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CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Uber & Apple Caught in the Crossfire: What to Do When Ensnared in a Crisis Not of Your Making

One of the best-known PR lessons for brands is that it's a good idea to have a crisis plan in place since no organization is immune to a crisis situation, as PR pros have argued repeatedly in these pages. But what can and should brands do when they find themselves in the crosshairs of someone else's crisis or in a crisis not directly related to them?

An obvious example is the recent case in Kalamazoo, MI, where **Jason Brian Dalton** allegedly killed six people and in-

jured two others in incidents on Feb. 20. **Uber** became involved in the story when it was learned that Dalton drove for the company. In fact, it is alleged he handled fares before and after the killings.

Although it remained silent for a time on the incident, Uber eventually said, "We are horrified and heartbroken at

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LEADERSHIP

BY JACK MODZELEWSKI, GLOBAL PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS AND J.J. CARTER, GLOBAL COO, FLEISHMANHILLARD

How PR Pros Can Turn Smart CEOs Into Dynamic Communicators

Corporate directors and shareholders assess performance primarily on business and financial results. They also have an obligation to evaluate leaders, particularly chief executives, on their ability to inspire organizations to achieve great feats, such as rallying people to make game-changing products or to deliver superb customer experiences. Leadership communication is as vital to organizational success as smart people, technology advantage and strong capital funding.

Savvy communication professionals invest time thinking about the toughest business challenges their leaders face, from outmaneuvering competitors to addressing operational vulnerabilities. They must think that way to add value to the

enterprise. C-suite executives and operational leaders value communication strategies that drive business outcomes and provide solutions to problems.

And if we are really doing our jobs, we must consider things that can go wrong as well as right for our companies or clients' organizations. More awards are given in our industry for breakthrough marketplace programs than for helping brands avert damaging situations. But crisis mitigation or prevention through early risk detection is critical, too. Ask any CEO who's experienced an enterprise-threatening event.

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**Seven Ways You Can Prove
 PR's Worth via ROI**



Today's PR pro needs to demonstrate direct correlation of PR to lead generation. Thankfully, new tools and tactics are available to gain control of reporting. Here are six mandatory metrics that can help:

1. Referral Traffic: If people are interested in learning about your brand after seeing it in an article, they'll probably visit your website. When reporters include a link to your website in articles, you can track how many people used those links by referencing the referral traffic from that publisher's website.

Not sure how this is assessed on the back end? Work with your analytics team to set up a PR-specific campaign in Google Analytics. Reference the number of visits to calculate your lead conversion rate. [See also Bonus Tip below.]

2. Leads Generated: Track the number of leads generated (people who submit their information via a form on the brand's website) based on referral traffic. Some first-time leads are further down the funnel than others. Determine which leads are most important so you can show the direct correlation of your PR effort to increases in that number.

Bonus Tip: To calculate your lead conversion rate, divide the number of leads generated by the number of visits. For example, if you have 50 visits and five leads, your conversion rate is 10%.

3. Organic Search: If an article doesn't link to your brand's website, you can use organic visits to measure impressions and leads. Highlight the spike in organic traffic to the website directly after the launch of your PR campaign and see where it falls off.

Unless other campaigns were running at that time, all signs point to PR as the source. In addition, from that time period, have the sales team ask organic leads how they heard about the company.

4. Earned and Paid Impressions: Paid media bolsters a successful PR campaign. Imagine your target visits the website after reading about your

brand in an article, and then leaves without converting.

A smart retargeting campaign could target those visitors who were referred to your client's website by one of the specific publisher sites. You could even reference quotes from the article that your target read and get that person to revisit the site.

When you're measuring the success of an earned-plus-paid-media campaign, it is likely to be impossible to separate the two, giving you built-in PR metrics.

5. Social Reach: Pinpoint social amplification. First, check the publisher's social feeds; most share articles without prompting (if not, enact prompting).

Then, check on any influencers related to the campaign (the reporter, executives quoted). Search for the article's title on social to find people who tweeted the link directly.

Additional searches for your brand and the key message in the article should turn up even more hits. Demonstrate how many times each article you secured was shared on social, and choose tweets from influencers to highlight.

6. Message Pull-Through: Before a PR campaign begins, everyone on the team should be aligned on key messages. Every story placement should then be examined to see if it hits on those messages. An article containing your messaging is like gold; such write-ups rank high in searches, offer third-party credibility and serve as tenured marketing material for sales teams, speaking opportunities, investor relations and more.

PR is important to a brand's success, and thanks to digital tools, it's easier than ever to prove ROI. Once the value of PR is demonstrated fully, there is no denying its worth. ■

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Crisis Can Be an Opportunity for Brands

the senseless violence...Our hearts and prayers are with the families of the victims of this devastating crime and those recovering from injuries. We have reached out to the police to help with their investigation in any way that we can." Uber also confirmed it had vetted Dalton. Later Uber held a press conference to explain its vetting procedures.

The incident blew up on Uber in part due to the popular belief that its drivers are vetted less than traditional cabbies. That perception was created during the past three years when the company failed to respond adequately to incidents involving its drivers. Since 2013 Uber drivers were involved in alleged and proven criminal activity here and abroad, most notably in New Delhi, India, where an Uber driver was charged with raping a female passenger in December 2014. Last year, after dropping a fare at **Denver Airport**, an Uber driver circled back to the passenger's home and burglarized it (PRN, April 6, 2015). There have been so many incidents involving Uber and **Lyft** drivers that a site was created, **whosdrivingyou.org**, that tracks their criminal cases. A PR News interview request to Uber was not answered.

Apple, too, was brought into a crisis not of its own making when the **FBI** requested assistance in disabling security features of an iPhone 5C that San Bernardino jihadist **Syed Rizwan Farook** used.

THERE ARE NO FAIR OR UNFAIR CRISES

In light of these cases, we asked PR pros what brands should do if they're dragged into a crisis unfairly. None of them accepted the premise of our question. In the moment, it's immaterial how a brand lands in a crisis. As **Marty Machowsky**, senior counsel, **Finn Partners**, says, "The reality is a brand doesn't get to choose its crises. They're chosen for you." Adds **Katina Arnold**, VP, communications, **ESPN**, "The key to any brand crisis is to act fast, even if it's not your direct issue. If your brand is brought into a bad situation, you need to proactively address it or else someone else will do it for you." **Bob Gold**, president/CEO, **Bob Gold & Associates**, advises brands similarly "whether or not they are fairly or unfairly brought into a crisis."

While Machowsky admits "you can imagine the penchant for brands to remain silent" when an incident is not directly related

to them, "that's not an option today." Neither is waiting to see if a situation will blow over after 24 hours. Speed is critical. "I don't look at a situation as to how long it will last...It's tough to know what will be a one-day story...Nine out of 10 times we want key stakeholders to hear from us first...the most important bond is trust and being first to the discussion is important." Adds Arnold, "The speed in which you move and the context together can make a difference."

CRISIS AS OPPORTUNITY

Machowsky sees crises as an opportunity for brands to reestablish themselves. "Think about how you want to emerge from the crisis," he says. "Start with who are your key stakeholders, what are they hearing and develop a plan that's appropriate for them. Sometimes that involves direct communications or a major ad campaign."

Gold's playbook calls for brands to recognize the severity of the situation and take it seriously. Next "the CEO should underscore the problem, and personally make a statement," he says. Last, the brand should "issue public guidelines or a statement about new guidelines that super-ensures that this kind of problem could not occur in the future."

For Arnold, "it's critical to have a strong focus on driving facts in the face of hyperbole and innuendo. The quickest and most efficient way is to use social channels."

A social media specialist, **Michael Fein**, VP, measurement & insights at **Edelman**, says, "Savvy communication marketers activate quick-turn research, often through social listening, to understand what will resonate with their target audience. Those consumer insights are critical in the messaging and measuring the success of protecting the brand."

Tone is critical, too, he says. "The brand relationship with the consumer is built upon two-way trust. Yet, in a crisis, many marketers struggle to understand their audience. We see this time and again when lawyers craft a clinical response that separates the brand from an incident. In contrast, brands that respond by showing humanity get kudos and even win awards." ■

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Tips for Enhancing Leadership Communications

Here are some insights from a recent global study by **FleishmanHillard**, *The Authenticity Gap*, which can help you drive those business-focused strategies:

- ▶ Many different stakeholders and sources shape expectations, and they vary dramatically by geography and industry. To be relevant and authentic, leaders must stay in touch with rapidly shifting expectations of customers, employees and other stakeholders.
- ▶ The way management behaves and a company's relationship with society overall may matter as much as the quality and utility of a company's products and services.
- ▶ Our *expectations* for management to do the right thing are on the rise, but our *experience* is on the decline. In this age of growing mistrust of institutions, organizational leaders become de facto chief credibility officers. They must appreciate the often-difficult challenge of sustaining trusted relationships by behaving authentically with stakeholders. (Is there a reason for PR to exist without relationship-building at its core?)

Leaders are expected to be dynamic communicators because of the iconic stages on which they perform. But they need not be naturally gifted, just thoughtful about what they say and how they say it. Coaching from skilled communicators can ensure leaders communicate frequently, sincerely, unambiguously, positively (but with balance), memorably and contextually. In today's hyperconnected world, leaders' words can travel far beyond intended context to other audiences, sometimes with unintended consequences. But the more authentic and credible leaders are, the more benefit of the doubt their comments may receive even when misperceived.

Let's examine three ways that leaders can extend their influence and clear the way for the organizations they lead to achieve greater success:

1. Set the example for a customer-focused organization.

Even if customer focus is the domain of teams serving specific customers, leaders can exhort everyone in the enterprise to play a role in improved customer experiences. That requires constant example, by storytelling and frequent communication ranging from town halls to leadership skills training to thematic tweets. Well-respected companies prove this daily with their coordinated, collaborative activity all directed at their customers.

Communicators can drive these customer-first behavioral models, while encouraging CEOs and other leaders to visit the real world of retail stores, factory floors, assembly lines and customer locations to hear and share mission-relevant stories. Important in all this is frequent leadership messaging and big-picture context to employees across the enterprise about the important work they do.

Owned communication channels have made easier the internal information-sharing processes. But leaders must still

be visible, in good times and bad, in person or webcasted, keeping people focused on the goals, values and ultimate "we matter" purpose of the organization.

2. Stay in front of enterprise risks.

Nothing can disrupt a company like an unanticipated or mishandled problem marked by risks that have been ignored or underappreciated until one day the problem explodes. It could be a product safety flaw or deficiency, litigation, a data security breach, shareholder activism or festering customer dissatisfaction. Others may be longer-term risks, like a competitor gaining an advantage through some form of category disruption.

Leaders cannot emphasize risk identification enough. They must take time periodically from driving the business to huddle with their leadership teams and share worst potential nightmares. Once those potential risks are vetted, the communications team and other functional leaders can conduct exercises to build readiness and test reaction speed. (Where companies often fail in real situations is in their reaction time.) Public safety organizations do these drills routinely, and more companies should, too. Today, crisis-scenario simulations can be conducted globally and virtually through private platforms connecting key players who will be called upon in a real situation.

Identify brand opportunity and enterprise risk by enhancing business intelligence systems.

We all know that it is not about big data or little data, but directional data—and well-examined insights that help focus corporate resources and actions that really matter. Communication and marketing executives often are at the wellhead of myriad sources of data. A common concern of global companies is geopolitical risk: terrorism, unfair or corrupt trade practices, onerous regulations, hostility expressed by exclusion or boycotts in unfriendly markets, etc.

Through their internal and external public affairs networks, companies and also NGOs must keep their intelligence antennae on constant alert for warning signs of either future trouble or opportunity. The communications team can design and operate a virtual situation room to monitor both the organization's intelligence sources and current events in real time, analyzing patterns in everything from social media chatter to what frontline company employees are seeing (sales associates) or hearing (customer service centers) that deserve stronger corporate attention.

Executives will inspire us not by simply communicating what they want accomplished, but also why it matters. They truly lead when we help them convey their principles, their passion and our shared purpose. ■

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Managing an Unpopular Stance: the Boston Bar Assoc. & the Bomber Trial



On April 15, 2013, the bombings at the finish line of the Boston Marathon devastated and stunned the city of Boston. Two years later, Boston—and to a lesser extent the nation—was fixated on the trial of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, one of the two men accused of carrying out the heinous act.

The Boston Bar Association (BBA), publicly anti-death penalty for more than 40 years, had to balance advocating for a position it had long held and respecting the concerns of those—BBA members among them—who did not agree with it.

There will be times in most professional settings when the position your brand takes isn't a popular one. The right messages, delivered respectfully, can help maintain a productive relationship between your brand or organization and its followers, members, customers or clients.

DECIDING IF, WHEN AND HOW TO GO PUBLIC

Communicating your position publicly may not necessarily be a given; there is nothing wrong with pausing to ask the question: *Should we make our position known now?* In considering the answer to this first—and important—question, it helps to put it in the following context: What does your position add to the public discourse? Are you able to clear up misconceptions or offer insights not currently being discussed? Are people expecting you to speak up?

This is not a decision that can or should be made in a vacuum. Seek input from key departments in the company or organization.

In the course of these conversations, you may find that staff has confidence in the position, but fears backlash from other stakeholders, including the public. This is understandable, but not insurmountable. How does a customer-driven business or member-driven organization communicate a position that may be unpopular with members and the public? The right messaging is crucial.

REFINING YOUR MESSAGE

Start with the basics: What is your position, and why? The why is essential. It grounds your position in your business or organizational principles. For the BBA, it wasn't enough to say:

We oppose the death penalty in all cases because we believe that capital punishment is wrong.

"Wrong" is a matter of perspective and is likely to invoke a negative reaction. Rather, as a bar association, BBA based its position in legal principles that directly tie back to its mission:

It is the BBA's position that the death penalty is fundamentally inconsistent with the fair administration of our system of justice:

- ▶ *The inevitability of error in criminal cases makes it overwhelmingly likely that reliance on the death penalty will lead to the execution of innocent defendants.*
- ▶ *In practice, the death penalty has a disproportionate impact on members of racial and ethnic minorities.*
- ▶ *Pursuit of the death penalty is an inordinately expensive gesture, inconsistent with the sensible allocation of resources in a criminal justice system already laboring under great financial strain.*

By spelling out the reasons objectively and connecting them to your mission, not only do you communicate that your position is solidly based in your work, but you also reduce the ability of others to invent reasons as to why you have taken your position.

Expect to be challenged, however, and be prepared with proof points. Proof points are facts that support your position and reasons. They are a show of good faith that you have done your research and know your topic.

The most effective proof points come from a respected third party. Can a report your organization created be used as a proof point? Yes. But be ready to show that contributors to the report represent a variety of viewpoints and stakeholders. When the BBA developed a report on the death penalty, the working group included criminal defense attorneys, district attorneys, and retired judges.

Using a proof point from the BBA's death penalty position as an example:

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“The inevitability of error in criminal cases makes it overwhelmingly likely that reliance on the death penalty will lead to the execution of innocent defendants.”

Proof Point: In the last 40 years, more than 143 wrongfully convicted defendants on death row have been exonerated. *Source: Carol S. Steiker and Jordan M. Steiker, No More Tinkering: The American Law, Institute and the Death Penalty Provisions of the Model Penal Code, 89 Tex. L. Rev. 354 (2010)*

Once you have your position, messages, and proof points, are you ready to start communicating? No. Your messaging toolkit [Please see sidebar] should include content that acknowledges the opposing viewpoint, while still advocating for your own. This can be a delicate and tricky process. A good way to begin is by asking some of the same questions as before: Who opposes our position? Why do they feel that way?

LET YOUR AUDIENCE SHAPE THE MESSAGE

Think about those who likely will disagree with you. Who are they? Do they come from a variety of backgrounds, or do they tend to fall into defined audiences, like parents, students or a certain professional community? This can help you tailor your message.

In the BBA's case, there was no “one size fits all.” It knew that many people in the Boston area would disagree (some very strongly) with its position, and that some of them would be BBA members. The challenge was to acknowledge their point of view and counter it in a respectful way. The key to respectful debate is to avoid the dismissive “yes, but...” as well as loaded language that can invoke an emotional response rather than foster calm. Examples of loaded language include:

- ▶ “Elitist” vs. “expert”
- ▶ “Bureaucrat” vs. “public servant”
- ▶ “Outrageous” or “ridiculous” vs. “unacceptable”

The BBA was mindful of the fact that it was speaking out against the death penalty in a situation that involved an act

of terror, the deaths of four people—including a child—and the maiming of many more. What's more, one of its main reasons for taking the position—wrongful conviction—did not apply in this case. It needed a strong message, grounded in legal principles, which supported its position while acknowledging and respecting the deeply felt anger and grief stemming from this tragedy.

FRAMING THE MESSAGE WITH EMPATHY

When it heard: *Tsarnaev deserves to die for what he did.*
And: *The evidence is clear that he is guilty; this is not a case of wrongful conviction.* BBA's president responded with:

- ▶ This is my home, and I feel deeply for the victims and their families, particularly the children. And I know that I'm not alone; many other Bostonians still feel the pain of this event every single day.
- ▶ Even for a crime as heinous as this, let's not align ourselves with a capital punishment system that is so deeply flawed.
- ▶ [BRIDGE TO CORE MESSAGE ON DEATH PENALTY POSITION:]
- ▶ We at the BBA feel that the death penalty is fundamentally inconsistent with the fair administration of justice.
- ▶ These systemic flaws compel the BBA to speak openly against capital punishment, even when the facts of a specific case do not appear to raise questions about innocence or discrimination.

BBA offered empathy, it conveyed that the organization felt the pain of this crime, and avoided “but” and was never critical of those who disagreed with its opinion.

Aesop said “Please all and you will please none.” Stay true to your mission, show that your position is one that has been carefully considered and be respectful. Some of your stakeholders may disagree, but with the right messaging, you can continue the relationship. ■

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YOUR MESSAGING TOOLKIT

1. Position statement
2. Reasons behind your position
3. Proof points
4. Your statement in op-ed or letter to the editor form if needed quickly
5. Your statement and core messages in tweet format
6. FAQ: Counterpoints to questions you're likely to get
7. Tips to help your spokesperson bridge back to core messages
8. If applicable, a history or timeline of the issue at hand and your organization's involvement

MESSAGING FOR CALM: DO'S AND DON'TS

1. **Do** invest the time needed to research the history and reasons behind your position.
2. **Do** be inclusive when making the decision to communicate publicly and when building your messages.
3. **Do** be respectful—not dismissive—of opposing viewpoints.
4. **Don't** use loaded language; your goal is to foster calm discussion.
5. **Do** be prepared to answer uncomfortable questions. Being ready with a thoughtful response is the best way to avoid messaging missteps.
6. **Don't** allow others to derail you; always bridge back to your core messages.
7. **Do** use your core messages to respond privately to customers, clients and members who take the time to reach out to you.
8. **Don't** engage in debate online or in social media.

When Change Is Unnecessary: 5 Things to Consider Prior to Rebranding



Not long ago, many thought of a brand as something that only attached to (and benefited) consumer goods: toothpaste, cars, detergent or jeans. That began to change when savvy marketers realized that having a clear and differentiated value proposition, promise and position in the landscape could be a leg up for any kind of product, service or offering—and actually could provide a competitive advantage at the product and enterprise levels.

Organizations of all stripes got on the “brandwagon”—many of which, just a few years earlier, would have shied away from something so “vulgar.” Now symphony orchestras, museums, institutional asset managers, colleges and universities—and, as we all know, politicians—embrace and actively attend to their brands. All learned that when a brand’s promise and meaning combine rational and emotional reasons to care, products can be freed from the confines of being viewed as commodities; schools can better attract desired students; symphonies can raise more money; and all can extend and deepen constituents’ connections beyond the actual item or experience offered. Wrapping offering-focused messages within higher-level brand messages moves people from “I should do X” to “I really want to do X”—a good thing.

Brand went from being what differentiated various kinds of toothpaste to being the buzzword and must-have it is today. Organizations today understand that the meaning, values, and affect their brand transmits can influence the choice between two offerings that provide similar features and benefits.

Still, this exaltation of brand does not mean it’s a panacea, or that attending to one’s brand—or more significantly, rebranding—is a sure road to success. While there are good reasons to invest in rebranding [See the first article in this series, which appeared on February 15], there are an equal number of good reasons not to.

If any of the situations below sound like your organization, investing in rebranding may not be wise.

1. You have a new CEO or CMO and he or she wants to make sure the world knows it. Your brand meaning is in sync with your organization and its offerings, your constituents understand and remember it, you’re differentiated in the competitive landscape...but the new sheriff in town wants a new logo and look and feel. Just say no, and do your best to head off change for ego’s sake. Suggest a new marketing campaign—one that also reinforces your brand—is in order.

2. What’s holding you back is a product or service that’s not sufficiently compelling. If what you’re offering underperforms or doesn’t fill real needs, it’s unlikely that rebranding it, or your organization, will address those problems, and it could actually land you in more trouble. (Such rearrangement

of the deck chairs also is likely to induce ridicule on social media.)

Fix what’s really broken first.

3. You have operational issues in your marketing, sales, or communication areas. Your brand, and branded communications, may be just what they need to be. But if those charged with planning and delivering your message, making connections, and following up are underperforming—or there’s dysfunction within and across these areas—expending resources to evolve your verbal and visual brand framework is not going to fix these internal organizational issues. Brands are organic frameworks that people have to continually live and execute to make them resonate.

4. You want to present yourself as an organization that you can’t credibly be, or become. Your brand needs to be an honest, authentic representation of who you are, credibly informed by your aspirations. But your brand can only get so far ahead, or to one side, of reality: Disconnects take a lot of time to repair. Years ago, **Häagen-Dazs** tried to own the granola-fed, Birkenstock-shod Vermont brand attributes of **Ben & Jerry’s**. It didn’t work. To thine own self...

5. You’re looking for a successful “Hail Mary!” pass and the other things you’ve tried haven’t worked. Whether you’re an arts organization, financial services firm, institution of higher education or retailer of vacuum cleaners, it’s a competitive world. You have to get the word out, make connections, resonate with constituents, create positive buzz and deliver value. It’s hard. If you’ve tried this, that and the other and haven’t seen success, your brand might need tuning up. But beware of digging in to what could be a very substantial project just because you’ve checked off all the other boxes and they haven’t delivered the results you were seeking.

Brands are comprised of your offerings, communications, history, behavior and promises—and the meaning and value that these have in your constituents’ heads. Brand-building is a process, not an event, and brands—certainly the strong, recognizable ones—take time to build up and gain currency in their competitive environments. Brands that have their genesis in reaction, desperation, manipulation, or provocation rarely find a positive footing—and even worse, can create more of an uphill battle for organizations seeking to connect with their constituents, clients and customers.

So be extra cautious before taking your brand apart, or reinventing it, for the wrong reasons. It may take a lot of time and money (not to mention blood, sweat, and tears) to get back to where you started. ■

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1. Lady and the Trump: Paraphrasing a sports adage: “If the election were held tomorrow”...**Hillary Clinton** would face **Donald Trump**. Speaking of Trump, the press was aflutter last week about how the businessman seems the inevitable GOP nominee. A *Wall St Journal* page 1 story detailing how Trump telegraphed the campaign in his book, *The Art of the Deal*, was loaded with lessons of interest to communicators.

One of Trump’s 11 tenets of the deal is to find ways to “get the word out” and “the more sensational, the better.” The *Journal* quotes the Trump book: “If you are a little different, or a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold and controversial, the press is going to write about you.” Perhaps not the best advice for established brands, but for newcomers, as Trump was to politics, maybe not so bad.

Another tip that communicators could relate to: The *Journal* adds that Trump early on adopted social media to get out his message, specifically **Twitter**. Eschewing a computer, Trump “tweeted early, late and often” from his mobile phone, the *Journal*’s **Monica Langley** observed. Some 14 million people follow Trump’s campaign on Twitter, **Facebook** and **Instagram** and the campaign has 50 million engagements on Facebook, Trump’s social media director **Daniel Scavino** said. That’s helped the Trump camp conquer another tenet: contain the costs. It’s used data from social media and rallies to avoid purchasing databases of voters. Another tactic is a five-digit number on the candidate’s podium that alerts followers of the latest news. The number has resulted in 1 million inbound texts, Trump campaign manager **Corey Lewandowski** said, “and it costs us zero.”



2. Nevermore: Another sports adage holds that you never add to an opposing team’s motivation by saying something negative about your opponent to the press. It’s advice athletes and brand communicators usually heed. That’s why the official **Twitter** account of the **NFL’s Baltimore Ravens** seemed so unusual last Wednesday morning.

Just after the team re-signed veteran quarterback (QB) **Joe Flacco**, it tweeted the news and noted general manager **Ozzie Newsome** had said, during a news conference, that teams such as the **Philadelphia Eagles** and **Washington Redskins** have had issues at QB. Not so the Ravens, who’ve been steady with Flacco, Newsome said. The tweet read: “Newsome: ‘Joe is our QB and we’re proud to say that. Teams struggle with the QB position.’” Underneath the verbiage were photos of Eagles’ QB **Sam Bradford** and Redskins’ QB **Kirk Cousins**. Fair enough regarding the oft-injured Bradford, who suffered through a bad 2015. But the unheralded Cousins emerged last year, leading his overlooked squad to the playoffs. The Redskins’ Twitter account returned serve, saying the Ravens should have used the “@” sign, which would have included them on the tweet. Later the Ravens tweeted an apology: “Our bad. Ozzie didn’t criticize. We should have used pictures of Joe” [Flacco]. In fact, Ozzie criticized. A story on the Ravens’ website said as much.

3. Un-Transparent: Things are getting interesting in Germany, where a lawsuit from shareholders is trying to determine if and when former **Volkswagen** chief **Martin Winterkorn** knew of defeat devices that allowed VW diesels to cheat emissions tests. In a 16-paragraph “public statement” that few members of the pub-



lic will have time to read, and fewer will understand, VW Group admits Winterkorn heard the issue discussed and received email about it well before the story went public. Still, it was one of numerous issues in front of Winterkorn, and VW says it’s unsure he understood the gravity of the situation. [A timeline in our October 5, 2015, edition indicates VW knew of improprieties as early as late 2014.] Should it be proven that Winterkorn and other senior execs knew of the situation prior to it becoming public knowledge, the company could face additional lawsuits from shareholders who feel they were duped. VW’s share price has fallen precipitously since the scandal broke last September.

4. News Bits: Smith & Harroff merged its staff and clients with **C. May & Associates**. – **Spencer Baretz** and **Cari Brunelle** launched **Baretz+Brunelle**. The former **Hellerman Baretz Communications** partners left HBC earlier this month to form the NY-based firm. – Former **HBO**, **Fox**, **Showtime** and **NBC** PR chief **Rich Licata** formed **Licata & Co.-The Awards Agency**, to advise on TV awards. Former Showtime PR exec **Stu Zakim** will head its NY office.

5. People: Jan Gusich was named N. American Chair of the **International Public Relations Network**. Gusich is CEO of **AKHIA** of Hudson, OH. IPRN members include agencies in 35 countries with more than \$215 million in sales. – **Rhea + Kaiser** VP, director of PR **Rob Merritt**, APR, was named to the 2016 executive committee of the **PRSA Counselors Academy**. – **Adam Welsh** returned to **APCO Worldwide** as managing director of its Singapore office. – Former PR News editor **Matthew Schwartz** joined **Gould+Partners** as editorial director. ■



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