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## DIGITAL PR

# How Three Communications Chiefs Hire and Cultivate Winning Digital/Social Media Teams

With fall approaching rapidly, it's time to start thinking about making strategic hiring decisions. And since digital and social media are continuing to be a large part of the PR professional's daily duties, we asked several communications professionals to provide insight about best practices for assembling a digital team. While they all preferred candidates experienced in digital and social media communications, lack of experience was not a deal breaker. As one team

leader told us, "Social media isn't that old and is changing so fast. Nobody can have that much experience." In addition, they felt that social media could be learned, but other critical qualities—curiosity, storytelling instinct, integrity and initiative—can't be.

**Howard Mortman**  
Communications Director, C-SPAN

*Continued on page 4*

## EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

BY LEILA BRYNER, VP, EXEC. COMMUNICATIONS, THE HARTFORD

# How a Small PR Team Rebooted a Century-Old Brand's Strategic Story

Divorce is hard, whether corporate or civil. In my first month on the job at **ITT Corp.**, we underwent our own version of divorce when the company divested its defense and water businesses in a triple spin-off. What remained was the ITT you see today: a \$2 billion global manufacturing company that provides critical, highly engineered components to the energy, transportation and industrial markets.

As you can imagine, the communications team found itself in a unique position after the spin-off. Technically, this was a "new" company with a new business model, strategy and customer focus. But also ITT was a company with brands, management systems, cultural values and memories

that were a century old. In effect, we were a 100-year-old start-up.

The company faced many challenges through the transition. To create a collective future, communications needed to align and enable everyone to deliver on the new corporate strategy.

Communications needed to foster a culture of innovation and become more nimble as an organization. The company needed to break down organizational silos and become better at collaboration and knowledge sharing. And it needed to accomplish all of this by unleashing the best of ITT's legacy without living in the past.



*Continued on page 5*



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## BEST PRACTICES

# How to Get Your Media Pitches Read

Email is still preferred to social media when pitching journalists “because it allows you to really control your message and provide details,” says Jessica Nielsen, VP communications & marketing, **Lockheed Martin**, who, with Allison Robins, global director of PR, **Zumba Fitness**, led an in-depth session on email communications at PR News’ Digital PR Conference in Miami in June. While emailed pitches should be “as personalized as you can,” some cutting and pasting may slip in. “Make sure you don’t inadvertently send

an email with personal details to the wrong person (i.e. opening with Hey, Robert...to Chris),” Nielsen warns. Timing is critical. “Find out when reporters prefer to be pitched,” she says. “Don’t bother them right before their 5 p.m. deadline.” And avoid pitching a press release. “They can get a release from the wire. Provide them something more—like an interview with a great subject matter expert or an opportunity to see your product up close and personal.” Keep pitches short and direct, in bulleted format. ■

## EMAIL PITCH TENETS TO LIVE BY



## EMAIL MEDIA PITCH DO'S AND DON'TS



**Source:** Jessica Nielsen, VP of communications, Lockheed Martin Information Systems & Global Solutions; Allison Robins, director of public relations, Zumba Fitness LLC

# 5 Steps to Building a Winning Content Strategy

Shawn Paul Wood of Woodworks Communications shares his content strategy checklist, borne of hard-earned experience. ■

## ✓ GET A COMMITMENT.

The foundation of content strategy is commitment. If your senior leaders or clients are not prepared to put muscle behind developing meaningful content that will engage and cause disruption in the marketplace, forget it. There's nothing more aggravating in public relations than someone who demands results but isn't willing to put in the work to get them. Content development requires time. Sure, you can ghostwrite forever, but you need insight and above all, approval. If you write something for the biweekly blog and get approval bi-monthly, close that section of the website. If your organization is ready for content strategy, it means it has committed someone to help you develop compelling material that will be vetted and ready to impress.

## ✓ GET UNDERSTANDING.

The following is a passage from the Bible: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7 KJV). This means that the "why" is crucial. While you are hoarding knowledge (the "what") and improving your wisdom (the "why"), you will get more and more understand-

ing (the "how"). That is the essence of true content—information that shares what, why and how. Without the how, there is no call-to-action, no marching orders, no movement. With any content, there must be direction. What do you want your reader to do? What is the takeaway? If you can answer that question every time you develop content, you may have a strategy in the making.

## ✓ GET 'THEM.'

Without knowing your audience's purpose and passion, it's unlikely that you will create content that it finds meaningful. Often I've told clients and teammates, "Stick to what you know," and cater your writing to the audience you want to serve. If I write online about baseball, no one will come to me to learn about cooking apple turnovers. And if I'm a baseball writer creating content about cooking, I'm unlikely to be discovered by a food channel. I will make baseball people mad because I've wasted their time. They could comment with angst or scorn, but what they will probably do is nothing. Instead, they will stop visiting, sharing and caring. They already do that—you just don't realize it yet.

## GET SOLUTIONS.

Notice this piece's headline: "5 Steps to Building a Winning Content Strategy." Those of us in the know (whatever that means) use the term "clickbait." This practice has been in use for decades, way before the Internet. The people who perfected it are called reporters. A good headline makes people stop. In short, content starts there. You have to know how to grab a reader's attention, and in this drive-thru world of microwavable attention spans, you must work in reverse. The headline provides the solution or answer. The content describes the problem. It's like bait on a hook, fishing for your attention...or clicks. See what I did there? Answer first. Questions later.

## ✓ GET CRACKIN.'

Back to the commitment angle. You need to get busy. Content must be a priority if you are going to be found online. Without it, your thought leadership doesn't exist. What's your voice? What's your result? What's your industry? What does it need? What should it want? That's your job to discover, but the result should be included in the content you develop and publish.

**Source:** Shawn Paul Wood, founder of Woodworks Communications. This article is adapted from PR News' Book of Content Marketing Strategies & Tactics.

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# How Three PR Leaders Build Digital Teams

**1. Fluency in Social Media/Eagerness to Explore:** Not only should the candidate have knowledge and experience with various social media platforms, Howard Mortman emphasized the need to find staff who will be curious about emerging platforms. “Our philosophy is that we need to go with the conversation, rather than hoping the conversation comes to us,” he said. A few years ago the conversation was on message boards, today it’s on platforms. “That’s why it’s good to have someone who will always be curious about the [newest] tools.”

**2. A Discriminating Attitude Toward Platforms:** While Mortman values communications using a range of social platforms, he also believes it’s critical to find people who can recognize which platform[s] will be right for the brand and can tailor messages for specific social media channels.

**3. Have the Demeanor of a Joiner:** See #1 above. Sometimes you begin the conversation, more often you are joining it, Mortman said, “so you need to have people on your team who will join the conversation, but do so respectfully. In our case, we have no editorial voice of our own and we don’t express an opinion, during our programs or on social media. Our job at **C-SPAN** is to provide basic information so people can form their own opinions.” This leads to #4.

**4. Passion:** “Look for someone who believes in your mission” and will enjoy using social media within the bounds of that mission. “For us, we don’t use flamboyant language,” which often is the norm on social.

**Notes:** C-SPAN is a heavy user of digital technology and has digitized its entire library, which is available to the public. Keeping with C-SPAN’s mission, Mortman values communicators who have a penchant for news, history, political history and current events.



**Veda Banerjee**

Director, Communications & Digital Marketing,  
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

**1. Test Them:** Banerjee uses a 2-hour test that gives candidates several scenarios and asks them to show how they would publicize a project or event. What platform(s) would they use and why? How would you use each platform? How would you use visuals?

**2. Seek Good Curators/Storytellers:** Much of the social communications job is curating copy, Banerjee said, so “I look for people who will be good curators.” About storytelling, she says, “I can’t teach people to be storytellers; they need to be curious and interested in telling stories.” How does she test for this? “I ask specific questions about what books they are reading, the five blogs that they check every day, the TV shows that they watch that they think are well written.” She also tests writing skills.

**3. Team Players:** At Banerjee’s shop, members of the team must reach out to team members at other offices. “I want

someone who is going to be responsive...[knowing this about a person] is a gut feeling.” You also need to ask if the person has worked on a team or alone. If alone, ask whether or not they reached out to co-workers and how they did so.

**Notes:** Banerjee always asks about a project that worked and one that bombed—a tweet, for example. Did the candidate delete the tweet or leave it up? What did the candidate learn from the experience? Did he or she experiment with something as a result? “This leads to a discussion about metrics and analysis.”



**Linda Rutherford**

VP, Communications & Outreach,  
Southwest Airlines

**1. Find Digital Natives:** Team members must be comfortable on digital platforms and experimenting with and eventually using any new channels that are developed.

**2. Find Utility Players:** You should seek people who are comfortable tweeting, editing video, taking pictures, writing a press release and helping executives prepare for an interview. Fortunately colleges are turning out generalists, Rutherford said.

**Notes:** The Dallas-based airline took a calculated approach to social media. In 2013 it decided since social media would touch the entire enterprise, representatives of various parts of the company, including communications & outreach, technology, customer care, loyalty programs and marketing, should oversee it. **Southwest** created a hub & spoke model to steer social media. The next year was devoted to getting senior buy-in of the organizational concept and funding. Additional staff was put in place during 2015. From this process, Rutherford has the following tips:

**1. Get Senior Executive Buy-in:** While the C-suite is warming to digital and social, some members have yet to fully understand the business case. “Slow down and explain it,” Rutherford said. “Don’t think like a communicator, think as a business person.” Southwest’s social steering group is appropriately known as the Social Business Executive Steering Committee.

**2. Get Off the Island:** “Wear your enterprise hat, not your functional hat,” she said. Think of ways to make social integral to the business, not just as a communications tool. For example, Southwest uses Twitter for real-time customer care, which has translated into substantial savings.

**3. Challenge the Status Quo:** Social can be disruptive. Use it to sell your product in different ways. ■

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# PR Secures Multi-Year Commitment From C-Suite to Create New Culture for an Old Company

It was a daunting mandate for our small communications team. By following the four principles for effective internal communications, however, the team was able to extend its reach, mobilize leaders and engage employees to bring ITT's new strategy and business model to life. The four principles were:

## 1. 'Pay Now or Pay Later'

The team developed a strong business case to secure resources for a multi-year employee engagement effort. It started with business results the company needed to achieve and outlined employees' roles in achieving them.

Taking this step allowed us to illustrate the behavioral risks inherent in our strategic plan. We also pulled from external research to demonstrate how investments in employee engagement had paid off for other companies. Providing this helped leaders prioritize employee engagement and redirect resources. Ultimately, it saved the team significant time by securing leaders' personal commitment for a multi-year effort.

## 2. Develop a Relevant Story

Relevance cannot be established in a vacuum—it's defined by the people you are trying to engage. The best way to apply this principle in your company is first to know whom you are trying to engage. Conduct research to understand how your employees think, what they value and how they want to be involved. For ITT, research reinforced that the culture was dominated by engineers—smart professionals with a passion for science and technology who are naturally curious about the way things work and like to solve problems using data to guide their decisions. We crafted our plans with the results of this research in mind.

## 3. Prepare Leaders to 'Carry the Water'

A story is only as effective as its teller. While the executive team was fully engaged in ITT's new strategy, we needed to be able to communicate the new direction to the rest of the company, specifically ITT's global leaders, who were not involved in its development. This critical group—consisting of 150 hand-selected leaders, 60 percent of whom were new to their roles in the new ITT—needed to feel confident in the strategy and

empowered to share it with the rest of the organization. With traditional corporate communication cascade efforts, the communications team often develops a core set of materials that is pushed out to leaders with the message to "go communicate." But, as is often the case with many companies, our leaders had strong technical abilities but were not always as confident about their communications capabilities. Behind the third principle is a simple belief—if you are asking leaders to carry the message, you need to build their communication skills.

## 4. 'Lather, Rinse, Repeat'

This final principle is about sustaining momentum. That's only done through consistency, repetition and reinforcement. The best way PR practitioners can help leaders sustain momentum is by integrating your strategic story into everything the company does, including quarterly results reporting, performance management and professional development programs, leadership competency models, recognition and reward systems, external marketing, and corporate positioning efforts. From this last set of activities, you'll notice the wisdom behind this principle—because what you do often communicates far more than what you say.

The value of the four principles for effective internal communications to ITT was perhaps best demonstrated through our business results. In one short year following the spin-off, 98 percent of leaders said they felt they could make a significant contribution to the company's five-year strategic plan. Eighty-five percent of employees said they understood ITT's path for growth. And, perhaps most tellingly, ITT's stock price increased in value by 50 percent. ■

*(The above is an excerpt from PR News' Book of Employee Communications Strategies and Tactics. To order a copy, please go to [prnews-online.com/prpress](http://prnews-online.com/prpress).)*

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# Data and Metrics You Can Use at Your Nonprofit to Win Budget Dollars



Many in-house PR professionals have developed effective tools to link their performance to the revenue and profitability goals demanded by their brands and organizations. But how do you elevate the function of PR within your organization when you operate in a non-commercial sector?

As a government organization, this is a question we took seriously at **Tourism New Zealand** (TNZ) when creating the “100% Middle-Earth Campaign,” which aimed to leverage the media profile of “The Hobbit” film trilogy to increase tourism to the country where the movies were filmed. Here are some communications and ROI issues the organization encountered and how it addressed them.

► **Link PR activity to business outcomes.** When you don’t have sales figures to rely on, it can be difficult to identify the effect that PR is having on consumer behavior. In the case of the 100% Middle-Earth Campaign, we knew that the films had strong appeal, but we needed to prove a link between our work and the ultimate consumer behavior we were trying to influence—that is, booking a New Zealand vacation.

By identifying the point during the consumer journey the campaign was targeting potential visitors, we were able to use increased preference for New Zealand as a key measure of success that contributed to a rise in visitation, which was a business outcome.

“Your organization may not be selling, but often your partners are. Use partner data to show market impact and link your activity to consumer behavior.”

► **Tools to help measure campaign outcomes.**

• **Research.** Make sure you’re enlisting your research team to help show the link between PR campaigns and key business outcomes. At TNZ, one issue was that our monthly consumer research primarily focused on measuring advertising’s impact. As the campaign was led by PR, not advertising, we had to reconfigure the entire survey. Here are some ways research can help you create and measure your PR campaigns:

• **Choosing the right media channels.** Surveys with your target audience can tell you what outlets your audience is reading, watching and engaging with online.

• **Measure one or two key indicators of impact.** For example, TNZ measured preference for the destination by asking potential travelers where they ranked New Zealand on their bucket list. Research showed that more people ranked New Zealand

first or second on the list during the time that the 100% Middle-Earth Campaign was in market.

• **Don’t forget to use follow-up research.** As well as surveying potential visitors, TNZ also asked people who had visited New Zealand since the first “Hobbit” film what had inspired their choice; 1 in 5 U.S. visitors cited “The Hobbit” trilogy as a factor in their decision, indicating that the campaign had inspired visitation.

► **Partner data.** Your organization may not be selling, but many times your partners will be. Using partner data can show real market impact and firmly link your activity to consumer behavior. Build shared data into your reporting; for instance, TNZ used partner data to show that during the campaign:

- Airlines had received increased web traffic and bookings
- Tour operators reported many more enquiries about New Zealand vacations
- “Hobbit”-related tourism products had seen a significant increase in visitors

► **Key-message penetration.** This is one qualitative measure that can be easily incorporated into reporting. Start by identifying four to five key messages that are the most important to your campaign, and evaluate the media coverage you generate to see whether they are reflected.

For the 100% Middle-Earth Campaign, we measured a mix of core brand values and campaign-specific message points about film-related locations and tourism products.

- **Core brand values** about people and experiences were reflected in 80 percent of campaign media coverage.
- **Campaign-specific messages** about film locations and products were reflected in 95 percent of coverage.
- **Key message penetration** was measured using a third-party monitoring service that objectively reviewed whether each story included these messages.

► **ROI and AVE.** ROI is a key measure that always will be crucially important to the bottom line of a business. AVE is a much-debated metric that many PR have dismissed. Still, measuring a basic dollar value as an advertising equivalent can be helpful in demonstrating the value of PR to the C-suite.

For the 100% Middle-Earth Campaign, for example, we set a basic AVE target for earned media coverage the campaign generated.

By no means was AVE the only campaign measure, but showing ROI allowed us to secure significant additional campaign funds from the New Zealand government. ■

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# How PR Can Take Ownership of Integrated Brand Communications



Many major PR agencies have stopped calling themselves PR agencies. Now they are integrated communications firms. The transition is subtle, but it says a lot about the evolution of PR. As we know, the business of PR has changed radically during the last 10 years, as the number of communications tools and methods of delivery at our disposal have multiplied. Chief among these is the ability to create content, in many cases bypassing third-party editors to get out our story to the world.

We're still going after press in third-party media outlets. But the path is different. Sources now are more likely to be found behind a pithy tweet or a well-read industry blog instead of on the other end of a PR executive's pitch.

The problem is all sorts of vendors are scrambling to claim this space as their own. Advertising agencies are calling it "branded content" and are eager to flex their storytelling muscles to get a bigger foothold with large corporations. Media companies, such as **Vice**, **Snapchat** and **The New York Times Co.**, have developed brand studios to create native content. Even social media vendors think they should own this market.

But really it's the PR team that's uniquely suited to be the ringmaster of this brave new world of multidisciplinary communications because we are the only one in the mix who sees all sides of the content equation.

We understand the company's brand goals; know how to translate them into credible messages; and have the connections to spread those messages organically.

The challenge is breaking down the silos inside many large organizations to summon all of the elements needed to deliver a comprehensive campaign. In our work developing content-centric campaigns for multinational brands, we've been able to identify key ingredients PR professionals need to take the reins of integrated brand communications:

► **Everyone needs an editor.** It's almost too easy for companies to produce content and have it seen by millions quickly. Someone needs to sit atop the content-creation machine and think about every tweet, blog post and data point as an external reflection of the brand. Is it tone deaf? Blatant promotion? The PR team needs to insert itself into the content development process to ensure that any communication released externally is appropriate.

► **Keep it journalistic.** We know branded content can be produced, published and promoted without ever having to get past the gatekeepers of third-party media outlets. Still, the content needs to be relevant. Whether it's being released to the press or published directly via owned media channels, it remains PR's job to judge whether content is newsworthy and reflects the brand as a thought leader or an also-ran.

► **Consider all channels.** It's possible for a single piece of good content to be used as a story pitch for third-party press; a company blog post; a series of social media posts; a video; a webinar; and more. PR teams that understand the power of leveraging content across multiple channels will win rapidly the kind of support that keeps the content engine running.

► **Get comfortable using data.** For evidence of the power of data to influence a narrative, look no further than **Atlantic Media's** recently launched Atlas, billed as a "platform for dis-

“Content may be a video clip or research brief, yet it remains an external embodiment of the brand and PR must own it.”

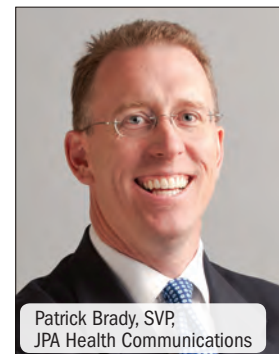
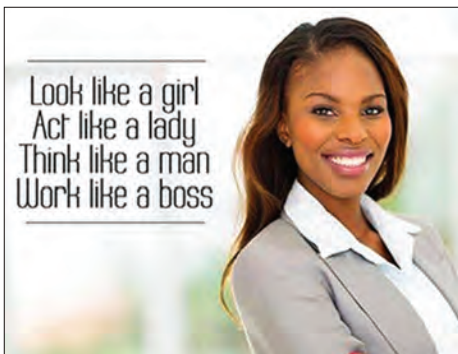
covering and sharing great charts.” There is no simpler, more direct way to influence traditional and social media buzz than through thoughtful presentation of unique (and owned) data.

► **Connect, don't sell.** A good branded content initiative will build thought leadership for a brand and its people. This is an entry point to a discussion, not a sales pitch. For content to connect—whether it is produced by a brand or third-party media outlet—it needs to intrigue, engage and stimulate an audience.

Whether you call it integrated communications, branded content, native content, thought leadership or some other variant, the role of the PR team is critical to its success.

Just because information may take the form of a video clip or a research brief instead of a press release, it does not become any less of an external embodiment of a brand. It is up to communications professionals to own content if they want to maintain their roles as protectors and promoters of the brands behind it. ■

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Patrick Brady, SVP  
JPA Health Communications

**1. Writing The Right Thing:** How many lessons can brands and PR pros learn from **Bic South Africa's** recent social media blunder? Attempting to do good by celebrating that country's National Womens Day, the company posted a congratulatory ad (excerpted above): "Look like a girl; Act like a lady; Think like a man; Work like a boss." (Lesson I: Have a PR person review ad copy before it leaves the building.) Social media had a field day, responding with a slew of faux ads mocking the original's apparently unintended sexist sentiments. Bic SA responded quickly with an apology, but played the blame game, explaining it took the offending verbiage from a "Women in Business" site. In that context, Bic SA said, the words made for an "empowering" quotation. Another explosion, with tweets and **Facebook** posts blasting Bic for being sexist in an "empowering" way. (Lesson II: Moving quickly to address a wrong is good, but it's better to take a bit more time and make sure you have it right. Also, take full responsibility.) A couple of hours later, Bic SA removed its first apology and issued a second, much better, one: "Let's start out by saying we're incredibly sorry for offending everybody—this was never our intention, but we completely understand where we've gone wrong. This post should never have gone out. The feedback you have given us will help ensure that something like this will never happen again, and we appreciate that." (Lesson III: Be careful about making promises, especially when you have a spotty track record.) Recall that in 2012 Bic introduced a line of pink pens "for her" that drew the ire of women, and men, who feel pens are a unisex item.

**2. News Bits:** Possibly the largest collaboration between hackers and insider traders has several PR angles. Exposed by federal authorities last week, the hackers, some in Ukraine, others in the U.S., penetrated servers of press release distribution companies, alerting traders about information in the press releases that were about to hit the wires, giving them information before it reached the public, according to *The Wall St Journal*. Allegedly hacked were servers belonging to **PRNewswire**, **Marketwired** and **Business Wire**. Federal government estimates of damage from resulting trades range from \$30 million to \$100 million. And how did one hacker get the message out to potential customers that he had a load of hot information for sale? Like many honest PR pros, he used a well-produced video. Allegedly the video shows an image of a computer breaking into a news wire server. — Of the various teams that make up the marketing function, Communications & PR (14%) is the least "overly stressed" or "stressed to the max," says a new study from **Workfront**, a work-management company. The most stressed was leadership (30%), followed by Creative Services (29%), Operations, Events & Other (28%) and Digital Marketing (26%). On the other hand, Communications & PR (3%) was least likely of these groups to say it's "under-loaded" with work; Creative Services (11%) was most likely; Leadership was in the middle, at 5%. Other findings from the survey of more than 500 executives: marketers say they have too few team members and too much work, with 80% saying they're "understaffed and overloaded." — **PRSA** said loyalty expert **James Kane** will keynote a session during its international conference, which will be held in Atlanta, Nov 7-10. Other keynoters include **KIND** founder/CEO **Daniel Lubetzky**, **Ford Motor Company's** Global Consumer

Trends and Futuring chief **Sheryl Connelly**; and **The Weather Channel's Jim Cantore**.

**3. PR Movers:** **JPA Health Communications** said **Patrick Brady** joined the agency as SVP in its Washington, D.C., office. In addition to working with several sectors, Brady's developed and implemented communications programs for healthcare systems, health IT companies, professional healthcare societies, senior care and senior living organizations. Previously the 20-year PR veteran was at **Stanton Communications**, where he was a managing director and led the firm's public affairs practice. — **Burson-Marsteller** said journalist **Brett Pulley** joined the firm as senior advisor. Pulley's portfolio will include business building and strengthening client relationships. Dean of the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications at Hampton University, Pulley covered the media and entertainment industries at *Bloomberg* and *Forbes*. Earlier he was a national correspondent at *The New York Times* and covered airlines and urban affairs at *The Wall Street Journal*. — **ConAgra Foods** named **Jon Harris** CCO, replacing **Theresa Paulsen**. He'll oversee strategic development and direct and implement corporate communication and reputation management programs. Harris had been the announcer for *The Meredith Vieira Show* through last year. Prior to that he was CCO of **Hillshire Brands** and VP of business development and global communications at **Bally Total Fitness** and senior manager of global public affairs at **PepsiCo**. — **Caitlin Hayden**, former special assistant to President **Barack Obama** is joining **Edelman's** Washington, D.C., office as SVP in the Media and Technology practices. Former campaign manager **Matt Seaholm** also is joining Edelman as a VP, Public Affairs. ■



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