

# PR NEWS®

The Weekly Source for Media Relations, Crisis Management, Marcom, Internal Communications and Financial Relations

## Media Databases: Cracking The Build-or-Buy Quandary

It was the English poet William Blake who probably first addressed the media list conundrum, when he concluded his prophetic poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* with the immortal words: "Enough! or too much."

Therein lies the rub. As a PR practitioner, you can build a media list in-house and you will get just enough names to hit the basics, while expending just enough manual energy to wring an intern dry. Or you can buy a list from a database vendor and you may get far too much: More names than you could possibly need, more media outlets that you would ever want to contact – and more uncertainty as to the accuracy of the list.

So what's it going to be? Throughout the PR world a response has bubbled to the surface. The answer, in a word, is "both." *PR NEWS* contacted several agencies to get the pros and cons.

At Allison PR, for example, Senior Media Specialist Sonia Taylor helped recently to build a list for client 1-800-RADIATOR. Since the list among consumer publications, trade journals and business media could be enormous, the PR team ran a search using the MediaMap subscription database as a first cut and then went to work on that. The MediaMap list named five contacts at *The Washington Post* alone. Clearly, a little human editing was needed.

Although hand editing can be a laborious process, "we have better control and peace of mind knowing exactly how the list was developed and exactly what outlets were included and deleted from the initial search," Taylor says. In addition, this seemingly mundane work can help develop the PR chops among junior staffers. "The process teaches them how to be

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## Time Will Tell Whether New PR Alliance Has Any Legs

Mark Raper, chairman-CEO of PR agency Carter Ryley Thomas (CRT), doesn't mince words when he describes what keeps his clients up at night.

"Clients are telling us they're sick and tired of the same PR tools coming off the shelf," says Raper. "It's like we all know what the problems are but we keep doing the same things to address those problems. That's the definition of insanity, doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."

Ed Moed, managing partner and co-founder of Peppercom Inc., also wrestles with his

clients' frustrations. "Clients are saying they're in pain and have needs that aren't being addressed," he says. "They know they're sick, so the question becomes: How do they get well?"

Paging Dr. Kildaire for PR? Not exactly. But CRT and Peppercom, along with three other independent, mid-size firms, believe strongly that their clients deserve better bedside manner. So they have banded together to form Lumin, an "intellectual collaborative" in which the five firms will work together to offer all their clients new ideas, strategies and PR methodologies.

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### GOOD PR

McDonald's was in the deep fryer in 2002, as the world's number one fast-food chain reeled from six consecutive quarters of lower earnings. But the Golden Arches have bounced back this year, and PR has played a significant part in the ongoing revival. McDonald's — which buys about 2.5 billion pounds of beef a year — has already conducted 500 audits of meat processing facilities globally, checking on everything from cleanliness to the treatment of animals. Now, McDonald's is embarking on a plan that, by the end of 2004, will require its direct suppliers to stop pumping antibiotics in low doses to speed animal growth; McDonald's will choose indirect suppliers that limit antibiotics over those that do not. Although the move is a long time in coming, McDonald's is finally doing the right thing for its customers. What's more, other corporations are likely to follow McDonald's lead in making farming practices safer — a plan that any consumer advocate can sink his teeth into.

### BAD PR

The recording industry is turning up the volume in its campaign against file sharing of copyrighted music over the Internet. Several recording groups, including the American Federation of Musicians, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, ASCAP and the Association of Independent Music Publishers, recently paid for a full page ad in *The New York Times* with the heading: "Next time you or your kids 'share' music on the Internet, you may also want to download a list of attorneys." The ad goes on to say the recording industry is preparing lawsuits against individual computer

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PR joins advertising and conferencing as one of the most difficult disciplines to measure.

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Office Depot garners good will, employee participation in new public awareness campaign.

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Methodologies and guidelines for measuring the ink you get online.

## PRNotebook

**Is there anything celebrities can't do?** ...In yet another example of how celebrities move messages, a new study found that after NBC "Today" show host Katie Couric had a colonoscopy live on national TV in March 2000, colonoscopy rates nationwide jumped more than 20% in the days and months that followed. Researchers are calling it the "Katie Couric Effect." The study runs in the current issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine* and was reported on in *USA Today* (July 15). Mark Fendrick, an associate professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan School of Medicine, told the daily that "a celebrity spokesperson, even one without the condition he or she is promoting, can have a substantial and important impact on what the public does related to that disease."

**New "Image" for Philadelphia Inquirer...** Yesterday (July 20) marked the debut of a new broadsheet section in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* called "Image." The section essentially replaces the paper's Sunday magazine, which folded earlier this month. However, most of the magazine's popular columns — by Karen Heller, Lucia Herndon, Dianna Marder, Craig LaBan, Rick Nichols and Merl Reagle — will run along with some new features in "Image."

**PR People Moves...** Burson-Marsteller names **Karen Doyne** (ex-Ketchum) as Managing Director for Crisis Communications in the firm's U.S. Corporate and Financial Practice... Coyne Public Relations picks **Ronni Heyman** (ex-eLUXURY.com) as VP/New Business Development... A shakeup in Edelman's global operations: **Alison Canning**, who for the last two years has been president of international operations, has resigned and her position eliminated. Hugh Gillanders, head of

### Tech Tools and PR: Never the Twain Shall Meet?

Score one for PR pros who think that PR is an art form and doesn't lend itself to science. Senior-level marketing executives and directors from 52 U.S.-based high tech firms participating in a recent survey cited public relations, advertising and conferencing and events as the most difficult disciplines to measure. The study, conducted by Smith & Suita Inc. and MarketWise Innovations, found the following stumbling blocks:

- >> Difficulty getting the data (49%)
- >> Not having the technology or tools to measure results (47%)
- >> Not having enough time (45%)

Survey respondents say they use a variety of criteria for measuring PR, ranging from actual number of placements and comparable ad value to qualitative information such as tone of the article, key messages and — natch — "buzz." One director of a marketing company, with revenue of less than \$50 million, who participated in the study, says, "Campaigns with low response and poor quality leads are identified and discarded early allowing a more profitable use of budget." *Contact: Paula Suita: 781.784.2900, psuita@smithandsuita.com.*

Edelman's Irish operations, has been appointed European chief operating officer. Edelman president-CEO Richard Edelman, said in a statement: "We've removed the international operations position because we need a flatter, one-firm approach that allows us to be a true communications partner for companies operating in multiple markets."... **Nancy Valentino**, senior VP, strategic marketing and business development at Christie's, will be the next director of communications at *People*... Fleishman-Hillard taps **Mary O'Connor LoJacono** (ex-Mercer HR Consulting) and VP **Heather Beldon Rosenker** to join the agency's Financial Communications group... Hill & Knowlton names **Chaz Godwin** (ex-Fleishman-Hillard) as vice president/director of Broadcast Services, a new specialty offering designed to expand the client services of Hill & Knowlton's Media Communications Practice... General Electric Co. has named **Beth Comstock** its chief mar-

keting officer and corporate VP of marketing. Comstock, formerly corporate vice president of communications, will continue to oversee GE's integrated communications... **Bruce Jeffries-Fox**, who runs his own PR/communications agency, joins i to i tracker as head of research in the U.S. (see *Jeffries-Fox's column on page 7*)... PRSA named **Robert Levy** to the newly created position of chief professional development officer and assistant executive director. Levy will work with PRSA executive director and COO Catherine Bolton to align the Society's existing and planning activities with the PRSA's overall strategy... G.S. Schwartz & Co. promotes **Rachel Honig Peters** to senior vice president. She'll be responsible for marketing, account management and new business development... Sallie Mae hires **Tom Joyce** as VP of corporate communications; Joyces was partner and chair at Carmichael Lynch Spang.

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**Editor** ..... Matthew Schwartz  
212.621.4875 .....mschwartz@pbimedia.com  
**Contributing Editor** ..... Adam Stone  
410.268.3427 .....inkbiz@yahoo.com  
**Marcom Manager** ..... Amy Urban  
301.354-1699 .....aurban@pbimedia.com  
**Production Manager** ..... Tracey Lilly  
**Associate Publisher** ..... Jennifer Schwartz  
301.354.1702 .....jschwartz@pbimedia.com  
**Assistant VP/Publisher** ..... Diane Schwartz  
301.354.1761 .....dschwartz@pbimedia.com  
**VP/Group Publisher** ..... Heather Farley  
**President & CEO** ..... Don Pazour

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Published weekly by PBI Media, LLC 1201 Seven Locks Road • P.O. Box 61130 Potomac, MD 20859-1130 USA  
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New York Editorial Office: 110 Williams St., 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10038 • Phone: 212.621.4875 •  
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## Bugaboos

Laura Fenton joined *Budget Living* around the time of its October 2002 launch and was promoted this past June to assistant editor. She is involved in the magazine's entire conception and, more specifically, handles the "Making It" and "Designer Challenge" sections. She also helps to steer the "Home Interior/Home Furnishing" features. In less than a year *Budget Living* has garnered some serious buzz — is it any wonder, considering the magazine title juxtaposed against the torpid economy? — and recently announced it was boosting its guaranteed rate base later this year to 450,000 from the current 400,000.



### Fenton's Bugaboos

>> Knowing the space. The *Budget Living* office in New York is, in real estate parlance, rather cozy. So don't send any unwieldy packages that will just frustrate the staff. "We just don't have the space," says Fenton. "We get a lot of large, strange things." So be familiar with the editorial calendar so you know *when* to send a product for editorial consideration. For example, one PR pro killed his chances of hitting the note when he sent a pitch about children's toys — a full month after *Budget Living's* Gift Guide ran in December.

>> Budget cuts. Fenton says it's crucial to understanding *Budget Living's* M.O. The magazine caters to people who are budget-conscious, but covers products/services that are stylish and au courant. For example, it's hard to pitch a sofa for anything less than, say, \$1,000. But pitching a funky alarm clock in the same price range won't cut it. They have to be products that make sense and would appeal to a young, hip audience. "It's not about the price but something that is very affordable, with a modern sensibility," Fenton says. "It doesn't have to be urban, but that's a style we aspire to."

>> Ready for close-ups. "We love pictures," Fenton says, enthusiastically. If you're pitching any kind of product be sure to include a digital image in an initial e-mail, something that Fenton says many PR pros fail to do. Also, she notes, "If it's a new purse we'd probably like to see the purse," she says. "It's easier to see things first and, if we like it, can get on the telephone."

**What works:** It helps Fenton if PR execs can come up with a host of pitches that she can possibly pass on to other editorial staffers. "We love people who love the magazine and are on top of things," Fenton says. This way, if you don't have any luck with Fenton you'll have a "What about...?" response ready to go that Fenton can pass along to another editor.

Contact: [lfenton@budgetlivingmedia.com](mailto:lfenton@budgetlivingmedia.com)

## Media Insight

Women's Wear Daily • Fairchild Publications Inc.  
7 W. 34th Street • 3rd Floor • New York, NY 10001  
212.630.3500 • [www.wwd.com](http://www.wwd.com)

### THE WIND-UP

While titles like *Marie Claire* and *Glamour* provide coverage of the fashion industry chapter-and-verse, Fairchild Publications' flagship *Women's Wear Daily* remains the true bible for fashionistas. The daily, which launched in 1911, is a must-read for fashion, beauty, retail and media executives, Wall Street players and just about anyone who follows the constant navel-gazing throughout the fashion orbit. It places a huge emphasis on breaking news, but also provides in-depth coverage of the deals, the personalities and the drama inherent in the fashion business. "We take the pulse of the market, which companies are up, which companies are going out of business or what the CFO of a big retailer is up to. The glossies don't get involved in all of that," says Lisa Lockwood, *WWD* news director, who started at *WWD* in 1984 as sportswear editor. The publication, which runs Monday-Friday, has headquarters in New York along with bureaus in Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. and satellite offices in London, Milan and Paris. *WWD The Magazine*, a glossy focusing on the New York/Milan/Paris/London collections, runs bi-annually, with the next issue slated for November.



### THE PITCH

The publication unfolds like a daily, with special sections running throughout the week. So it's important to study the masthead and find out who covers what. Reporters and editors generally prefer e-mail or voice mail. The "Accessories Report" runs on Monday and is edited by Melanie Kletter, [melanie.kletter@fairchildpub.com](mailto:melanie.kletter@fairchildpub.com). The "Media/Advertising" section runs on Tuesday and Friday and is handled by Greg Lindsay, [greg.lindsay@fairchildpub.com](mailto:greg.lindsay@fairchildpub.com), and Jacob Bernstein, [jacob.bernstein@fairchildpub.com](mailto:jacob.bernstein@fairchildpub.com). Sportswear pieces run Wednesday and should be pitched to Eric Wilson, [eric.wilson@fairchildpub.com](mailto:eric.wilson@fairchildpub.com), and Evan Clark, [evan.clark@fairchildpub.com](mailto:evan.clark@fairchildpub.com). Thursday features "Denim Dish," or all things denim, and is edited by Scott Malone, [scott.malone@fairchildpub.com](mailto:scott.malone@fairchildpub.com); Malone also covers the textiles industry. "The *WWD* List," ranging from the top 10 highest paid U.S. apparel executives of publicly-listed companies to the most productive shopping malls in terms of square footage, for example, also runs on Thursday and is edited by Sharon Edelson, [sharon.edelson@fairchildpub.com](mailto:sharon.edelson@fairchildpub.com). "Beauty Day" runs Friday, featuring about 8-10 pages of beauty coverage. Pete Born, [pete.born@fairchildpub.com](mailto:pete.born@fairchildpub.com), steers that section. David Moin, [david.moin@fairchildpub.com](mailto:david.moin@fairchildpub.com), is the retail editor. Julee Greenberg, [julee.greenberg@fairchildpub.com](mailto:julee.greenberg@fairchildpub.com), edits the junior sportswear pages, called "The Beat," which runs on Thursday and covers junior and contemporary sportswear. Lockwood says the publication thrives on exclusives and prefers "ideas with broad implications that are not self-serving and can take a view of the market. We're not very big on one-company profiles." Keep in mind there's a full-blown editorial meeting every day at 10:00 a.m., where story ideas are fleshed out and assigned, and another meeting among senior editors at 3:00 p.m. Breaking news can be pitched up until 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. "We've been known to rip up the paper when an unbelievably crucial story comes in at deadline," Lockwood says. Non-breaking news features are filed by the reporter at least a day before publication.

### THE FOLLOW-THROUGH

*WWD* has a full line of special issues coming down the editorial runway. The "Sounds of Style," which plugs into the connection between rock and fashion, runs on Sept. 4; "Inside New York," with wall-to-wall coverage of New York Fashion Week, will appear in the Sept. 12 issue; fashion coverage of the Emmy Awards — featuring stories on the stylists who dress television stars — runs on Sept. 23, while L.A. Fashion week hits on Nov. 4.

## Media Databases

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media savvy. They will be forced to edit unnecessary outlets and think about what targets best fit the goals of the client.”

At PR agency GroundFloor Media, VP

### Competition Creeps Up For Media Databases

There's a crowded field of competitors nipping at the leader's heels. Here's a rundown of some of the companies gunning for market share.

- Publicity Assistant - [www.publicityassistant.com](http://www.publicityassistant.com)
- Bacons - [www.bacons.com](http://www.bacons.com)
- Media Atlas - <http://mediatlas.prnewswire.com>
- PR Anywhere - [www.pranywhere.com](http://www.pranywhere.com)
- Vocus - [www.vocus.com](http://www.vocus.com)
- Gift List (specialized list for the December holidays) - [www.giftlistmedia.com](http://www.giftlistmedia.com)

In addition, Business Wire is in beta testing with a service to be known as PressCenter, due to be commercially available in September.

John Shors says it is not just the volume of material that makes him wary of database lists. It's the accuracy.

Last year, Shors' firm switched to MediaMap from the PRNewswire product Online MEDIAtlas because MediaMap offers advanced technical features. But Shors says he has found the same shortcoming in all the leading databases. “A deficiency they all have is that a lot of their data is outdated,” he says. “They are fairly good at keeping tabs on reporters at the largest publications, but in the smaller publications I will often make calls only to be told that Bill Smith has been dead for the past three years.” Shors says a mailing done off a straight unchecked database list often will result in a 30% percent bounce-back rate.

To avoid that Shors, too, will undergo an arduous hand-check process. “If we have an important pitch or an important release to send out, I will use the database to build a general list of the publications, but then I will often call the receptionist or an assistant editor and determine the appropriate person to send the pitch letter to,” he says.

At the law firm of Winstead Sechrest & Minick, PR Manager Joey Mooring finds a combined list is his best bet. He likes to use third-party databases for the “flexibility and freedom” they give him in terms of being able to easily build and alter a basic list. At the same time, Mooring also works

with a number of PR agencies he asks to generate their own in-house lists of appropriate contacts for his press releases. “I have found by having access to my own media database, combined with my agencies' media lists, we are more successful in targeting each of our news releases and media pitches to only those media who would be interested,” he says.

Prices for a subscription to one of the major database services start at about \$3,000 and can easily go to 10 times that amount depending on the number of “seats” purchased. For that kind of money, some may expect a database-generated list to be a one-stop shop, but even the vendors themselves say their data cannot go it alone.

“We are always trying to refine the information that we collect on journalists and outlets,” says MediaMap Senior VP of Marketing Tim McManus. “But there are always improvements that a person working on their own or as part of a team will accomplish” above and beyond what the database offers. The majority of MediaMap's 2,000 customers combine the database-driven lists with some degree of hand editing.

The extra effort is worth it if a better list can help to land new clients. That's the argument put forth by Ken Dowell, managing director of targeting services for PR Newswire. He contends that with its 450,000 journalist contacts at 150,000 media outlets, the Online MEDIAtlas (OMA) can give an agency instant expertise when pitching stories. “It gives the agency the ability to present a potential client with some media intelligence in a sector or an area where they may not have done a lot of work before,” he says.

If volume is the chief virtue of a third-party database it is hardly surprising to see vendors angling to increase the breadth of their offerings. Take, for instance, one of the market leaders, Vocus, which on July 9 announced it has acquired certain assets from LexisNexis, including the in-depth media profile database and other products that had operated at one time as PressAccess Inc. The acquisition brought additional depth to Vocus's already substantial database and signaled vendors' increasing interest in building up both the scale and the substance of their services.

That kind of extensive reach has proven invaluable to Susan McLaughlin. As director of corporate communications for Toys R

Us, she turns to her Bacons database whenever the toy store chain is reaching into a new region. “We find it very useful when we are doing outreach to markets that we are not familiar with, where we don't have contact with the newspaper and the television stations on a daily basis,” she says. “It can be a great tool for developing a relationship with someone who you maybe never knew before.”

Still, many PR execs contend that nothing beats the human touch for making an accurate and effective pitch.

“An in-house list created by real PR people will have information that you just can't put a price tag on,” says Meg McAllister of McAllister Communications. “Hidden contacts, assistants to the gatekeepers, lower- and mid-level contacts ... and notes about general likes, dislikes, and a track record of what they've said yea or nay to,” she says. “These are the real keys to effective media placements for clients. It's all an extension of relationship building.”

### Best Practices for Databasing

Here's how some PR practitioners get the best use of vendors' media lists:

- **Mandatory training.** At CGI Group, “you will not get a user name and password [to access the database] unless you have been trained by the vendor on how to use the product,” says Senior VP Ray Kerins.
- **Dig deep.** Most media database lists will include more than just a reporter's name and contact information. Many offer beats, deadlines, pitch preferences and other valuable details.
- **Test drive.** At Yesawich, Pepperdine Brown & Russell (YPBR) Public Relations, Senior VP Rod Caborn took his third-party database for a 30-day test drive before going back to the vendor with questions and comments. “That way we could ask articulate questions,” he explains. “By that time we understood what we could figure out on our own, and what we really needed help on.”

**Contacts:** Rod Caborn, 407.838.1799, [rod\\_caborn@ypbr.com](mailto:rod_caborn@ypbr.com); Ken Dowell, 201.946.5440, [ken.dowell@prnewswire.com](mailto:ken.dowell@prnewswire.com); Ray Kerins, 212.537.8039, [rkerins@gcigroup.com](mailto:rkerins@gcigroup.com); Meg McAllister, 416.410.8466, [Meg@mcall.com](mailto:Meg@mcall.com); Susan McLaughlin, 201.986.8641, [mclaugh@toysrus.com](mailto:mclaugh@toysrus.com); Tim McManus, 617.393.3200, [tmcmanus@mediamap.com](mailto:tmcmanus@mediamap.com); Joey Mooring, 214.745.5308, [JMooring@winstead.com](mailto:JMooring@winstead.com); John Shors, 303.926.0973, [jshors@groundfloormedia.com](mailto:jshors@groundfloormedia.com); Sonia Taylor, 415.277.4907, [sonia@allisonpr.com](mailto:sonia@allisonpr.com)

# Creating Awareness of Medical Conditions Helps To Boost Brand

## Case Study

When retail giant Office Depot came calling, Joe Guzzardo knew it was his lucky day. As communications director for the National Alliance for Autism Research (NAAR), Guzzardo has a tough challenge: promoting awareness of autism, using the resources of a relatively small, non-profit agency. So, when Office Depot offered to help promote the cause, “it was an incredible boost.”

Office Depot attracts up to 5,000 requests each month for charitable assistance. The company started to rally around the cause of autism when a group of employees talked with the communications staff about the condition; the campaign got a major endorsement when CEO Bruce Nelson approached the PR team with the desire to help raise awareness. The PR team decided to help promote the cause after a thorough review showed that NAAR was legit, and that Office Depot’s participation could make a substantial difference in NAAR’s goals.

Together, Office Depot’s Director of Community Relations Mary Wong and PR Director Brian Levine set out to build a public-awareness campaign that would raise funds for autism research and — perhaps more important — heighten the understanding among Office Depot staff and customers. At the end of 2002 the Office Depot team started talking to NAAR about launching a campaign in all 870 North American Office Depot stores in time for National Autism Month in March 2003.

With that many stores to cover, it takes a fairly high degree of coordination to make this kind of campaign fly. “We’re not into writing checks just to write checks. Every charitable activity that we do is based on getting involved,” Levine says. “So the complexity is internal as much as anything else: distributing the posters, making sure the stores receive those, getting them out promptly and getting the employees to understand what it is all about.”

Job one was to get managers up to speed, with detailed literature explaining the cause and the reason for Office Depot’s involvement. Managers also get a “huddle

note” with talking points meant to help them convey the campaign themes to their employees, along with brochures and posters to mount on an in-store rack for the one-time, month-long campaign.

Nor is this the first time Office Depot has taken such steps. The retailer also has ongoing partnerships with Junior Achievement, City of Hope, Toys for Tots, America’s Second Harvest, the Canadian Association of Food Banks, the Dream Foundation and Gifts in Kind International, among other organizations.

### The Partner’s Role

Before the posters and brochures could emerge, however, the PR team needed to coordinate with the NAAR about nailing down the medical basics about autism.

“We needed to give them some language the general public could identify with without getting too scientific or too technical,” Guzzardo says. He created new language for the campaign while also providing Office Depot with some existing items, such as a “Did you know?” fact sheet. As simplified as some of these may have been initially, Guzzardo found himself having to tone them down. “They are looking for it in the most simplified format, with literally no technicalities to it at all.”

Wong notes that for NAAR, producing the materials was a challenge. “They had never had anyone do anything like this for them before, and sometimes it was a mess,” she says. In order to keep NAAR’s materials in line with the needs of her office, Wong kept up a steady stream of communications with the nonprofit partner. “We would outline it at each step: ‘This is what I need, when I need it. This is how we are going to do it.’ We would put together a very organized timeline to show them how we were going to do this going forward.”

As things progressed, various PR staffers in both organizations communicated on at least a weekly basis to ensure that logistical details were unfolding properly. Together, they coordinated press outreach efforts — largely in the distribution of an Office Depot press release — and organized joint interviews in response to requests from local media. Time consum-

ing, to be sure, but also par for the course at Office Depot, where community outreach accounts for “a considerable amount of the responsibilities” in the PR shop, says Levine.

Once she had the basic materials in hand Wong then produced the finished posters, brochures and so on, giving NAAR’s information a more uniform look. In campaigns like these, “we will put together our own materials, our own pamphlets and posters and so forth, so that the look at the feel of it will support our programs at Office Depot,” she says. The idea is not just to impress the customers, but also to get the employees stoked. “It is important to us that our employees understand why we are supporting these organizations. We want to show them how we are making a difference as a company. It’s important that we explain that to our managers, so that they can explain it to their employees.”

### The Results

Office Depot spent about \$75,000 on the community outreach campaign, including a cash gift and in-kind donations to NAAR. The retailer also raised more than \$10,000 from consumers who made donations upon checkout at Office Depot outlets. Office Depot reps say they consider the \$10,000 raised a bonus to the primary goal of the campaign, which was to raise awareness about autism and the work of NAAR.

It is more crucial than the cash, however, for the PR team to look at the intangibles. Wong, for instance, says she got hundreds of e-mails from families nationwide thanking Office Depot for helping to raise awareness, and Guzzardo agrees that the effort did much to boost the overall visibility of autism and of his organization. “The Office Depot campaign was very important for us in terms of getting the NAAR name and mission, and just autism in general, out there to the general public in a way that doesn’t happen very often.”

**Contacts:** Joe Guzzardo, 888.777.NAAR, x17, [jguzzardo@naar.org](mailto:jguzzardo@naar.org); Brian Levine, 561.438.2895, [blevine@officedepot.com](mailto:blevine@officedepot.com); Mary Wong, 561.438.7626, [mwong@officedepot.com](mailto:mwong@officedepot.com)

## New PR Alliance

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What's more, the tools will be designed to address communications throughout the entire enterprise — not just vertical silos.

The founding member agencies include Carter Ryley Thomas; Padilla Speer Beardsley (PSB); PainePR; Patrice Tanaka & Co. Inc. and Peppercom. Collectively, the firms have nearly 300 employees, 11 offices and approximately \$35 million in fees. (See sidebar). Raper, the driving force behind the alliance, serves as chairman while David Paine, CEO of PainePR, serves as Vice President and Ed Moed is the Treasurer. A board of directors consists of executives from all five companies. Each PR firm has invested an equal amount in the enterprise.

The alliance is not your garden-variety PR network, which tends to focus on geography, specific PR projects and Profits & Loss (P&L). Rather, the alliance's mission is to develop PR content first and worry about the distribution later. Lumin, which will be a virtual agency, is expected to roll out the first of several PR products in the next two or three months.

"It could be a service-oriented product, but it won't be cookie-cutter," Paine says.

"It'll be specific to a defined need a company might have, like the difficulty in getting sales and marketing departments to communicate better or why a publicly traded company isn't getting what it feels is a proper valuation in light of its revenues compared with its competitors."

Lumin will initially focus its efforts on four areas that internal research shows corporations think PR firms need to improve upon: a better understanding of their businesses; bringing more brain power to the table; what's "next" in public relations and said frustrations with the same old same old. Lumin will also create an MBA-style boot camp to help the agencies' staff members familiarize themselves with the language of the C-suite and learn about the communications concerns within corporate America. It's too early to tell whether the alliance can serve as a potential model for other mid-size PR firms.

"On the surface it looks like a great idea," says Mike Crawford, president of M/C/C, a marketing communications firm exclusively serving the technology industry. "The biggest challenge they have will be to play well together." But Lumin plays into an accelerating trend throughout industry: a growing demand for integrated

communications and one-stop shopping. "Maximizing every dollar you invest in marketing communications is critical today, and they're trying to reach out to the marketplace," Crawford says.

Of course, the five agencies that form Lumin want to serve their clients better. They also want to compete head-on for PR business with the heavyweights like Burson-Marsteller and Edelman.

"If they can tell the clients they can provide new tools, great," says Andrew Edson, president-CEO of Edson & Associates Inc., a public/investor relations firm. Edson helped to create The Worldcom Public Relations Group, a network of 100+ independent PR agencies. (PSB is

a member). "But then the big firms will tell the client, 'We also have market research departments, we're constantly coming up with new ideas and all of that is part of our mission.'"

Reaction among other PR pros has been mixed. Kare Anderson, co-founder of Say It Better Center Inc., which specializes in cross-promotional strategy, says Lumin hasn't done a very good job of coming out of the gate. "There's nothing specific where a prospective client can immediately grab the obvious benefit of the alliance, which is at the heart of PR," says Anderson, who is the author of "Walk Your Talk: Growing Your Business Faster Through Successful Cross-Promotional Partnerships." (Ten Speed Press, 1998.) She says the company should have "first established a specific benefit which can be a method or a mutual market they're going to serve together" rather than waiting for clients to fuel the alliance.

Cathy Ackerman, president-CEO of Ackerman PR, a full service PR firm with offices in Tennessee and Dallas, Texas, is more sanguine. "These things take time to gel," she says. "I think getting the business together is a low priority and how [the PR firms] help each other is the bigger priority."

Ackerman's agency has an ongoing collaborative with Washington, D.C.-based Dittus Communications PR. Dittus assists Ackerman with several of Ackerman's clients that have PR needs in the nation's capital, such as the Department of Energy and Siemens AG. Ackerman says the biggest hurdle to growing an alliance is making sure all of the players stay on the same page. "All the partners need to be sure not to get too greedy or impatient and to spell out the expectations. Not feeding the organization and putting it in the work is what causes failure."

Kathy Cripps, president of the Council of PR Firms, applauds the concept. "It is purely about bringing brain power together to help solve problems," she says. "They're willing to take the risk and challenge ourselves to try and do new things and create new ways to solving clients' challenges."

**Contacts:** Cathy Ackerman, 865.584.0550, cackerman@ackermanpr.com; Kare Anderson, 415.331.6336, kare@sayitbetter.com; Mike Crawford, 972.480.8383, mike\_crawford@mccom.com; Kathy Cripps, 877.773.4767, kripps@prfirms.org; Andrew Edson, 631.486.5546, andrew@edsonpr.com; Ed Moed, 212.931.6116, emoed@peppercom.com; David Paine, 949.233.0050, dpaine@painepr.com; Mark Raper, 804.675.8100, mraper@crtrp.com

Lumin: The Players				
PR Firm	Location	Staff	Specialties	Major Clients
<b>Carter Ryley Thomas</b>	Richmond, VA (HQ), Norfolk, Los Angeles, Charlotte Launched: 1989	45	CommTech, consumer behavior, business-to-business, education, awareness and influence; RC <sup>2</sup> (Reputation, Change, Culture); health sciences	Capital One, Nextel, Wyeth
<b>Padilla Speer Beardsley (PSB)</b>	Minneapolis & New York Launched: 1961	80+	Technology, retail, manufacturing, health care, financial services, consumer products and utilities	BASF, General Mills and Rockwell Automation
<b>PainePR</b>	Los Angeles, New York and Orange County, CA Launched: 1986	50	Consumer (electronics & technology/packaged goods), business products, services & technology, financial services, life sciences	Procter & Gamble, Duracell, Polaroid
<b>Patrice Tanaka &amp; Company, Inc.</b>	New York Launched: 1990	35	Brand marketing & PR, corporate PR, cause-related marketing, business-to-business, crisis management, event management, sales promotions and buzz marketing	Dyson, Godiva Chocolatier and World Kitchen International
<b>Peppercom</b>	New York, San Francisco, United Kingdom, Chicago Launched: 1995	60	Technology, manufacturing, health care, financial/professional services and consumer products	GE, Steelcase, ITT

Source: Lumin LLC

# Drilling for Gold: Using Research To Grab Bigger Budgets for PR

Is your slice of the budget pie shrinking each year? It's time to fight back. Along with your ability to create terrific programs, your most valuable weapon is research. Used wisely, it can get you more bucks and more influence in your company's strategic decision-making.

Research can assist you in three ways:

- ① It can help you do better programs.
- ② It can help you show a positive ROI.
- ③ It can show how your use of the money compares with other groups'.

## Using research for better programs.

Research can help you develop better programs by providing you with valuable insights. For example, research can show you what the public really thinks about your organization and your business issues. It can give you ideas to build creative platforms. Without these insights, you're flying blind. These days, when budget dollars are harder to come by than a decent presidential candidate, it is positively irresponsible to ask for more budgets for programs without having a firm foundation. Using research for strategic communication plans plays an important role in getting bigger budgets because it allows you to stand up before top management and show that you are approaching your task in an objective manner and proposing only those programs with a solid, fact-based rationale.

**Using research to demonstrate a positive ROI.** If you want more money,

you've got to convince someone his or her investments are paying off. You need to show that for every dollar they give you, they get at least a dollar back. The tricky part is expressing what PR does in terms of dollars.

Some *marketing PR programs* are designed to generate sales, and this makes the ROI calculation easy. Total up the value of the sales, compare it with your costs, and you got a ROI. Another example: Sometimes we're the first form of communication used in new product launches. Here again the math is easy. Reckon the value of the sales before other forms of communications were introduced, compare that with your costs up to that point and calculate the ROI.

But more often we're one of several forms of communication, and our role is not so much to close the sale but to prepare the market for doing business with us. In this case we can't take the credit (or blame) for sales, but we can take responsibility for changing levels of awareness or perceptions or attitudes. Here's another remedy: Ask your researchers which perceptions and attitudes are "key drivers" of sales. Then ask them to design you a study that shows how people exposed to your messages and programs differ in these attitudes and perceptions from those not exposed. If the research is set up right, the gap between the two groups is a measure of your impact —

then this can be translated into dollars to make the ROI calculation. It takes a pro to design and execute this type of research, so don't try to do it yourself. Sure, it will take some of your precious money to do the research, but it is money well spent if it can demonstrate a positive ROI that you can show to your top management at budget time.

When we're talking about *corporate communications* and trying to influence a vote among community leaders, for example, we need to take a more qualitative approach. First, document your efforts against the target voters.

## Measurement

These are your costs. Determine if any other groups from your organization are also trying to influence the voters and be sure to document their efforts. Then put a price tag on the vote—how much it will mean to the company, in dollars, if the vote goes "for" or "against" you. After the vote is taken, compare your costs against the outcome of the vote (in dollars). This will give you your ROI.

If another group is trying to influence voters, you need to give them some credit. Describe their efforts and then divide the value of the votes' outcome by two. This is a crude way of saying that your efforts and their efforts contributed equally to the outcome. After doing the division, compare the resulting half of the vote's outcome to your PR costs. Call this calculation your "estimated PR ROI." It's clearly not the most rigorous calculation ever made, but it does show that you're trying to be both realistic and fair.

**Comparing your use of budget to other groups'.** In order to compare results among groups fairly, the same measuring stick needs to apply to all. To do this, try to piggyback on studies your company already does to measure other groups' results. Talk to the managers of the research and see if they can build in appropriate questions to measure your results as well. Use the survey's data to calculate ROI's for each form of communication covered by the study and compare your results with others'. If there isn't an ongoing survey, partner with marketing to field one. Get a professional researcher to design a questionnaire that will generate data about exposure to different forms of communication (PR, advertising, direct mail, etc.), key driver attitudes and perceptions, and interest in doing business with your company. Then use the study's results to calculate ROI's for each type of communication.



Bruce Jeffries-Fox is president of Jeffries-Fox Associates, a Cape May, New Jersey-based PR firm, and is also director of research, U.S., for i to i tracker, the research subsidiary of Manning, Selvage & Lee. (a Publicis Group Company) He can be reached at 609.884.8740, bruce.jeffries-fox@itoitracker.com

## Good PR/Bad PR

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users who "share" copyrighted music over peer-to-peer networks. Good luck. While we agree that sharing music over the Web is illegal, legal threats from the recording industry will just alienate Webheads who have come to view file sharing as free. Now, Congress is also getting into the act. At press time, two Democratic lawmakers proposed a bill that would make it easier to file criminal charges against Internet users who copy music over peer-to-peer networks. With the nation's unemployment rate hovering around 6%, a developing mess in Iraq and the number of uninsured Americans on the rise, it's good to see Congress has its priorities straight: siccing the Federal government on Web users who swap tunes. The recording industry needs to embrace the Web; not fight it. The industry needs to figure out a way to work with the Web so that artists can be compensated while the industry still maintains the ability to distribute music digitally. A full-employment bill for trial attorneys doesn't help anyone in this case.

## • BLUEPRINT •

# Measuring Media Relations Outputs for Internet Publications

If you think guidelines to measure print and broadcast media can give you a headache, trying to measure articles on the Internet is akin to getting a frontal lobotomy. How does one determine the number of people who may have seen a story on the Web, and what possible media value could it have? It's an issue that should be at the top of mind for communications executives, especially if you consider how much faster the Internet has grown compared with the historic growth of radio and TV, for example. To get a better handle on Web measurement, PRtrak/SDI recently worked with top executives in the advertising research, media buying and Web measurement industries to develop some methodologies and guidelines that would lay a cornerstone for Internet media measurement for the PR world. These methods are now being used by a number of PR vendors and hundreds of practitioners nationwide, and include the following:

### Internet Audience Estimates:

Internet audience estimates are easy to inflate, just by misunderstanding the various definitions alone.

**Hits:** many users cite "Hit" counts as evidence of how many times their story was accessed. But "Hits" is the most inflated number of all, since it delivers the total of all graphic elements accessed within an entire site each day.

**Impressions:** this number is also inflated, since it delivers the total of all pages viewed on a site per day.

**Visits:** since a story usually appears on a single page, the best number to use is Daily Average Visits, which shows the average number of times the site itself is accessed each day. Thus, at the most, this would be how many people could actually have seen your story. Essentially, Daily Average Visits for the Internet is the same as Gross Impressions are for broadcast stations – "eyeballs."

**Home Versus Non-Home Page Visits:** Keep in mind that "Visit" numbers tend to be available for Home Pages, which is not where most of us get story placements. So, if you wish to measure more precisely,

research done by SDI and comScore MediaMetrix has shown that the likelihood of a prospect to go from a home page to a secondary (or deeper) sub-page depends upon the type of site. For example, at the low end, only 8% of visitors to a "community" site go on to a sub-page, whereas at the high end, 28% do so on a financial site.

### Internet Media Values:

The metric to request is the 468 x 60 banner rate for a site. A reliable source for Internet advertising rates is:

SQAD Inc., which is the definitive standard in media-cost forecasting for the broadcast and Internet industries. SQAD obtains the real invoices paid by major ad agencies, and supplements that information with polling and then determines the "Average Banner CPM" paid by media buyers.

Using a straight banner rate for the value of a story is completely inaccurate. SDI found that what was missing in these calculations was the amount of space covered by a story, in the same way column inches are used to calculate print value. The algorithm that yields the most realistic

rates – when compared to print space costs – is to use 1 banner rate for each 50 words in an article.

### Adding It All Up:

Here is a summary of the steps, along with an example:

**Obtain Daily Average Visits for the site**  
(Example: 20,000 visits)

**Obtain the 468 x 60 Banner CPM**  
(Example: \$25)

**Divide Daily Average Visits by 1,000**  
(Example above: 20,000 divided by 1,000 = 20)

**Multiply the CPM by the result above to get the full Banner Cost**  
(Example above: \$25 x 20 = \$500)

**Divide the Word Count of your story by 50**  
(Example: a 200-word story divided by 50 = 4)

**Multiply the result above by the Banner Cost for story Media Value**  
(4 x \$500 = \$2,000 Media Value)

**Contact:** Angela Jeffrey, APR,  
713.956.1516, angie@prtrak.com

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