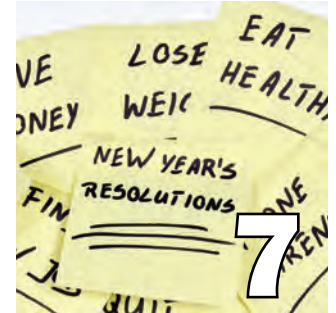


CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| CES..... | 1-4 |
| Crisis Communications | 1,5 |
| Events Calendar | 2 |
| Predictions | 6 |
| The Year Ahead | 7 |
| The Week in PR..... | 8 |



CES

Data Rights, Connectivity, Cyber, Wearables, Virtual Reality Dominate CES for Communicators

Let's get the nomenclature correct. A note to editors from the **Consumer Technology Association** (CTA), formerly the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), informs us, "The official name of the global technology event is CES. Please do not use Consumer Electronics Show or International CES to refer to the event." Message received.

So now that we know its preferred name, what will PR pros whose Happy New Year includes attending CES be looking for

when they attend later this week? And if they're representing a brand, how will they make sure it stands out from the clutter of nearly 4,000 exhibiting companies on more than 2 million square feet of exhibit space? Last, but not least, with some 176,000+ people converging on Las Vegas, January 6-9, for CES, how does one survive? Get around? Think?

For answers we asked PR pros and even a journalist who are veterans of "the global technology event."

Continued on pages 2-4

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

BY ANN MARIE VAN DEN HURK, PRINCIPAL, MIND THE GAP PUBLIC RELATIONS

Multiple Channels Critical for Internal, External Crisis Communications

In the wake of multiple terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut, Nigeria and Mali along with the shooting directed at **Planned Parenthood** in Colorado during the latter part of 2015, now would be a good time to review your organization's crisis plan, including your crisis communications plan.

Cities and countries usually have solid crisis plans in place, although we saw during 9/11 how a lack of coordination between officials in the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland, led to a disorganized evacuation of the District that day. By contrast, the evacuation of Manhattan and those on waters surrounding the island went relatively smoothly. Perhaps one good thing to emerge from 9/11 is that governments here and

abroad were motivated to work on their crisis plans.

The cities and countries mentioned above, along with the American organization, Planned Parenthood, were able to react quickly amidst the chaos that befell them in 2015.

But what about businesses within the targeted zones? Were they prepared to communicate during these unexpected horrific events? As a communications pro in an organization you need to ask yourself what would you and your brand have done if a bombing or an attack occurred near your headquarters or other offices? How would you communicate effectively?

Continued on page 5



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Continued from page 1

CES Geared to Communicators



Michael Bassik
 Managing Director
 President, Global Digital Operations
 MDC Partners Inc

Bassik says CES has become more a draw for marketers and communicators during the past three years. "Before that, it really was more of a B-to-B conference about linear technology...concerning itself with size, speed and definition...smaller phones, faster computers, brighter screens...it was all about hardware that was stationary...it didn't have much to do with CMOs or marketers." That's no longer the case, he says. "If you look at CES in 2016, it's geared almost entirely to the marketer, the communicator and the CMO because...it's now all about connectivity, content and data working together to deliver exciting experiences anywhere...and that's why marketers and communicators are drawn to it." Bassik sees three trends coming from this year's CES:

Virtual Reality and Multisensory Storytelling: For Bassik, who works across a number of PR firms, digital and media agencies, including **Allison + Partners**, which is managing the press experience at CES for **Samsung**, spotting trends is straightforward. He jokes: "You just have to count the square feet. You have 80% increase in square feet for virtual reality exhibits, 71% increase in robotics and 200% increase in drones." Yet having more space doesn't necessarily mean it's a trend for the consumer and the marketer, he says more seriously. In fact, from a marketing standpoint, virtual reality is the first trend he's hoping to see at CES this year. "We're going to see an explosion of virtual reality headsets, **Oculus Rift**, **HTC**, Samsung gear, **Sony PlayStation** and these will be available for the first time for purchase" in 2016.

Marketing Payoff: "From [the above] you will see a trend toward multisensory storytelling. We've already begun to see how marketers, **Marriott**, **HBO** with *Game of Thrones*, have leveraged Oculus Rift and other virtual reality technologies to bring storytelling to a more immersive level....How will marketers take virtual reality and create more exciting, more personalized experiences for consumers?" While many people think of virtual reality for gaming, Bassik believes it falls to PR to "be even more creative to think of new and innovative ways to use [it] for marketing purposes."

Intelligent Machines: Another trend that marketers will be seeing at CES is "the rise of intelligent, Internet-enabled machines working together that bring big data insights and automation to everything from driving to doing the laundry." Appliances will look the same from the outside, Bassik says. You won't be able to tell a dumb car from a smart car, for example. "It's the inside that's different and remarkable," he says, noting "the companies that are powering the technology of our appliances are those that a few years ago you'd have never imagined would have anything to do with household appliances or a car or a thermostat. Companies like **Apple**, **Google**, **Microsoft** and **Amazon**."

Quantified Self: "Wearables are the universal remote control of our generation," Bassik jokes. He anticipates a lot of advances in wearables related to healthcare at CES. "Perhaps wearables that can test your blood, analyze your sweat, inject medication when you need it, communicate with your healthcare professional. It's big data meets personalization and marketers will be interested in this," he says.



Michael Goodwin
 Senior Vice President
 Makovsky

Wearables: As others we interviewed, Goodwin mentions wearables first when asked about anticipated technology trends at this year's show, although he says "most important, I want to see what personal vehicle technology looks like, as well as autonomous driving... how will it be presented to the public, the states and more important the liability professionals?" As a communicator he's also interested in the questions surrounding the technology. "If a millennial rents a driverless car to travel from NY to Boston, who assumes the liability?"

Returning to wearables, Goodwin says, "**Fit-bits** have become ubiquitous lately, but I'm very curious what the next level [of demand for wearables] will be," he says. "We're into the I-watch now...is there a better mousetrap...or does that market even make sense?" From a communications standpoint wearables interest Goodwin in that "I want to know how people are acquiring information, how they are assimilating information...I'm curious about how technology consumers are viewing touch tech, if they're still

looking for next-level innovations or is what we have now good enough? I'm curious what the news story is." Many of these issues will be debated in the media this week, he says.

Clutter Breaking: While at CES Goodwin and his team will be representing **Amlin Andretti**, a racing team that competes on the Formula E circuit, which means it uses electric-powered cars. Former driver Michael Andretti and members of the racing team will be at CES to discuss how Formula E racing is advancing technology for the consumer sector. "We're also talking about Formula E's association with robo race, which, if you can believe this, is a Formula E race without drivers." The pitch will be that such racing also will benefit consumer technology.

To make sure media hear the pitch, Amlin Andretti will attend a press-only event the first night of CES called Showstoppers. It will bring what Goodwin calls "the world's most-advanced racing simulator" to Showstoppers. Media will be able to climb into the simulator and race against Michael Andretti. Goodwin feels appearing at Showstoppers "will get us the same mindshare with reporters" that large companies like Sony seeks with a 2000-square-foot booth on the CES show floor. "Otherwise it's a very crowded event and very difficult to be noticed." Goodwin has ample reason to speak. A few years ago he attended CES with a client and *CNET* named it Best in Show. "We didn't even exhibit at CES" but we were at Showstoppers, he says. "It's a matter of knowing where the media are and how they gather their information."



Brad Williams
Chair, Global Technology Practice
Weber Shandwick

As one who has been attending CES for more than 10 years, Williams sees the show's influence slipping, but only a bit. "In technology its influence is transferring to **Mobile World Congress**...there's been some continental drift," he says. He quickly adds, though, "CES is still hugely important...in terms of trends and in its importance" for brands. Williams echoed the thoughts of several of our interviewees, saying, "It's a great place to re-connect with influencers and media, to network and spot trends."

Wearables: Williams, as well as many of those interviewed for this piece, sees wearables and the Internet of Things, particularly the connected home and connected car, being big at CES. "Last year's CES was a tipping point for the Internet of Things," he says. "[The Internet of Things] is not quite mainstream, although the connected home and connected car are getting better known." As for wearables, "Apple has come in [with the Apple Watch] and defined the marketplace."

Technology and PR Opportunities: While some look at mobile and wearable technology and envision mining the data that devices will generate, Williams takes a different route. In addition to seeking emerging trends, Williams goes to CES to look for opportunities that technologies will present for communicators when questions arise. "Typically technologies pose so many hard questions that they create a very interesting communications playing field," he says. For example, he believes "drones will land this year... they are a disruptive technology and they also are disruptive from a regulatory standpoint. In addition they pose privacy and safety questions. When there are a lot of questions and ambiguity...communications has an important role to play in terms of messaging and public opinion...there are also reputational opportunities and risks."



Mike McDougall
President, McDougall Communications

Tapping into Data: In addition to representing a client, McDougall, as many who were interviewed for this piece, will be eyeing the Internet of Things and wearables. "Today you have to choose to update your status, but eventually [wearables] will do it for you...[the data this will generate] will be interesting from a communications standpoint...I'm always thinking about how I, as a communicator, can tap into that."

Floor to Store: McDougall also will be observing what's shown on the CES floor. "If it's being used on the floor in Vegas, it will go wide in mid year," he says. The floor also is a prime spot to network and scout for partnerships and co-marketing

Continued on page 4



PR News is excited to announce this year's list of Top Women in PR, saluting the creativity and accomplishments of our female colleagues at leading agencies, nonprofits, corporations, and more. Honorees will be celebrated at an awards luncheon on 1/26 at the Grand Hyatt New York.

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arrangements, he says. He'll also be eyeing foreign technology suppliers who provide "quirky technology that often gets overlooked." There are small entrepreneurs "who've scraped together enough money" to travel to CES, he says. You can find them on the edges of the show floor, he says. Large brands "rarely show their cards," but the small vendors often "are not as well-versed in what to show," he says. But beware, "there's a lot of junk" shown, too, McDougall says.



Rowan Benecke
Global Technology Practice Chair
Burson-Marsteller

For Benecke, nearly all the technology at CES will have one common denominator, "data, enormous amounts of data. The question is, Who owns this data? Does

it belong to the company that produces the product? Or does it belong to the consumer who owns the product? This is why privacy and data security are the top threats to innovation," he says. "So I'm looking for a cybersecurity trend at CES." He adds, "An understanding of what consumer technologies will be most topical and trending throughout the year...helps advise and direct clients...."

[Subscriber Bonus: More from Rowan Benecke can be found at the subscriber-only section of prnewsonline.com] ■

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CES SURVIVAL SKILLS

A large part of CES involves survival skills. We asked our interviewees about travel and dining, booth etiquette and strategies for remaining sane during CES.

Travel: "Keep in mind it takes longer – way longer – to get around than you think it will," says freelance journalist Cathy Applefeld Olson, who's attended CES for more than 14 years. "Patience is a virtue at this show, beginning with the serpentine cab lines at McCarran Airport." Mike McDougall agrees. "Once you accept you can't control [the traffic delays], it all becomes easier," he adds.

Getting There: Brad Williams and McDougall counsel taking off-hour flights. Both arrive at McCarran late in the night, when crowds are light. Williams adopts a similar strategy throughout the day. "Try to step out of the normal patterns...don't go with the flow," he says. "Schedule your day differently; avoid lunch at noon,

eat at 2...anticipate when crowds will be around and then go at a different time."

Getting There While You're There: With 176,000+ attendees expected, taxi lines to and from hotels and the convention center will be "endless, we're talking hours-long endless, so you might end up walking," says Applefeld Olson. Her motto: Wear comfortable shoes (repeat three times, please). Michael Goodwin sums up his travel strategy: "Vegas now has **Uber.**" It also has **Lyft,** adds Applefeld Olson. Having a room in a hotel that's on the monorail line is a winning bet, too. "It gives you another option besides cabs to get to and from the convention center," Goodwin says. Applefeld Olson notes, "CES runs shuttle busses from most hotels to the convention center, which is great for getting there." Returning is much more difficult (see cab lines above). Regarding transport between meetings at hotels, Rowan Benecke says forget it. "Don't rely on cabs to get you to your next

meeting on time...the best bet is to use the monorail to get you close enough. Otherwise, invest in good shoe leather and be prepared to rack up some serious steps on your Fitbit."

On The Floor: New this year: "Rolling bags are banned, which means you'll be carrying more on your back, but it'll be a little easier to make your way through the crowd without having your toes run over," Applefeld Olson says.

Packages: "Don't ship large packages [to CES] and expect to find them," says Goodwin. "Hotel staffs are overworked...my colleague and I will be traveling with a bit of checked baggage."

Food: "Reporters respond well to being fed and 'watered' since we often don't have time for a meal at CES. Any events that involve food and drink are likely to bring us out in greater numbers," Applefeld Olson says.

Sanity: McDougall urges "go as hard and fast as you

can [during CES] and take the next week to recover... it's not a show to go slow or you'll miss it...and some of the most important times are late evenings early mornings, for networking...a normal night ends at 1:30 am." Adds Applefeld Olson, "Don't forget to sleep. It's easy to do."

Miscellaneous: Etiquette includes no pitching for business inside CES booths. If you want new business look at a brand's products and exchange business cards with staff, "but don't cold pitch, you'll be blackballed," McDougall says. – "Get to keynotes early if you want a seat," says Applefeld Olson. "It's amazing how quickly these cavernous rooms fill up." Wireless Internet around the convention center is sketchy, though works great in the media room. "In general, don't count on it," she says. – Don't take it personally when journalists are unable to make time in their schedules for you. Applefeld Olson says most journos schedule few meetings. Flexibility is in short supply at CES. ■

In a Crisis, Reach Your Audience Where it is

Have you reviewed your crisis communications plan recently?

Ideally you should be reviewing your crisis communications plan quarterly and making adjustments based on the changing landscape. One important piece of a crisis communications plan is how you are anticipating to communicate with internal and external stakeholders. At a minimum, you should have notification systems in place before a crisis occurs.

NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

During a crisis, you can expect that some systems will be compromised. This is why you need to be able to make plans to work with multiple channels of communications to get out information quickly and efficiently. That means expanding beyond the traditional means of sharing information through the news media. You should have more than one channel to reach people within and outside the organization—such as a website, phone trees, email or SMS text messaging groups. The goal of notification systems is to get the correct information out to the right people fast.

COMMUNICATING INTERNALLY

Do you have a way for staff to report in or get information fast? Set up an out-of-area number that staff can call to say they're OK. In addition, make certain that freelance staff are briefed on where to check in during a crisis. An 800 number that feeds into a security company is an option.

Another option is **Facebook's** Safety Check, which is activated during natural and other emergencies such as terrorist attacks; encourage staff to check in using that feature. Note, however, that Facebook determines when Safety Check will be activated. This means you should have other options. You will want to use your company intranet and email to broadcast information about the crisis. A phone tree and SMS text messaging also are potential options.

Your organizational model and industry should factor into how your notification system will be designed. **FedEx**, for example, uses the *Manager as Communicator* model. Important messages and news are sent to managers, and managers hold team meetings to communicate the needed information. If there is an urgent message when the drivers are out on their routes, FedEx sends a dispatch message on a scanner. Before a driver who has received a notification can continue with de-

liveries, he or she must read the short message.

COMMUNICATING EXTERNALLY

In terms of external communications, the type of industry your organization is in determines the type of notification system. The notification system for a chemical plant is going to be very different from that of a retail store. The principles are the same, though: you want to communicate quickly and

“ You should have more than one channel to reach people within and outside the organization—such as a website, phone trees, email or SMS text messaging groups. The goal of notification systems is to get the correct information out to the right people fast. ”

effectively reach your communities.

You need to know your communities' preferences. Phone calls, SMS texts, emails, **Twitter**, Facebook and traditional media all are acceptable channels.

Keeping your website updated is important during a crisis; however, it is critical to keep your Facebook page and Twitter feed active. Share information on these channels using a crisis-specific hashtag. Remember that people aren't necessarily going to go to your website during a crisis. They're going to turn to sites where their friends and family are likely to be accessible, such as Facebook and Twitter.

It is critical to distribute correct information quickly during a crisis situation. The last thing you want your employees to be is uninformed. Notification systems help you avoid that situation.

Prepare to communicate during the unexpected. It could do more than save your business, it could save lives. ■

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THE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDEBOOK

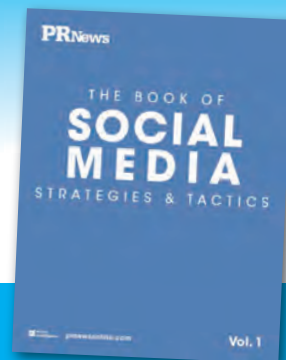
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Millennials, Data, Bold Stakeholders Will Test Communicators in '16



The stakes for today's communications leaders have never been higher. We are operating in a world of constant change and disruption; a world in which every stakeholder has a voice if he or she chooses to speak out; and a world in which issues, no matter how small they might seem, can metastasize into full-blown crises overnight.

More than that, in many cases communicators also are depended upon to be chief advisors to boards and CEOs. Our purview often has grown to include social media, internal and external communications as well as supporting HR and marketing.

As a result of the above there are few communicators whose jobs are the same as they were five years ago and none will be the same five years out. In my view, there are four prevailing trends that are shaping the current communications landscape and will continue to drive changes in our profession in the future.

1. Demographic Shifts are Having a Ripple Effect Across Enterprises, Both Internally and Externally. On June 25, 2015, the **U.S. Census Bureau** reported that millennials now outnumber baby boomers and have become the largest generation in the country, representing more than 25% of the population. By 2025, they will comprise as much as three quarters of the American workforce. Between now and then, the implications for employers will be significant.

A 2015 **Gallup** study concluded that millennials are the least-engaged group among employees, at 28.9%. In 2013 Gallup found companies with the highest levels of employee engagement outperformed their lower-engaged counterparts by 10% in customer ratings, 22% in profitability and 21% in productivity. This means all our existing practices—for internal and external communications—developed in a boomer-dominated world need to be reassessed to be more relevant to a new generation that possesses different behaviors, attitudes and worldviews.

2. The Data Revolution is Accelerating. Communicators Need to Become Adept at Finding the Signal Amid the Noise. Insights mined from data now can inform engagement with stakeholders, which creates a unique opportunity to tailor communications to individuals. This communication can be based on what we can discern about who the individuals are, what they're doing and what they want. The shift from descriptive to predictive to prescriptive analytics has been rapid. The challenge for CCOs is to find methodical ways to structure data and apply insights to achieve a specific business outcome. The rise of data analytics is cause for us to rethink the skills required in our jobs, how we work and add value.

3. Stakeholders Are More Empowered and Emboldened Than Ever; This Is Especially so for Activist Investors. Stakeholder engagement models were developed in an

analog, baby boomer world in which the behavior norm with all groups, except small groups of activists, was a passive equilibrium. That's no longer the case. Now we must assume a degree of activism among most, if not all, stakeholders. In this environment, the assumption must be that even if we don't act, they will. Employees heavily engaged in social media can act out online in support of or against their employer. Consumers can critique a restaurant, post a video of a careless bus driver or sign an online petition through Change.org in seconds. An activist shareholder can petition your investors to seize seats on the board, break the company into pieces or change the business model altogether.

“ Millennials are the least-engaged group among employees, yet companies with the highest levels of employee engagement outperformed their lower-engaged counterparts. This means all our communications practices need to be reassessed to be more relevant to a new generation. ”

4. The CCO Role Is More Globally-Oriented Than Ever. The three aforementioned trends sum up to a world where communications are constant and lack a binding to geography. Global enterprises must engage in more parts of the world, be aware of local cultural norms and sensitivities and be able to navigate varied political, regulatory and socioeconomic challenges. This requires CCOs who possess more global acumen than their predecessors, leading global teams that engage with stakeholders promptly and appropriately.

None of these trends is an abstract concept. They are the realities and challenges confronting communicators across all geographies and every sector.

On January 1, 2016, I had the honor of beginning my two-year term as chairman of the **Arthur W. Page Society**, a professional association at the forefront of understanding this new dynamic and advancing our profession into the future. Over the next two years, we will continue to explore our new reality and learn from each other as to how we can best address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. ■

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Six Resolutions That PR People Should try to Break in 2016

After weeks of unseasonably warm weather, the much-talked-about precipitation finally came after the Sun dropped below the horizon. Yet it wasn't the blanketing of snow we expected.

The so-called storm was a mix of steel-cold rain, tiny ice pellets that pinged off the windows and a gusty wind that made heavy branches sway and creak. Winter had arrived to welcome in the New Year, albeit in a different form than we're used to in the lake-effect snow region of Western New York.

It was a different form – yet winter just the same. Taking a cue from Mother Nature and her propensity to change the rules as 2016 begins, maybe we as PR practitioners and communicators should do the same.

Perhaps it might be appropriate to avoid making resolutions and vow to break some of them.

Let's start with some resolutions that seem to be on the perennial list for PR pros.

1. Devote More Time to Your Work. I love hard work and admire hard workers. But overdo it and the consequences will wipe out the gains you've otherwise made. Work smarter, aiming for efficiency and effectiveness over expended energy. There's a panoply of tools available that can help raise your efficiency, although you will need to expend some time to learn how to use them. When you work more efficiently you'll reduce the chances of burning out and of burning out those around you.

2. Follow the Playbook. My team always poses two questions regarding new ideas on the table: are they legal and are they ethical? If the answers are yes, then the other elements of the PR playbook are negotiable. Breaking long-established rules advances the industry, and is at the heart of innovation. Even academia is on your side – a new **Harvard Business School** working paper from Michael Housman and Dylan Minor indicates that stringent rule followers can add to workplace toxicity.

3. Build the Client Roster. On the agency side, there's a constant push to add more brand logos to the client tableau. While there's nothing wrong with gaining new clients, temper that push just a bit. Back off and focus more on organic growth, looking for ways to deepen the relationships and expand the business with organizations for which you already provide counsel.

4. Move Up the Ladder. Stop climbing for a moment and scan the world around you. Over the long term, what skills do you need to succeed? Is the prize at the top of your ladder what you really want? Consider making a lateral move this year, jumping onto a different set of rungs to diversity your experiences and gain new perspectives.

5. Win More Awards. Sure, nearly everyone likes being noticed by his and her peers. But some awards are meaningless – pretty, little pieces of crystal or acrylic that look nice on a shelf but do little to advance your business or your pro-

fessional development. Focus on gaining recognition that truly matters – to your colleagues, your customers and your future.

6. Master New Technology. Exploring new platforms and mechanisms is commendable, if not necessary, in this crazy, fast-moving industry. But mastering them? Participate in the digital evolution and help shape how new tech applies to your objectives, yet turn your mastery goals to slightly more mature platforms about which you should have a comprehensive understanding.

“ Perhaps it might be appropriate to avoid making resolutions and vow to break some of them.... Breaking long-established rules advances the industry and is at the heart of innovation. ”

7. Enrich Your Career. Flip or scroll through most business media these days, and a theme emerges: building your career is worth sacrificing most everything else. Yet many of the most seasoned and well-respected executives tell a different story. They emphasize the importance of surrounding yourself with friends and family and partaking in experiences that help you develop a more reasoned and holistic world view. This year, spend a little less time on your career, and a little more time on living life.

Now that you're back in the office, put up that new calendar that your mother-in-law sent you. Down another almost-stale holiday cookie or two. Start commiserating about how springtime seems like a lifetime from now. And since there's no time like the present, start breaking resolutions.

You won't be alone. Various studies indicate that up to 75% of people break their resolutions within the first few weeks of the New Year. Eating that cookie probably just took points of your personal resolutions list, right?

So lower those harmful, ulcer-creating professional expectations for 2016. Look to the year ahead with an excitement and energy that comes from having a new perspective not on promises made, but promises broken. ■

CONTACT: Mike McDougall is a Fellow of PRSA. To his recollection, he has never made a New Year's resolution – a practice he resolves to mischievously continue. @McDougallPR.





1. Peyton's Place: By now you've likely heard of *Al Jazeera's* report about an Indianapolis clinic that allegedly distributed performance-enhancing human growth hormone (HGH) to NFL players, including **Denver Broncos'** quarterback **Peyton Manning**. Anti-aging clinic, the **Guyer Institute**, allegedly sent HGH to Manning's home in packages addressed to his wife **Ashley**. The NFL banned HGH in 2011; it began testing players in 2014. *Al Jazeera's* report alleged Manning was shipped HGH in 2011, as he recovered from neck surgery. Heard less loudly was that a main source of the story, former Guyer employee **Charlie Sly**, took back his statements to *Al Jazeera* and now disputes the veracity of the network's report. The NFL is investigating. The PR angles? Mr. Manning issued a strongly worded denial Saturday, ahead of the Sunday-night *Al Jazeera* broadcast. On Sunday morning he appeared on **ESPN** and again strongly denounced the allegations. Fairly early in the game Manning enlisted former White House spokesman **Ari Fleisher** to represent him. Fleisher appeared with Manning on ESPN. Manning's current team sided with him as did his former team, the **Indianapolis Colts**, whose property he was in 2011. Later in the week one of the many brands the quarterback endorses joined the chorus. "**Papa John's** is aware of the speculation," the pizza maker said in a statement. "During the course of our relationship, Peyton has represented himself, the game of football and Papa John's with the utmost honor and integrity. Furthermore he has been a trusted friend. It is a shame [that] for all his hard work...he has to deal with these allegations." In addition to his



being a spokesperson, Manning owns 22 Papa John's outlets. Here's hoping Papa John's has no need to backtrack on these remarks.

2. Das Honest Guy: Besides ousting the CEO and seeing sales fall and share prices decline, there's yet another casualty of the **Volkswagen** emissions scandal. "Das Auto," the carmaker's tagline in ads since 2007, apparently is kaput. Ironically, or maybe not, the slogan was launched under **Martin Winterkorn**, the VW boss who resigned five days after the emission story hit the media September 18. Apparently VW's new leaders, meeting last month in Dresden, felt Das Auto was an elitist relic and inappropriate for a company now wishing to show humility in the face of probable multi-billion dollar penalties and lawsuits. In a sign of communicators gaining traction, the company held its first press conference on the scandal, nearly three months after the story broke. Haste indeed makes waste and the hiatus allowed VW time to formulate a plan to avoid future emissions scandals, which is good PR. But three months? Held Dec 10, that first presser left lingering questions. For example, VW communications chief **Hans-Gerd Bode** told reporters, "We certainly did not, at any point, knowingly lie to you...." Really? When asked in late September about chief Winterkorn being replaced, VW replied "nonsense." He was gone the next day. In November, VW's **Audi** unit said it was false that certain of its cars contained illegal software. Three weeks later it had to admit they did. – **Family Affair:** In a related note, our September 28 edition quoted **Gene Grabowski**, partner, **kglobal**, urging VW to make sure dealers stay informed. "They are



your best ambassadors to the public," Grabowski, whose dad sold cars for some 20 years, told us then. What VW should avoid, he added, is for dealers to "commiserate" with the public, saying things like 'We are as confused as you are...we don't know what went on or what's happening next.' We thought of Grabowski when we saw a story in the *Wall St Journal* Dec. 19. It quotes VW dealer **Alan Brown** saying, "We really don't know what's going on...I really don't have a feel if we're close or not to a fix for the customer." He was referring to the status of a VW plan submitted to CA and the **EPA** to recall and fix the offending cars. The article mentions Brown is sitting on 60 diesel VWs he can no longer sell. What it fails to mention is whether Brown is upset with VW, the EPA or both. A VW spokesperson says in the piece that since the scandal erupted dealers and customers are its "top priority," although she refused to address specific dealer concerns. Making matters worse, the WSJ identifies Brown as chairman of VW's national dealer advisory council. Oops.

3. Bell Tolls: We thought **Blue Bell Creameries** was on an upswing since its ice cream's staged return to shelves began late last summer (PRN, Aug 24). Maybe not. Owing to a *Listeria* outbreak that killed three people, Blue Bell closed three plants and recalled its ice cream in April (PRN, April 20). **CBS News** last week reported the **Department of Justice** is probing Blue Bell, alleging the company was told of issues with its plants in 2013, two years before the *Listeria* outbreak. Neither DoJ, Blue Bell nor its popular Twitter site, which has chronicled the ice cream's re-emergence, commented. ■

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