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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Please join PR News in beautiful Huntington Beach, CA, Feb. 23-24 for our Digital Summit and Crisis Management Boot Camp. You'll get a chance to learn from top communicators at TOMS, Yelp, Northrop Grumman, Certified Angus Beef, eHarmony, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UC Berkeley, Boingo Wireless, DocuSign and Monterey Bay Aquarium. For more information visit: prnewsonline.com



SOCIAL MEDIA

Meaty Advice: Why Certified Angus Beef Values User Experience Over Numbers on Instagram

To look at the news about **Instagram** last week you'd be forgiven if you didn't think it also is a tool for business, particularly suited to small communications shops. The rapper Nicki Minaj, who hinted all week she was about to do something big, posted a photo of her sitting on a small bed in what appears to be a tiny bedroom. True to Instagram's acceptance of informality, the photo seems far from the highly stylized, professional picture of a celebrity that the public usu-

ally sees. The photo's lighting is spotty, Minaj isn't centered and the bed is disheveled. Still, it's a very effective photo. Clad in six-inch heels with tassels, wraparound shades, bikini bottom and nothing else, Minaj makes an arresting subject. Quickly the post had in excess of 10,000 comments and thousands of likes.

Actually there's a link between the Minaj photo and how communicators can use Instagram to humanize brands. And

Continued on page 2

CSR

BY JON SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, AFLAC

Getting Better at Doing Good: How Aflac Transformed its CSR Program

As someone old enough to remember the 1980s, I pondered a question while organizing my thoughts before putting figurative pen to paper to write this article: In our age of social media, would today's youth be able to comprehend J.R. Ewing of the old *Dallas* series? (Hint: Think Billy the Kid in a board room, only less ethical.)

So much has changed in 30-plus years. What was acceptable behavior—or at least tolerated, before **Enron** and Bernie Madoff made Ewing, the fictional king of the dirty deal, look like Mother Teresa—is far from what consumers and investors will stomach today. As we know, it's a new age: Customers and business partners place the metaphorical micro-

scope not only on your ability to deliver quality products and services, but on the quality of your heart, your soul and your ability to empathize. In short, they want to know not only that you are a great company, but a good one, too.

People want ethics and at **Aflac** we are proud to consistently be on the *World's Most Ethical Companies*, the *Best Companies to Work For* and *Most Admired Companies* lists. These are great honors, but until recently, there was a question of why we were included on these lists. It wasn't be-



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FEB. 21, 2017
1:30-3:00PM ET

DIGITAL SUMMIT & CRISIS MANAGEMENT BOOT CAMP
FEB. 23-24, 2017
 HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

THE SOCIAL SHAKE-UP
MAY 22-24, 2017
 ATLANTA, GA

How to Deploy Brand Advocates When Promotions Are Crowding Social Media



[Editor's Note: This regular feature asks communicators to spot trends and discuss their reactions to them. In this edition we hear from Larissa von Lockner, PR & social media manager, PwC.]

The Trend: We've all been there. You're scrolling through your social feeds wondering what your friends and family are up to and you just can't escape the those targeted ads. Those shoes you found last week during your lunch break—the ones you added to your shopping bag but never bought—they're haunting you!

So, naturally, you ditch that social platform and vow to never buy the shoes out of pure spite. **Instagram** is supposed to be a sacred space, after all!

All jokes aside, this scenario is not an uncommon one. While many brand advertisers believe that their targeted promotions will lead to a higher sales number or an increased following, the reality is that this world of inescapable promotion proves frustrating to consumers.

How then, you ask, can a brand effectively market itself in an environment where paid campaigns aren't what they used to be?

The Reaction: Don't spam your followers. Instead, be selective with your campaigns and invest in developing brand advocates.

That's right, focus on your most powerful and most valuable asset: your people. Whether you work at a firm that spans the globe and has thousands of employees, or you're a tiny non-profit working out of a garage with a force of five,

Continued from page 1

how they can do so without the services of famous rappers sprawling nearly au naturel in a post. Also: what's the best way for brands to measure engagement on Instagram? We asked communicators at **Certified Angus Beef, LLC**.

"We are unusual in that we're not directly selling a product," says Jennifer Kiko, online community manager for the brand, founded in 1978. Certified Angus Beef is a not-for-profit marketing arm of the **American Angus Association**. "[On Instagram] we're trying to be interactive and engaging, talking with our customers, but also talking with our partners' customers."

this theory holds true: In our modern day, information that comes authentically from the heart of a trusted source is content that will be readily consumed and engaged with.

So, how do you make sure that you're trusted? How do you establish that voice?

The key is authenticity. Train your people. Even more important, empower them. Establish a strict social media and communications policy, then make sure that your staff receive the training and education that is needed.

Once people understand what they can and can't say, and you are comfortable having them at the forefront of your brand strategy, they'll start sharing key messaging in their own voices.

I agree with Carmen Collins who wrote in *PR News Pro* last week about the payback a brand receives when it empowers employees to act as ambassadors on social media and speak in their own voices (*PRNP*, Feb. 13). And let me tell you, the voices, videos and photos of your employees always are going to be funnier, more genuine and more relatable than those of a faceless brand.

Just remember: Less is more when you're running promotions. People turn to social to be social, after all. And when they see other people speaking positively about your product—even if those people are your employees—they'll respond more positively than if you toot your own horn and spam their favorite channels. ■

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Jennifer Kiko
 Online Community Manager, **CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF**

Kiko uses **Instagram Analytics** and **Iconosquare** "to get an even better understanding of what's going on from day to day and week to week. We also use [listening tools] **Nuvi** and **Falcon** to see other mentions [of the brand], track trends and follow what's happening on all of our platforms."

Adds Margaret Coleman, digital platforms director, "Brands are different when it comes to measurement...each one has to determine how

Continued to page 3

Segment Your Audience, Know What Works Best

they want to measure and what means the most to them.” Followers are tracked, but “for us, sometimes, success might be a comment or a call that one of our sales team members receives and gets to tell us, “Hey, because X saw the [Instagram] post about [a celebrated chef using Certified Angus Beef], it wants to work with us.” Coleman adds, “Maybe that image only got 400 [likes], but it may result in a big account.”

For example, “We did an Instagram takeover with [James Beard award-winner] chef Jonathon Sawyer of **Greenhouse Tavern** in Cleveland.” A leader in the culinary scene, Sawyer took over the Certified Angus Beef site for a day and featured his content. “When chefs and restaurants saw that we worked with chef Sawyer, they called us and asked if we would work with them.”

EXPERIENCE OVER NUMBERS

“Let’s say followers drop a bit one day, we’ll go back and look at what photos we used that day,” Kiko says. “Or if likes soared and comments dropped, we’ll say what can we do the next day to encourage conversation? We have goals, but we’re not stuck to them because we’re creating an experience...a conversation, rather than a measurement of the numbers.”



Margaret Coleman
Digital Platforms
Director, **CERTIFIED
ANGUS BEEF**

Adds, Coleman, “we look at a combination [of metrics], but if you had to pick one, it’s engagement.” The best engagement, she says, is when a comment reads: “I dine at X restaurant because it serves Certified Angus Beef” or “I shop at X retailer because it sells Certified Angus Beef...to us, that’s the ultimate in engagement.”

OK, but how do Coleman and Kiko report experiences and comments to the C-suite, which tends to be interested in numbers, as opposed to potential sales leads? A preface: “while numbers are certainly important and we always look at them,” Coleman says, our C-suite “values brand impressions, brand value and relationships...as even more important [than numbers alone]...obviously that’s a unique” situation, she admits.

The specifics: every Monday the brand’s PR staff sends out a 3-minute video of highlights companywide from the

previous week. 30-45 seconds of it includes coverage of social media, such as mentioning the above phone call. The video is done simply, via a mobile phone camera. It goes to all employees, board members and PR agencies the brand employs.

Reports about social also are made during regular meetings of an internal group that works with “signature accounts and top chefs,” Coleman says. All this “is a bit labor intensive; we don’t just have a quick report with numbers...it’s more of a 1 on 1 thing...we’re describing whom we are working with [socially].” Talk about labor intensive. Kiko reads “every comment we receive...we try to respond to most of the...we want to show we appreciate them, we’re approachable and we’re listening to them.”

A key to the brand’s Instagram success, says Coleman, is “not just what we do on our Instagram,” but “getting into chefs’ conversations and consumer conversations.” Again, they use Falcon and Nuvi to follow certain hashtags and search terms. Those tools have helped them “create a list of consumers” who are more likely “to talk about us.”

Now, back to Minaj’s informal picture. Certified Angus Beef has used professional photos, but the most-engaged posts feature photos from chefs and other users. Beef “just waiting to be put on the grill” or “hot off the grill” work best, Coleman says. Photos featuring people don’t work as well. The key is knowing your audience, they say. An agency did an audience study for them that identified six different types of fan. Foodies, restaurant goers and chefs are the sweet spot for the brand, Coleman says. When they began aiming content at those fan categories is when the brand’s Instagram followers ramped up, doubling to some 21K+. ■

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Hot Off the Grill: The sort of user-generated content that works best on Instagram for Certified Angus Beef.

Source: Certified Angus Beef

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How Data Helped Change Aflac's CSR Approach

cause we were underqualified; we earned these accolades by being a good, caring company. No, the questions arose—and this is just our secret—because our formal CSR plan lacked focus.

It's true. Of course, we had the programs, including a world-class commitment to curing childhood cancer, a devotion to diversity, sustainability, etc., all elements of a great CSR story. What we lacked, however, was a formal, integrated CSR plan that connected our good deeds with good business. Why? We lacked the research needed to do it right.

In 2015, all that changed.

START WITH RESEARCH

We committed to a results-based, research-driven CSR program and nurtured it. To start, we asked the **Reputation Institute** to examine us. It was a sobering experience. Our reputation scores were good—in most cases, above average—but they weren't where we expected they should be. We lagged in citizenship, workplace and leadership. With all we had done, including donating \$113+ million to fight children's cancer and fostering workplace diversity, we wondered how this could be. Regardless, those were the numbers.

So in 2015, we produced the *Aflac Corporate Social Responsibility Survey (ACSR)* to develop a baseline about what influenced consumers and investors concerning CSR. We repeated this survey in 2016 (*PRNP*, Dec. 5, 2016). The following key findings enabled us to formalize a plan:

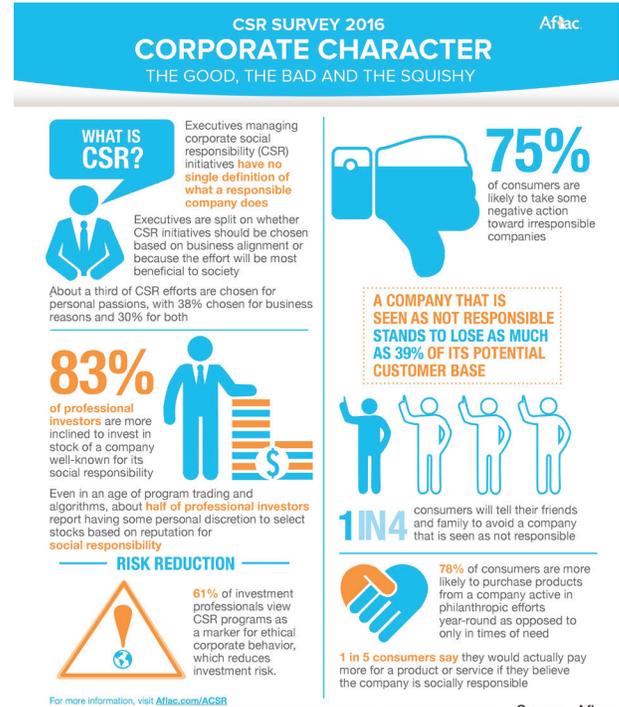
- ▶ 75% of consumers likely will take negative action toward companies perceived as less than responsible,
- ▶ Companies that consumers see as irresponsible stand to lose as much as 39% of their customer base,
- ▶ 83% of professional investors are more inclined to invest in a company well-known for its social responsibility, and
- ▶ 20% of consumers say they would pay more for a product/service if they believe a company is socially responsible.

Another essential piece of data: 81% of consumers are more likely to purchase from companies that are active in philanthropy year-round as opposed to only in times of need. That was important because it told us to take full advantage of a program that we had in place since 1995, our commitment to childhood cancer (see chart).

[Note to Subscribers: See the report at the PR News Pro Essentials Page: prnewsonline.com/pr-news-pr-essentials/]

Fortified with information, we approached the C-suite and made a compelling business case for why we needed to do more to expand our reputation beyond being a company that supports childhood cancer initiatives in and around our home state of Georgia. We needed to be a national thought leader for ethics and responsibility. Armed with data, Aflac CEO Dan Amos signed off on additional dollars that enabled us to do what we believe are remarkable things.

First, in 2016, during National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, we sponsored *CureFest*, a grassroots effort in



Washington, D.C. Parents and families who have faced the horrors of childhood cancer organized the event. After a successful satellite media tour and a six-minute interview on **CNBC's Squawk Box**, the foundation was laid for creating that national dialogue. A few months later, Aflac sponsored *The Washington Post's* first national discussion on cancer, *Chasing Cancer*, which brought experts, researchers, celebrities and families to Washington for an eye-opening discussion on finding a cure. After garnering more than 200 million media impressions, more is planned for 2017.

THE RESULTS

So, did our effort help? The research says it did. Aflac's Reputation Institute pulse score soared 3.4 points, which the Institute says is a "significant" movement. Not only did our overall score surge, but so did our marks in the dimensions we focused on, including significant increases in the citizenship and workplace categories. In addition, our CSR program received and is being considered for industry awards that should further embolden the Aflac corporate communications team to operate as more than just a town crier, but as a vital business partner.

As we said, a lot has changed since Kristin shot J.R. (the cliffhanger to end all cliffhangers). As more research pours in about the value of being socially responsible, I doubt that today's young people would be able to identify with the likes of J.R. Ewing. People want ethics, not conniving deals, and the people mean business. In an age of **Google** and **Wikipedia**, he would never last long enough to have an impact. ■

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Teamwork: How to Fight Back Against The Weaponization of Social Media



When social media channels started to emerge in the early 2000s, many of us thought these platforms would improve business understanding and help break down barriers between companies and their critics. More than a decade later, it hasn't exactly turned out that way.

These days the chatter in business sanctums is more about the weaponization of social media. **Twitter**, **Facebook** and others are being used to denigrate, belittle and demonize brands as well as the people who run them.

The paramount question for upper management regarding social media is not so much how companies can use social channels as a charm offensive—that now seems to be the easy part—but how to defend against the increasingly nasty things being said on social platforms.

Communicators are being asked to confront myriad critics who will say things about companies via social channels that few would dream of uttering in public. The source could be the U.S. president or an irate individual who will stop at nothing to criticize a brand.

C-SUITE KNOWS SOCIAL MEDIA'S DANGERS

As we know, communicators are paid to distinguish between a brush fire online and a legitimate threat via social platforms that, if left alone, could cost the brand dearly. Communicators have their work cut out for them.

Losses linked to reputational damage at publicly traded companies grew 461% during the past five years, says a recent study from **Steel City Re**, which supplies reputation-protection solutions, and **Hanover Stone Partners**, a risk evaluator. The study is based on analysis of reputational-related losses for roughly 7,500 companies. The primary culprits, the study says, are a large spike in anger from the general public and the weaponization of social media.

Prior to the barrage of tweets since Inauguration Day, we counseled communicators to prioritize carving out time to communicate firsthand the threat of social media-originated crises to the C-suite. Now, we can't imagine the C-suite is unaware of the existence of that threat.

There are other measures—preventative in nature—that

communicators can take to mitigate social media trolling against their brand(s) and boost their value in the eyes of the C-suite.

“The single greatest strength and weakness in crisis always has been the team. Today, when there are too many things to know...no one discipline should dominate the strategy conversation for long.”

CANARY IN THE COAL MINE

Communicators need to constantly track threat assessment via social media platforms. **Mylan's EpiPen**, the **Wells Fargo** crisis, the Keystone Pipeline, GMOs, fracking, sugar, you name it; the coming communications crises for these issues and more were foreseeable with a careful reading of the digital tea leaves. Remember: Companies advertise, critics organize. Your adversaries need to leave their footprints to find allies.

The onus is on communicators to monitor the social conversation. Learn about the trends in hashtags that critics are using, company-focused grassroots organizations fundraising and communications strategies; what the plaintiffs' bar is posting; who Change.org or #Grabyourwallet are listing; and what videos are trending, to name a few. Such tracking gives communicators a clearer window into what's next. If you track successfully enough, you can modify behavior, negotiate or counterattack, as the opportunity dictates, without being surprised.

Continued on page 6

FEBRUARY 23-24, HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

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For companies fearing the enterprise risk of a new president bent on exercising his powerful thumbs, look at what has happened in the opening weeks of the administration. Threatened boycotts against brands emerged, but have yet to be effective. Share prices of targeted companies such as **Nordstrom** are either unaffected or rise, and even **Koch Industries** has gone on the offensive. What was an existential threat less than one month ago appears to be gone.

Look within, too. As **Verizon's** VP for corporate communications Torod Neptune says, as a communicator who works with all the parts of your company, you know where 90% of the risk of crisis exists internally. It's critical that you be on top of these issues, look to help reduce the potential of crisis and develop relationships with relevant personnel in these areas should a crisis erupt.

“**Brilliant strategy is a team sport played collectively.**”

THE INTEGRATED TEAM

The hyper-democratic age of digital communications and transparency requires that communications professionals have a deep appreciation of, if not a much closer relationship with, legal, investor relations and government and public affairs. If the whole world has been a stage for 400 years, everything, as of November 8th is political, even your brand. If you do not understand these influences, you cannot communicate effectively.

A critical point: “Hyper-democratic communications” is a revolutionary transformation. Most of us grew up with a republican form of communications. That is, we knew the key journalists, thought leaders, financial analysts and politicians. It was a small group and we were the gatekeepers. Now communications is more about ideas sprouting from the grassroots up and becoming movements, much more than from the boardroom down, becoming fads. Understanding how grassroots movements work is about as important as knowing how to use your phone. If you don't get this, well, you don't get it.

In a Twitter age, huddling in a defensive crouch after the damage is done is too reactive—it is the electronic equivalent of no comment. Shareholders will not be pleased and consumers may decide to shun your brand's products and services altogether. Use peacetime wisely and, as we said above, develop relationships with these team members now. It will only get harder in a crisis.

KNOW 'EM BEFORE YOU NEED 'EM

Similar to the above counsel, communicators need to cultivate audiences and influencers now, during peacetime, so when the company is attacked various stakeholders can act on the company's behalf.

“Companies have to assess social media and create buckets of risk—cultural risks, political risks and regulatory

risks—and plan defenses accordingly,” says John Kelly, managing partner of Hanover Stone Partners.

It may be comforting for boards of directors and C-level executives to watch other brands melt down due to nasty messaging via social media and think, “We're doing it right, because our company has yet to be attacked.”

But clinging to an it-can't-happen-here mentality does communicators and corporate managers no favors when it comes to effectively dealing with the weaponization of social media. Does your brand or organization have a crisis plan? Nearly half the communicators polled last year in a **PR News-Nasdaq Public Relations Services** survey did not. When asked if they regularly run mock crisis scenarios the results were even worse (*PRN*, Mar. 28, 2016). The 2017 edition of **PwC's** annual survey of CEOs here and abroad found sentiment similar to the Nasdaq-PRN poll: Nearly two-thirds were concerned about their company's ability to respond quickly to a crisis, despite 50% who said they'd experienced two or more crises in the past three years.

People used to find truth in advertising and trusted media. Now they find it in what they hear first, most often and from trusted influencers. If you don't have a game plan now, you will be a case study later.

THE TEAM AND THE BEST IDEAS WIN

The single greatest strength and weakness in crisis always has been the team. Today, when there are too many things to know, all changing too fast, no one discipline should dominate the strategy conversation for long. Far too often communicators substitute tactics with the title strategy. They think that switch fools people; it's not even sufficient to win.

The strongest people and communicators are the ones willing to show their vulnerability, while the weakest people are those who already are certain of the answer. If you are not learning, you're dying.

Today's fully integrated, rapidly changing communications environment—where a brilliant solution one month ago is antiquated today—requires people to work as teams, being unafraid to try new things, expose personal limitations and weakness and ask great questions. Protecting professional territory, believing you already know the best way and cutting and pasting past solutions is a recipe for disaster.

As Stephen Covey wrote, “Start with the end in mind.” Do solid research *first* so you have a deep understanding of the problem's extent and its many permutations. It's not the tweet, it's what drove it in the first place. Only when you know the real challenge can you develop the elegant solution.

Strategy is about what drives people and markets. The best ideas win. Period. Check your ego and fears at the door. Brilliant strategy is a team sport played collectively. ■

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Note: Ernest Del Buono, a senior strategist at Levick, will be speaking at the PR News Digital Media Summit and Crisis Management Boot Camp, Feb. 23-24, Huntington Beach, CA. For more information: bit.ly/prnewsHB

Fashion Brands Used Instagram to Dominate Consumer Engagement During Grammys

Shareablee

SOCIAL SCORECARD

Top Brands at 59th Annual Grammy Awards by #Grammy February 12 to 13th

Based on Total Actions (reactions, comments, shares (FB)); likes, retweets (TW); comments, likes (IG))

Sources:   

| Rank | Brand | Total Actions | Total Content | Total Reactions | Total Comments | Total Audience |
|------|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | BALMAIN | 246 thousand | 7 | 244 thousand | 1480 | 6.7 million |
| 2 | GIVENCHY | 193 thousand | 5 | 193 thousand | 651 | 7.5 million |
| 3 | Jordan | 182 thousand | 1 | 182 thousand | 457 | 11 million |
| 4 | Marc Jacobs | 181 thousand | 5 | 181 thousand | 1092 | 13.9 million |
| 5 | Gucci | 117 thousand | 3 | 117 thousand | 417 | 12.6 million |
| 6 | PacSun | 106 thousand | 3 | 106 thousand | 482 | 1.8 million |
| 7 | Armani | 87 thousand | 2 | 86 thousand | 361 | 7.3 million |
| 8 | TOM FORD | 81 thousand | 4 | 80 thousand | 394 | 6.1 million |
| 9 | Giuseppe Zanotti Design | 54 thousand | 2 | 54 thousand | 184 | 3.1 million |
| 10 | American Eagle | 32 thousand | 1 | 32 thousand | 28 | 2.4 million |

shareablee.com | info@shareablee.com

Sponsoring a tent pole event such as the **Grammy Awards** does not insure you'll pull big engagement numbers on social. In fact, none of the sponsors of the 2017 Grammys, held Feb. 12, made the Top 10 list of most-engaged brands on social that you see on this page, according to **Shareablee** data provided to *PR News Pro*.

Dominated by fashion-industry brands, the list of the top 10 brands was compiled analyzing social posts from brands and consumer posts that used the hashtag #Grammys on **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **Twitter**. Shareablee examined posts from midnight Feb. 12 through midnight February 13. Actions, or engagement, are the total of likes, dislikes comments, retweets and other reactions to posts. The column in the chart titled Total Reactions includes various Facebook comments, in addition to likes.

PEOPLE: A BRAND OR PUBLISHER?

A caveat here: the magazine *People*, America's largest, indeed was a Grammys sponsor. It's not included in this table since Shareablee classifies it as a publisher, as opposed to a brand.

Had *People's* people.com site been included, though, it would have topped the list of engagement by a wide margin, Shareablee's Nathalie Nuta says. It tallied 660,673 consumer actions on the most pieces of content posted: 332, an average of 1,990 actions per post.

Again, had it been considered a brand for the purposes of

this list, consumer actions with people.com's posts would have represented about 90% of total consumer actions with posts of Grammys sponsors.

Looking at the social prowess of other brands that were sponsors, insurer **Aflac** followed people.com, with 27,000 consumer actions on its 33 posts.

With just four posts, **JBL** was next and had the most actions per post with an average 5,257. JBL's top post was of its celebrity endorser Demi Lovato. The same image was posted to Facebook and Instagram and garnered better than 4,000 actions across both channels.

The other sponsors, in order of consumer engagement with Grammys' social posts were **Target**, **Bulova**, **Gibson**, **MasterCard** (N America), **Delta**, **Akami Technologies** and **Westwood One**, with just 29 actions on three posts.

Of the most-engaged brands (excluding People) that posted to social during the Grammys, luxury design houses like **Balmain**, **Givenchy**, **Marc Jacobs** and **Gucci** dominated, as you see on this chart.

All of the top-ranked brands' most-engaged posts were images they placed on Instagram.

BALMAIN: TOPS ENGAGEMENT AND POSTS

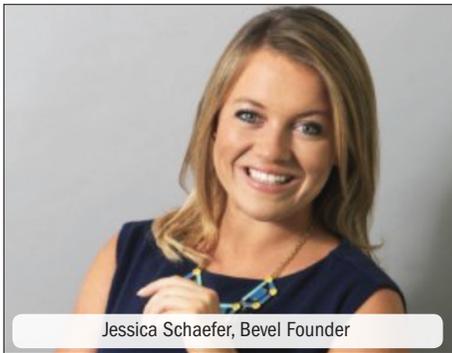
Number 1 on this list, Balmain, posted more than any other top 10 brand. Its most-popular post was an image of Paris Jackson's dress. The post captured more than 50,000 actions.

Other posts that did well for Balmain included photos of celebrities who wore items from the luxury retailer.

Both Givenchy and Marc Jacobs tapped into the singer Adele's social phenomenon. Givenchy shared an image of Adele holding her nine Grammy awards in a custom Givenchy gown. The post captured more than 46,000 actions.

Fortunately for Marc Jacobs, Adele also is a Marc Jacobs Beauty Ambassador. A Jacobs' post congratulated Adele for her win and garnered more than 96,000 actions.

People.com's top post was a picture on Instagram of Beyonce and Jay-Z. The post drove more than 87,000 consumer actions. ■



Jessica Schaefer, Bevel Founder



Mark Weiner, CEO, PRIME Research and Director, Measurement Commission, IPR



President Trump

1. Interesting Times for Brands:

We should have known it was going to be a bizarre week (loaded with PR lessons) when a completely serious press release from **Care2**, a social networking site for activists, hit our desk late Feb. 10 informing us that a petition supporting **Rosie O'Donnell's** bid to play White House advisor **Steve Bannon** on *Saturday Night Live* had gained thousands of signatures in just a few hours. PR Lesson: It can be difficult for journalists to interpret email messages from organizations they're unfamiliar with. Provide context or cues. This release seemed like a joke on first glance. It wasn't.

Item 2: Late on Valentine's Day a highly reputable D.C. PR shop sent us an email saying: "Just wanted to make sure you saw this statement from **Allied Progress**" [an advocacy group] "calling on **Oprah Winfrey** to release footage of [President] **Trump's** Labor nominee **Andy Puzder's** former wife detailing allegations of domestic violence on" Oprah. (You know how that turned out.) PR Lesson: This threw us totally. The language used was so familiar it sounded as if it came from a friend/source, but it was from someone we'd not heard of. Perhaps the familiar language was a cute tactic (it got us to read the release), although some journalists might be turned off by it.

Item 3: Need more evidence that brands have become political animals (with all the obvious PR implications that entails)? Note **IBM** chief **Ginni Rometty** releasing a statement to employees and media *prior* to her visit explaining why she was heading to D.C.

Item 4: A *Wall St Journal* story, tucked far back in the paper, reports on editor-in-chief **Gerard Baker's** meet-

ing with 100+ staff as he responds to staff allegations that the paper's reporting on Trump had been "soft." A Baker email that advised against use of the phrase "Muslim-majority countries" in reporting on the president's immigration ban prompted the tumult. Baker, the article says, admitted "he didn't choose his words carefully when he sent the late-night email." A big PR lesson there. He "subsequently clarified" his argument "in an internal memo to staff," the paper says. During the meeting, Baker said the paper's reporting on Trump was "extremely tough." (Hmm... we thought journalists were supposed to get facts and print them. Instead of reporting hard or soft on the president, just report.) Baker also noted the administration's hostile attitude toward the press and said the president and his staff "peddle falsehoods on a daily basis." A few sentences later the article says Baker told reporters they can use the word "'lie' in connection with Mr. Trump or his administration," but added "the bar is high, because the word connotes an intention to deceive that is hard to prove." Huh? Mind you, this meeting took place three days *before* the president's Feb. 16 criticism of the press. Yes, a wild week and more proof that the rules of PR are changing at the speed of a presidential tweet.

2. Reorg and More: Last month **Ogilvy Worldwide** chairman/CEO **John Seifert** said changes were ahead for the brand. **Ogilvy USA** CEO **Lou Aversano** delivered some of them Feb. 16, with the moves effective in April. Intended to be more client-centric, the moves have Ogilvy USA becoming a single brand, "shifting from a focus on disciplines and sub-brands to a focus on clients

and specialty skills and expertise," Ogilvy said. Domain groups will be at the center of the new organization. Both they and integrated functions such as finance and communications will serve across the U.S.A. enterprise. Some of the group leaders include: **Michele Anderson** (Influence and PR Domain); **Alvaro Cabrera** (Customer Engagement and Commerce Domain); **Mark Himmelsbach** (Digital and Innovation Domain); and **Sean Muzzy** (Media and Distribution Domain). Integrated functions leads include **Simone Oppenheimer** (Business Development); **Suresh Raj** (Growth); **Jennifer Risi** (Communications); **Jim Woods** (Finance); and **Jean-Rene Zetrenne** (Talent). **Kate Cronin** will lead the USA Health & Wellness practice; **Adam Tucker** will lead the USA Enterprise Branding Domain; and **Jack Rooney** will lead Integration for Ogilvy USA. More announcements about the "Next Chapter" strategy are expected. – Former VP, corporate communications at **Point72** **Jessica Schaefer** is launching **Bevel**, a PR consultancy. It will focus on fintech and hedge funds.

3. People: The **Financial Industry Regulatory Authority** (FINRA) promoted **Marcia Asquith** to EVP, board and external relations. Asquith will continue to oversee corporate communications as well as investor education, member relations/education and government affairs. She joined FINRA in 2001. – Congrats to our good friend, *PRN* Measurement Hall of Fame member, *PRN Pro* contributor and editorial advisory board member **Mark Weiner**, who was elected director of the Measurement Commission at the **Institute for Public Relations**. Weiner is CEO of **PRIME Research Americas**. ■

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