

CONTENTS

Social Media.....	1,3,5
Crisis Management	1,4,5
Generation Z.....	2
Events Calendar.....	2
SEO	6,7
The Week in PR.....	8



SOCIAL MEDIA

Picture This: How to Visualize Your Brand's Stories With Instagram and Why You Should

Chalk up the lack of media buzz around **Instagram** to the vagaries of our what-have-you-done-for-me-lately digital media world. While the 6-year-old platform is far from past it—in fact, you could argue it's only hitting its stride now—it's hard to find much business news lately about it. Press coverage of Instagram seems to get bumped by stories featuring app *du jour* **Snapchat** and of course the behemoth (and Instagram parent) **Facebook** and Facebook Live.

Still, with 500 million monthly active users of Instagram and 300 million daily active users, the platform shows few signs of weakening. In fact its user base is growing faster than social network usage generally, says **eMarketer**. It will grow 15% this year vs 3% growth for the social network overall. By next year more than half of all social media users will be using it, notes Leslie Drate, social media manager, U.S. consumer print, at **HP**. By 2020, eMarketer predicts, it will add 27 million

Continued on page 3

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

BY JULIANA TRAMMEL, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Six Communications Takeaways From the 2016 Summer Olympics so Far

[Editor's Note: With the Olympics beginning, we asked Rio native Juliana Trammell, PhD, associate professor and **PRSSA-SSU** co-adviser at **Savannah State University**, to discuss PR and communications with respect to the upcoming games.]

On August 5 Brazil is set to become the first South American country to host the Olympics. Some half million people are expected to join a city of 6 million inhabitants. While it has been well documented globally that Rio faces extreme challenges (*PRN*, May 16), you'd not know it looking at the communications the Rio Olympics' organizing committee is producing. The committee has a user-friendly, visually attractive website with stunning photos, press kits, news updates

and social media links, among other PR tactics. Similar to many other sporting events, there is a festive and triumphant tone to the committee's storytelling.

While it's understood that PR pros are expected to stress the positive aspects of stories, this must be balanced with at least some level of transparency. The committee's lack of honest communications about the economic, social and health challenges facing Rio could become a negative story and perhaps reflect poorly on brands taking sponsorship roles at the games. At the least,



Continued on page 4



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Z Best Is Yet to Come: How to Communicate With Gen Z



Just as communicators are starting to ‘get’ millennials, there’s a follow-on cohort, Generation Z. While there’s debate about the age range of Gen Z, we’ll define it here as those born from 1995 to now, meaning anyone 21 or younger.

As a communicator you can think of Gen Z-ers as the poor man’s millennials and treat them as you did their predecessors. This is a mistake. It’s better to see them as young evolutionaries. Of the characteristics that will influence how brands interact with this group, the most important may be Gen Z’s sway over family spending (more on this below). Three others:

1. Change Agents: With their easy access to tech devices and considerable interactions online, there’s a confidence about this group. It’s unafraid to speak up. Gen Z-ers aren’t just trying to fit in but seek to drive change. Critical for communicators, Z-ers feel free to be themselves and readily interact with brands, sharing their perspective and advice. Yet they aren’t merely offering hyperdiscerning opinions. They are making business cases, pitches and PowerPoint presentations so they’ll be acknowledged.

2. Local and Global Change: They’re intentional about everything and live with a change-the-world mentality. They’re not just talking, but rolling up their sleeves and doing it.

3. Controlled Aggression: While they are a hard-charging bunch, they’ll display a cautious side, particularly with social media. Often they will pause before posting. They’ve learned from millennial blunders like losing a job or relationship over a flash-in-the-pan post. They filter before they share publicly because they know that even if their post is removed, they aren’t immune. The younger Z-ers learned this in school.

KEY TO OUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

These toddlers, tweens and teens represent 28% of the population. In four years this is expected to be 40%. While the implications for communicators are clear, a paradigm shift makes Gen Z’s influence even greater. Unlike

their predecessors, they have more sway over not just their piggy bank but family spending. It started with putting Gen Z in the driver’s seat for low-stakes purchases and has evolved into many Gen Z-ers making family decisions for tech devices, vacation and cars. In terms of back-to-school buying, a 2015 **National Retail Federation** survey found 10% of parents admit their children influence 100% of what they buy, up from 8% in 2014.

WHAT BRANDS SHOULD DO

It’s imperative that brands crack the code to grow in a Gen Z world. Companies that act now to understand Gen Z attitudes, behaviors and preferences will gain healthy insights and a first-mover advantage. Communicators should reframe conversations to do more than recycle existing tactics. Instead encourage your brand to spend time in the field getting to know this generation. And facilitate honest and sometimes uncomfortable conversations about how your brand values overlap with Gen Z or don’t.

To further tap into this audience here are three tips for PR pros:

- ▶ **Be real—you only matter if you fit into their world.** Understand the Z lifestyle and values and where your brand can meet them. Find ideas and communications strategies that flow easily into their lives; ask for their input.
- ▶ **Connect with social good.** Leapfrog competitors by connecting to a long-term social cause. Show your purpose and how you authentically will leave a positive footprint on the world. Invite Gen Z to vote for a charity and become philanthropists no matter how much or how little they give. If you’re making a commitment, don’t skip taking this for a test drive with customers to see if it aligns with their values and dreams.
- ▶ **Find their inner circle.** Adapt your communications strategy to cultivate relationships with the people they love most. Embrace the new influencers or online celebrities who are in their circle of trust. Engage them to give life advice and share their not-so-perfect, behind-the-scenes selves. ■

Big Spenders	
\$200 billion	Gen Z spending power by 2018
\$600 billion	Gen Z’s influence on spending today

Source: *Upfront Analytics*

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Authenticity, Influencers a Good Mix for Instagram

users, well more than any social platform. It's also very hot with millennials. While there are 48 million U.S.-based millennial Instagram users, by 2019 some two-thirds of all millennial smartphone users will use Instagram, eMarketer says.

With those user figures in mind and PR News' Big 4 Social Media Summit starting in a few days, we asked Drate and other Summit speakers to share their knowledge about Instagram. Specifically, we asked how brands can best use it to tell stories and engage followers. We also asked about working with influencers and using Instagram when you're on a small budget.

Before You Start: For Drate and HP, a visually oriented brand, Instagram's visually oriented platform is almost a no-brainer to feature the brand's lifestyle photography products. "Experiencing our brand visually has gotten customers and fans engaged, and Instagram is one of our best performing platforms for organic engagement," she says.

For brands without an obvious visual tie-in, Erin Fior, senior director of digital communications, **Cystic Fibrosis Foundation**, urges communicators to "start with a lot of reading" and researching. "What content is of value to the community you are trying to engage? Who are the influencers and how do they talk about the topics important to you? What are the critical hashtags and...the themes the conversation is happening around?" After that, "determine where there are authentic overlaps between the message you want to convey and the conversations happening organically. Don't be afraid

to test and abandon themes or hashtags if they aren't getting the response you are looking for," she says.

Is there a magic number for hashtags? "Some say 12 is the perfect number, but even more important is being authentic and tagging to join conversations that are relevant to your post," Drate believes. "They can help you find new audiences who might be interested in what you have to say."

As in nearly every PR initiative, "determine what your goal is and how you will measure success in advance," Fior says.

Content Takeaways: Drate believes "every social media platform requires a unique approach." The timing, tone, variety "as well as when and how to incorporate product stories" all are aspects of "a recipe that has to be fine-tuned as you collect data and learn." Another tip: "Keep in mind that users experience the content almost exclusively on mobile devices and a large portion of content is viewed without sound."

Fior stresses authenticity. "For us, highly produced and edited content performs much worse than in-the-moment, real, feeling moments. That might not be the case for every brand. Listen to feedback...and take time to glean lessons from what content performs and what doesn't. Replicate your successes and move away from your misses."

While it's great to have a significant budget, Drate counsels quality over quantity. "As a rule, I suggest fewer, better images or videos for this platform," she says. "Even if you don't have a lot of creative resources, your iPhone and filters can save you in a pinch. In fact, filters are proven to increase your engagement, so it pays to use them well."

What about working on a tiny budget, when the entire Instagram effort is you? Fior suggests booking two separate times in your day: one for reading and engaging with other people's content and the other for publishing. "It's so important to not just be pushing content on Instagram," she says, "success happens with engagement." She urges small communications departments to "take the time to respond, comment on and share other peoples' content."

Fior also believes in engaging with influencers. "Even if your team is one person, you can build a large group of advocates and supporters over time to share your content effectively growing the capabilities of your [one-person] team."

Continued on page 5

Instagram: A Brand Gathering Place	
49%	Percent of brands on Instagram
70%	Percent of brands expected to be on Instagram by 2017
50%	Percent of Instagrammers following brands
90	The number of top 100 global brands on Instagram
96%	Percent of fashion brands on Instagram
Engagement with brands on Instagram is 10 times higher than Facebook and 84 times higher than Twitter	
Pokemon and Hootsuite: The most engaged U.S. B2C and B2B brands, respectively, on Instagram (Q1' 16)	
Sources: Brandwatch, eMarketer, forrester, GlobalWebIndex, Shareablee, SimplyMeasured.com	



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Transparency, Honesty Needed in Rio's PR Plan

the social and economic problems represent opportunities missed for brands on the CSR front.

Examples of the committee's good-news communications:

- ▶ While media were reporting on the precarious state of athletic housing found by the Australian delegation, the Rio 2016 website showed stunning pictures of the facilities.
- ▶ As social media was overwhelmed with locals' disapproval of the Olympics and stories of individuals being arrested for trying to extinguish the Olympic torch, the committee's press releases ignored these sentiments and events.
- ▶ While state workers, including teachers, police and firefighters, protested a lack of basic human needs such as adequate pay and safe working conditions, the website touted the city's sustainability and environmental initiatives.

Selected to host the games during a time when the country's economy was booming, Rio now is facing one of its worst economic recessions since the 1930s. While much of the world is focused on the Zika virus, that may end up being the least of Rio's problems. While police will need to protect visitors from serious waves of violent crimes, robberies, thefts and carjacking that plague residents, the morale of these civil servants is low. In July, more than 100 officers and firefighters vented their anger over working conditions with a banner "Welcome to Hell" at Rio International Airport. This came after months without being paid. Other state services are similarly in peril. A state-run morgue stopped receiving bodies because cleaning service workers, who'd stopped being paid, walked off the job. State-run hospitals lack supplies and people are being denied care in emergency rooms.

In addition to Rio's inconsistently paid police force, the state hasn't been able to pay salaries of other workers. Pensions for retired workers are erratic, too. Many retired teachers, including my mother, received a check for half of May's pension in July. Of current teachers, about 40% have been on strike for months, the largest school strike in Rio's history.

The denial of Rio's issues is far from a unified position of Brazilian authorities. In fact, on June 17, governor Francisco Dornelles declared Rio was in a "state of public calamity in financial administration." This, he said, could cause total collapse in public security, health, education, transport and environmental management. Yet Mario Andrada, executive director of communication for Rio 2016, said the games would not be affected.

THE WRAPPING

In fact, the half a million tourists expected in Rio may never see the worst parts of Rio. Just as the committee's communication is attempting to shield visitors from the several truths, authorities are erecting a literal shield. An article, "Rio Is Putting Makeup on for The Olympic Games," was recently published in the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper. Pictures accompanying the story show the city's "face-lift." This consists of thematic adhesives, large flags and color-



fully painted boards placed mostly around poor residential areas and complexes. Rio's Department of Tourism says the purpose of the "enveloping," which cost \$230 million, was not to hide poverty, but to brighten the spirits of visitors, guests and tourists.

Rio 2016 probably will be fine. The show will go on. But as PR pros, we often are confronted with the ethical dilemma of "wrapping things up" for special occasions. As we know, this wrapping may come with a high price. Engaging in two-way communication and allowing stakeholder concerns to influence an organization's storytelling are important parts of risk communication. Rio 2016's messages have failed on this account. The organizing committee could have done better at:

1. Initiating Early Contact When Crisis Emerged: When it comes to managing bad news, the committee could have acted faster. When news broke about the Australian delegation's issues, the committee was unavailable for comment for hours. Meanwhile Kitty Chiller, the Australian delegation head, was making statements to the media. Being proactive and contacting concerned parties early is important, particularly to establish trust.

2. Identifying Local Residents as Legitimate Partners: The Olympic committee, and the host city, failed to engage locals in two-way communications. Many citizens' concerns have been ignored or not heard. There is no formal means of dialogue. Instead there's a top-bottom "order" approach to things. There are services and venues local residents won't have access to during the Olympics, including 150 hospital beds reserved for visitors. Effective risk communication involves addressing issues of concern. Proactively soliciting and identifying issues to establish and foster trust and understanding is crucial. This, too, has been wanting.

3. Being Honest: The truth hurts sometimes. But nothing in PR weighs more than an organization's transparency, even when information it releases is unpleasant. The website failed to highlight or address issues that were being widely discussed on social media and news outlets, and that could impact not only the guests, but also the athletes. For example: the water quality in the Guanabara Bay, which is still overrun by sewage. Despite numerous news reports, social media outcry and warnings from local fishermen, there is

Continued on page 5

Piggybacking: If your brand has a social presence on other platforms, build off existing relationships you have and extend them to Instagram,” says Karen Do, senior manager, brand social, at Adobe. Similar to Florio, Do urges communicators to follow “influencers creating content relevant to your brand. Engage with what they share and consider direct message outreach if there’s more you want to say. If you simply love the work, consider asking their permission to regram with full attribution and share the context in how you’d use the image.” In addition, you can negotiate a channel takeover with an influencer or sponsor a post they share on their profile, Do says. She advocates agencies that provide influencers. Such agencies “have expertise in negotiating the cost and terms of engagement, and can sustain the relationship on behalf of the brand.” Still, brands, at least

so far, have been on the hook for infractions of Federal Trade Commission regulations committed by agencies and their influencers (PRN, July 18). The obvious lesson is for communicators to be vigilant overseeing agencies and influencers. ■

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Subscribers: See sample agreements for working with influencers at the PR News Pro Essentials page: prnewsonline.com/pr-news-pro-essentials/

For more information about the Big 4 Social Media Summit, August 10, in San Francisco please visit: <http://www.big4socialmedia.com/>

little in the committee’s communication strategy besides the core message “we are ready.”

4. Avoiding Top-Down: Rio could have done a better job communicating with locals, making it a conversation instead of deploying a top-down approach telling them about the areas and streets they will not be able to use or even get close to because of the Games. It’s also important to remember only the upper class can afford to attend the games. Attending to those inside the wrapping is as important as serving those outside.

5. Having a Crisis Plan: Have a crisis communications plan for the “internal” constituents, even if it is an entire city: For those groups who get to see the ugly side, have a

plan to minimize damage. While key messages (and efforts) have been to communicate that Rio is ready for the Games, communicating that the locals are safe and being taken care of is as important, and their wellbeing cannot be ignored.

6. CSR Aspects: The city of Rio could have spearheaded a series of initiatives with direct and long-lasting impact for the people of Rio. It might not be too late for brands to make sure the party leftovers include a positive humanitarian legacy for locals. ■

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Reverse SEO: 5 Ways Communicators Can Erase Negative Citations



Most in public relations know that sinking feeling. You get a call at 2 a.m. Your client has just made headline news after insulting a bouncer at a questionable watering hole and is now getting blamed for a nice, western-style bar brawl. Wait, is that just me?

Maybe this exact situation hasn't happened to you, but you likely have your own story about a client who made the wrong decision. Now that the crisis is over, it's possible that client is still paying for those same mistakes. The internet doesn't forget.

Or does it? Through the miracles of science (and some clever PR professionals), online reputations are no longer as cemented in history as perhaps once thought. Enter the advent of reverse SEO. Think of it as SEO but, well, in reverse.

The concept has been around for about a decade, and elements have seeped into the lexicon of public relations professionals. Namely, reputation management has caught on. But while reverse SEO shares characteristics of reputation management, reverse SEO is more specific to search results that pop up for clients when specific keywords or phrases are used.

Can this methodology truly rewrite history and give clients a clean slate? The answer, as with so many things in life, is: yes and no. Let's explore what reverse SEO is and how it can be applied. But first, how do you even know when you need to take action?

EAT AN APPL... KEYWORD A DAY

As with health, prevention is typically the most cost-effective option. Keeping fit throughout one's life is generally considered the best way to mitigate the downside of aging. Of course, in life and PR this is not always possible. Whether it's due to poor judgment or inadequate training, most clients eventually will encounter tricky PR issues. That's what you, the communications professional, are there for. Clients, however, may not always recognize when these tricky moments are happening.

Reverse SEO shares characteristics with crisis management, especially when it comes to information gathering. However, instead of checking media outlets for stories about your client, you monitor social media chatter and keyword results instead.

BAD THINGS LURK ON THOSE SOCIAL MEDIAS

1. Invest in a Monitoring Tool: Those seeking to harm a brand's reputation frequently start off with complaints via social media. If a company is fortunate, the complaint will be made to the brand itself, either via a hashtag or posted on the company's page. Sometimes this is not the case. Hashtags are easy to monitor. Non-hashtag complaints are a little more involved. Invest in a social-media-monitoring tool that can help you identify specific keywords and mentions,

allowing you to check on your brand's reputation without having to rely on people coming to you specifically with a complaint.

Eventually tools using artificial intelligence likely will be sophisticated enough to monitor social media text and visuals. It's likely the various platforms will use them to monitor foul language and hate speech. Still, the need to oversee a brand's reputation will remain.

WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT US?

2. Keyword Alert: Just as you subscribe to **Google Alerts** or another service to check for mentions of your brand in the media, so too should you monitor certain keywords involving the brand. We're not necessarily talking about the same keywords your brand wants to rank highly for. "**Subway** pedophile" is certainly not something the sandwich chain wants to rank highly for, but alas, a quick search lately doesn't result in news reports of sleazebags and mass transportation. Keep your brand's recent events in mind and try to get in the mind of those who dislike the company. What would they say about it? How would they refer to it?

SHOULD I JUST APOLOGIZE?

3. The Human Touch Works: You can forego the fancy technological approach and go with something a little more old-fashioned, too. A common source of negative publicity comes from unhappy customers. Businesses on **Yelp**, **eBay**, **Amazon**, or any other platform that includes a social reputation scoring system can attest to just how damaging several negative reviews in a row can be to a business. Thanks to social media, many of you have witnessed firsthand how out of control reputation management can become when negative experiences go viral.

Rather than attempting to divert attention, you may want to go after the source itself. Reach out to the offended party and find out what happened and how your brand can make things right. In your conversations, ask for concessions like removing negative public opinion. You'd be surprised how many people are willing to do so if they see they now have a voice and are heard. All of this may seem like something your brand's legal team should do, but you're better equipped to know what outcome will serve the brand's reputation best.

STORM THE FORT, OVERWHELM ITS DEFENSES

4. Fight Back With Content: The most involved strategy is to try and overwhelm existing search results with favorable ones. Just as companies one-up one another for popular search terms, the same can be done for those that reveal unwanted links. In this case, the competition isn't another company vying for "best car wash Las Vegas" but rather online articles, bloggers and whoever else has decided that

your brand's reputation is the story *du jour*. Create a plethora of consumables, from blogs to white papers, guest articles, backlinks, and even social media posts (use platforms that show up in results, like Google Plus and **Twitter**). While you won't get rid of existing links, you can certainly increase the chances of certain search terms showing favorable results rather than negative ones. Combine this strategy with your usual SEO routine and you'll slowly start getting results.

While you're at it, check to see if there are other, related terms that are more frequently searched. Some of them may not yet have many negative associations, so now would be a good time to be proactive and enhance your brand's SEO for those terms before others hijack them.

5. Speed Kills: Keep in mind that this is a slow, arduous, but effective process. This isn't a tool for crisis management, but rather reducing exposure over time. Negative brand stories on reputable media sites likely will take up the top search results for quite some time just because search engines trust them. But you have the advantage. Stories die. Attention gets diverted. Eventually, media outlets stop reporting on the same issue, so the stories no longer benefit from additional exposure and renewed search rankings. Meanwhile, a continuous strategy on your part will eventually overcome old stories. Once you've secured the top five results, you've effectively captured 70% of all clicks.

As with most things worth doing in life, these processes take time. If only there were something you could do that was more direct.

A FOREIGN SOLUTION

Enter Mario Costeja Gonzales, a Spaniard who auctioned off property after he ran into financial troubles in the late '90s. He wasn't very happy about that chapter of his life, so imagine his dismay when he discovered his financial issues were among the first search results that appeared when typing his name into a search engine. Determined to rid himself of evidence of past mistakes, Gonzales sued and eventually won. In 2014 the **European Court of Justice** agreed he should have the right to have information about his past financial troubles removed from search results. As a result, the EU's attempts at pushing through data privacy laws were rewarded with a key component, a so-called "right to be forgotten" ruling.

Thanks, Europe, I knew I could count on you for a seemingly foreign solution.

Within two years, Google alone received nearly 400,000 requests for removing certain links—not to mention requests

other search engines received—highlighting just how much public interest in such a service there seems to be.

Of course, this applies to European residents only and excludes companies and brands. The ruling may seem of limited benefit to U.S.-based PR pros unless they represent a European resident.

Could a similar law be enacted here in the States? It's doubtful, at least for now. In the U.S., First Amendment concerns have trumped any serious attempts at creating the same ruling, but there are limited resources at your disposal. Google takes links down if they violate certain policies, namely if the content includes:

- ▶ violations of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act
- ▶ child pornography or promotes abuse
- ▶ sensitive, private information about individuals such as bank account numbers, credit card numbers, images of signatures
- ▶ sexually explicit images shared without the subject's consent

Hopefully, your brand will never be in a position of needing help with that last one, but you never know. Nevertheless, the options are severely limited compared to what you can request to have removed in Europe.

JUST GIVE US WHAT WE WANT!

In reality, the European Union's "right to be forgotten" policy is what many people hope for when they think about

the reverse SEO concept. The field is still relatively young, perhaps 10 years old, and there are some innovative ideas coming out of both established digital marketing companies and start-ups with fresh perspectives on the matter. For now, we'll have to make do with other, less direct strategies. Whatever your approach, know that there are tools at your disposal, and with a dedicated approach, you can minimize harmful publicity and, eventually, relegate it to the shadows of second- and third-page results. ■

Editor's Note: *Learn about SEO from the global SEO leads at Cisco and Careerbuilder.com during our webinar: SEO Strategies That Will Help Your Messages Find The Right Audience, August 23, 1:30pm ET. For information, please visit: <http://www.prnewsonline.com/webinars/seo-strategies-that-will-help-your-messages>*

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SEO Data Points	
59%+	Percentage of U.S. adults using a search engine daily *
17.5 billion+	Number of searches using desktop computers (as of Jan '16) **
68%	Percentage of U.S.-based desktop searches conducted by Google**
89%	Percentage of global searches Google conducted**
1.1 trillion	Number of searches Google conducts yearly, including mobile devices **
70%	Percentage of people who never go beyond the 1st page of search results **
68%	Percentage of those clicking on one of the first five search results **
Source: * Pew Research Center ** comScore	



Elizabeth Holmes, Founder, Theranos

1. Platform Prater: The tit-for-tat between social brands continues, with the battlefield moving to live streaming. For a time pundits enjoyed contrasting **Facebook's** financials with those of **Twitter**. No more. Due to Facebook's historic financial prowess, it's no longer a fair fight. At least with live video, it's still a contest. In July, **CNBC International** signed an agreement with Facebook to put its morning show *Street Signs* on Facebook Live for a trial following the Brexit vote. Meanwhile Twitter tapped **Bloomberg Media**, which will live stream several of its shows on the bird platform, including election monitor *With All Due Respect*. July 20 Twitter said it hooked the **NBA** to live stream a pair of new, weekly pre-game shows on the platform. This adds to Twitter's sports stable: it signed the **NFL** earlier this year to live stream *Thursday Night Football* games. Twitter also live streamed **Wimbledon** in July. Facebook returned serve: it signed a bevy of people who made their reps on **Vine** and **YouTube** to create video for Facebook Live. That's in addition to media companies like **BuzzFeed** and **The NY Times**, announced earlier (*PRN*, June 27). From July 25-July 28 Twitter carried live coverage from **CBSN** of the Democrats' convention from Philadelphia.

2. Transparency: Speaking of The City of Brotherly Love, we'll be watching events there anxiously August 1. That's when ousted **Theranos** chief **Elizabeth Holmes** (*PRN*, July 11, May 23) is scheduled to do something she's avoided for months—she'll be speaking in public about the merits of her blood-testing company. As of July 29, Holmes was still set to address a special session of the 68th annual meeting



Former VW U.S. chief Michael Horn

of the **American Association for Clinical Chemistry**, the group's communications & PR director **Molly Polen** told us.

3. News Bits: There might be yet another wrinkle for **Volkswagen** communicators to explain. NY State's chief prosecutor alleges the automaker hatched its strategy to cheat emissions standards years ago. The dieselgate story hit headlines last September. Planning dates to 1999 at VW sister company **Audi**, NY attorney general **Eric Schneiderman** charged in a \$450-million civil suit July 19. It involved dozens of VW employees, he added. In October 2015 then-VW U.S. chief **Michael Horn**, who apologized for the wrongdoing, said it involved "just a few software engineers."

4. M&A: Phoenix-based PR and marketing firm **Impress Labs** said July 27 it will merge with **Duo Public Relations** of Seattle.

5. Hourly Rates: PR agencies and firms failed to raise their hourly rates last year, says a July 26 report from **Gould+Partners**. Rates average \$448/hour for CEOs of agencies with \$25 million or more in revenue and \$301/hour for those with less than \$3 million in net revenue, Gould says. Productivity—measured by billable time utilization—has been far below optimal levels. SVPs are billing out at 59% of their theoretical yearly capacity of 1700 hours. The study is based on responses from 106 PR agencies in the U.S. and Canada. Account execs are averaging 89%, the same as last year. The goal for staff not involved in management and new business should be at least 90%, Gould says.



Fred Cook, Chairman, Golin

6. People: Interpublic Group agency **Golin** turns 60 in January and will move from one CEO, **Fred Cook**, to a CEO team of **Jonathan Hughes**, **Matt Neale** and **Gary Rudnick**. Cook will become chairman; the three CEOs will report to him. **AI Golin** will continue as founder and **Ellen Ryan Mardiks** will remain vice chairman. Golin's 2010 reorg from a traditional PR firm into a community of specialists inspired the team CEO move. – **BlueCross BlueShield of TN** promoted **Roy Vaughn** to SVP, CCO. He joined BlueCross in 2007 as director of communications after years on the agency side. – North America's largest wine and spirits distributor **Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits, LLC** named **Lee Brian Schragger** SVP, communications and CSR. Schragger joined Southern in 2000 as director of media relations and special events. – **Two Harbors Investment Corp** named **Timothy Perrott** senior director of investor relations. His resume includes corporate communications and investor communications positions at **Nextel**, **ADT Security** and **Orbital Sciences**. – **Flowers Foods** promoted **Mary Krier** to SVP, communications and corporate responsibility. She joined Flowers in 1990. Prior to that, she was a writer and editor for trade and consumer press in the Chicago area. Flowers also named **Chad Johnson** VP, distributor communications. Johnson joined Flowers in 1995. Among baker Flowers' brands are **Wonder** and **Tastykake**. – Former **Booz Allen Hamilton** exec **Kelly Stepno** joined **APCO Worldwide** as senior director for crisis management and litigation communication. – **Paul Hewitt** was named EVP, communications at the **CW**. He's been with the television network since its founding in 2006. ■

PR News Rising PR Stars 30 & Under

Entry Deadline: July 29
Late Deadline: August 5

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WHO ARE THE **YOUNG PR PROS** THAT HAVE STOOD OUT TO YOU THIS YEAR?

It's your turn to decide—enter your favorite young PR professionals in PR News' Rising PR Stars competition. This program, honoring budding PR leaders and creative practitioners, is open to PR professionals age 30 and under. Nominees must be a practicing communications professional at any of the following: a corporation, PR firm, nonprofit/association, educational institution, government organization or industry supplier. Nominees may reside anywhere in the world.

Winners will be recognized at PR News' Rising PR Stars Awards Luncheon on December 6, 2016 in D.C.

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The Rising PR Stars 30 & Under Awards are open to all individuals worldwide at for-profit and non-profit organizations including: corporations, PR firms, public affairs and IR agencies, publicity firms, associations, government organizations, NGO, and sole practitioners, who are 30 or under on the date the entry is submitted.

HOW TO ENTER:

You can nominate yourself or your colleagues. Your nomination/s need to include the following:

- The nominee's name
- The nominee's position (title and organization)
- The nominee's age (including birth date if possible)
- Your professional relationship to the nominee (*you can self-nominate)
- A brief synopsis on why this young PR pro should be named to our list
- At least three concrete examples of his or her stellar achievements over the past year (specific campaigns, events, programs – proof that this person shines!)
- A sample of his or her work and/or supporting materials
- Nominee's contact information (full name, title, organization, email and phone)
- Your name and contact information so that we may follow up with questions during the judging process

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TODAY!**

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