., Qorvis president Michael Petruzzello and VP-Finance Jonathan Nicholas signed the PR contract. ○

Sonoran speaks for Afghanistan resistance

Sonoran Policy Group has signed a six-month contract to provide strategic advisory services to Ahmad Massoud, a leader of the resistance to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Massoud is the 32-year-old son of “The Lion of Panjshir,” who kicked the Soviets and then the Taliban out of the Panjshir region.

Al-Qaeda assassinated the legendary guerilla leader Ahmad

Shah Massoud on Sept. 9, 2011, two days prior to the attack on the World Trade Center.

Sonoran’s representation of Massoud is via its Stryk Global Diplomacy unit. It is working on a pro bono basis.

The Taliban has launched an offensive against Massoud’s forces in the Panjshir Valley.

The Massoud Foundation says it is “monitoring the Pakistani-supported Taliban invasion of the Panjshir Valley with alarm and resolve.”

It is organizing humanitarian aid packages, assisting refugees and calling for international support. ○

Saudi investment fund taps Teneo

Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund has awarded Teneo two contracts for international communications and stakeholder engagement services worth nearly \$3 million.

The “Focused Strategy and Structure Diagnostic Project” is pegged at \$1,860,000, while “Project Wedge” is valued at \$837,500. Both pacts went into effect Aug. 25.

The goal is to position the PIF as a sophisticated global investment organization with a solid track record and targeted strategy.

Teneo is to show how PIF is creating opportunities and driving transformation in the Kingdom. It will pitch PIF’s focus on generating sustainable returns and diversifying the economy of the country.

The firm will determine the external perceptions of PIF through stakeholder research, analysis, reputational benchmarking; conduct crisis/issues management; develop messaging, handle media relations and launch websites.

Teneo co-Founder & COO Paul Keary heads the Saudi team. ○

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.

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, Washington, DC, **registered Aug. 30, 2021 for Government of the Republic of Palau**, Koror, Palau, regarding advising the client and conducting outreach to U.S. Government officials about the bilateral 30th Anniversary Review of its Compact of Free Association with the U.S. and in the application of other U.S. laws and programs.

Copithorne & Blakely Corp., Calgary, Alberta, Canada, **registered Sept. 1, 2021 for Canadian Energy Centre Ltd.**, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, regarding developing and implementing a public relations campaign to encourage greater cross border importation of Canadian energy products into the United States.

Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Washington DC, LLC, Washington, DC, **registered Aug. 30, 2021, for DIHK DEinternational GmbH**, Berlin, Germany, regarding performing services to promote and deepen economic and commercial ties between the United States and Germany.

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.

Federal Hall Policy Advisors, LLC, Washington, DC, **registered Sept. 8, 2021, for National Rental Home Council**, Washington, DC, regarding issues relating to housing and real estate.

Holland & Knight LLP, Washington, DC, **registered Sept. 14, 2021, for National Association of Clean Water Agencies**, Washington, DC, regarding clean water and safe water policy and funding.

Lodestar Strategic, Seattle, WA, **registered Sept. 10, 2021 for Outdoors for all Foundation**, Seattle, WA, regarding support and funding for disability services.

Pugliese Associates, Harrisburg, PA, **registered September 16, 2021, for Aging and Diverse Home Healthcare Services**, Philadelphia, PA, regarding strengthening home healthcare aides salaries and benefits.

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212/924-3600
letstalk@jpublicrelations.com
www.jpublicrelations.com
Employees: 65. Founded: 2005.

Agency Statement: J Public Relations (JPR) is an international luxury PR and social media agency specializing in hospitality, travel and luxury lifestyle brands with offices in New York City, London, Los Angeles and San Diego. JPR is a trusted leader in media relations and brand strategy, trend forecasting, brand partnerships, influencer relations, social media strategy and unparalleled media placements worldwide.

Established in 2005, the award-winning agency has consistently risen to become the country's fastest growing, bi-coastal agency in the travel and hospitality spaces. JPR's global roster includes more than 125 hotels in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai, Europe, New Zealand, Asia and more. JPR steadily garners and retains notable clients including Relais & Châteaux, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Vail Resorts Hospitality, Grace Hotels, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, Newport Beach & Company, Four Seasons Lanai and 15 Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts.

JPR is listed on the Observer's annual "PR Power 50" as one of the country's most powerful PR firms. The agency also garnered "Top Places to Work" by PR News and "Agency of the Year" by Bulldog Reporter in addition to multiple trade and consumer awards for company culture and brand success.

Jamie Sigler O'Grady, Sarah Evans, partners

Locations:

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530 7th Ave., #502, New York, NY 10018
212/924-3600

San Diego

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619/255-7069

Los Angeles

429 Santa Monica Blvd., #280, Santa Monica, CA 90401
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Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts
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Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa
Regent Seven Seas Cruises (project work)
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