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SOCIAL MEDIA

Pandora Puts Audience First and Sales Second as It Builds Thought Leadership on LinkedIn

Some people treat their **LinkedIn** profile like a **Ronco** rotisserie oven: They set it and forget it, until they need to find a new job. Quietly, though, the platform has become a go-to for business executives. And it's grown. LinkedIn said Apr. 24 it has 500 million members. That's up from August, when it said it had 450 million members. When **Microsoft** acquired it for \$26 billion in 2016, some questioned LinkedIn's growth prospects. LinkedIn also said last week its members reside

in 200 countries and can peruse 10 million jobs and 9 million companies. Still wondering about growth?

This announcement prompted us to wonder about how brands can tap into the LinkedIn base with their messages. We asked a brand communicator as well as a LinkedIn executive about best practices for brands trying to build engagement and market services on the platform.

Goals First and Business: At barely 15 years old, Linke-

Continued on page 3

WHAT'S TRENDING IN PR

BY ADRIANA STAN, PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR, W MAGAZINE

United, Pepsi and Uber: Proof That PR Must Be Strategic Advisor to Brands

[Editor's Note: Our regular feature asks communicators to spot trends and tell us their reactions to them.]

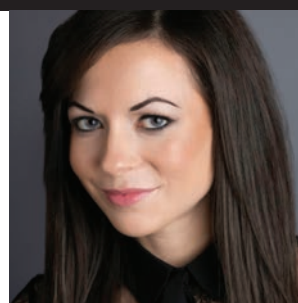
The Trends: The question we all have to answer is: How do we reimagine public relations for the post-digital age, at a time when we are facing more change and disruption than ever before? In a world of ad blocking and general consumer mistrust around being targeted and marketed to, and in a world where we are confronted with fake news and political propaganda, PR as a profession is facing a new set of challenges and opportunities.

Technology has driven profound changes in the way we operate as PR and communications professionals. We are fac-

ing decentralization and disintermediation, along with more and more competition from digital and social agencies, influencer marketing experts and management and innovation consultants—areas that PR should fully own and leverage.

Brands' needs have changed, along with the relationship between consumers and brands, and executives and the press, and new business demands have emerged. Our jobs no longer are about serving as gatekeepers. PR as a function is shifting toward building trust, reputation and influence, and

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DATA DIVE

Consumer Engagement With B2B Brands on Instagram Up 54% in Q4 '16

There's little question that brands, even so-called unglamorous B2B brands that might seem to lack a compelling visual story, are finding **Instagram** a useful outlet for messaging. That was illustrated in our lead story last week (*PRNP*, April 24).

Courtesy of **Shareablee** data provided exclusively to *PR News Pro*, there was healthy growth in consumer engagement with Instagram posts from both B2B and B2C brands during Q4 2016 (Oct. 1-Dec. 31) vs. the year-ago period. Consumer engagement with posts containing video content grew even more rapidly.

Engagement, or actions, is defined as the total of reactions and shares to posts.

For U.S. B2B brands, consumer engagement with Instagram content jumped 54% in Q4 2016 vs. the figure in Q4 2015. Consumer engagement with B2B brands' video content rose 76% over the 2015 Q4 number. Social media stalwart **IMG Models Worldwide** and its nearly 1 million followers maintained its number one position with more than 5.2 million actions or engagements, almost 4 times more than the second-highest brand, **Sotheby's**.

Consumer engagement with IMG's Instagram content was up 33% from last year, with video interactions making up 62% of engagement, says Shareablee's Nathalie Nuta. As has been the case often, its top post featured Bella Hadid and other top models boarding a flight to the **Victoria's Secret** fashion show. The post has received more than 42,000 actions.

Certainly IMG is an usual B2B brand in that it clearly has a visual element. The other brands on the B2B lack the immediate connection to a visual story. Still, brands like **IBM**, **FedEx** and **Kickstarter** are finding visual stories to tell on Instagram. Software firm **HubSpot** experienced the most growth among the top 10 since Q4 2016. It generated more than 41,800 Instagram actions in Q4 2016, 190% more than the year prior.

Shareablee

SOCIAL SCORECARD

TOP B2B BRANDS ON INSTAGRAM — Q4 2016

Based on Total Actions (likes and comments)
Data provided exclusively to PR News by Shareablee.

Source:

RANK	BRAND	TOTAL ACTIONS	TOTAL CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	TOTAL AUDIENCE
1	IMG IMG Models Worldwide	5,150,692	702	7,337	949,332
2	Sotheby's Sotheby's	1,291,949	369	3,501	407,725
3	Pantone Pantone	1,278,179	111	11,515	750,573
4	Lockheed Martin Lockheed Martin	87,823	30	2,927	132,592
5	Cat Cat Products	83,834	28	2,994	155,786
6	Zillow Zillow	83,049	82	1,013	153,267
7	FedEx FedEx	43,981	23	1,912	56,624
8	HubSpot HubSpot	41,822	116	361	57,057
9	IBM IBM	41,052	26	1,579	110,324
10	Kickstarter Kickstarter	40,309	72	560	142,709

Shareablee

SOCIAL SCORECARD

TOP B2C BRANDS ON INSTAGRAM — Q4 2016

Based on Total Actions (likes and comments)
Data provided exclusively to PR News by Shareablee.

Source:

RANK	BRAND	TOTAL ACTIONS	TOTAL CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	TOTAL AUDIENCE
1	Victoria's Secret Victoria's Secret	109,624,902	393	278,944	49,421,351
2	Anastasia Beverly Hills Anastasia Beverly Hills	95,274,547	933	102,116	12,364,395
3	Urban Outfitters Urban Outfitters	42,503,702	386	110,113	6,346,361
4	GoPro GoPro	39,633,977	194	204,299	11,107,124
5	MAC MAC Cosmetics	37,604,283	568	66,205	13,122,718
6	Morphe Morphe Brushes	37,240,081	1,088	34,228	3,900,471
7	Forever 21 Forever 21	36,068,719	351	102,760	12,098,257
8	Victoria's Secret Pink Victoria's Secret Pink	32,369,862	230	140,739	6,396,606
9	Too Faced Too Faced Cosmetics	30,150,370	345	87,392	7,770,395
10	Brandy Melville USA Brandy Melville USA	28,907,056	297	97,330	3,832,538

On the B2C side, Q4 consumer engagement with Instagram posts rose 16% year over year; engagement with video posts rose 85% vs. Q4 2015.

A dominant social brand with its 49 million+ followers, Victoria's Secret amassed 110 million consumer actions, representing a 59% increase compared with the same period last year, Nuta says. ■

How To Tie LinkedIn Content to Business Goals

LinkedIn's a relatively new platform. Yet Lauren Harper, senior manager for B2B content and social marketing at **Pandora**, advocates taking a traditional approach to building a brand's presence on LinkedIn. "Start with a mission statement," she says. "Answer questions like, 'Why is your brand on LinkedIn? Who are you trying to talk to?'" Remember to bring everything back to business goals. "Ask, 'What are my business goals and how will being on LinkedIn help me?'"

To distinguish Pandora's outreach to advertisers from other parts of its business, the brand has several show pages on Pandora corresponding to parts of the business. Harper oversees content for the Pandora for Brands show page. Prior to developing these additional pages, Harper says, various business units competed for space and timing was an issue.



Lauren Harper,
Senior Manager,
B2B Content &
Social Media
Marketing,
Pandora

Thought Leadership: Pandora, Harper says, attracts potential advertisers by showcasing thought leadership on LinkedIn. Bucking conventional wisdom, it emphasizes storytelling over sales when creating content for LinkedIn. "People want to read stories" as opposed to content that says "buy ads on Pandora," she says. Still, Pandora's content "is aligned with our business goals...it's a subtle sale." Stories that do well for Pandora include those about advertisers that are mounting creative and successful campaigns, she says.

More of her tips for thought leadership content:

1. **Be informative:** "We want to provide content that will make the reader better [informed]...and share content they can't find elsewhere."

2. **Think like a publisher:** Post content in a steady and regular cadence.

3. **Know your audience and put it first, sales second:**

This is a variation on putting storytelling first and sales second. To learn about your audience, Harper recommends, "Test, test, test and then test more" to see who likes and engages with your content. Create buyer personas and map content back to them. Some of your audience might be senior executives, others are juniors, she says. Provide content for both. ■

CONTACT: @LaurenEHarper



ADVICE FROM LINKEDIN

► **1. Writer's Block:** What should my executive write about on LinkedIn is one of the most common questions, says LinkedIn's senior manager, member marketing

and communications, Blair Decembrele. Her answer: It depends on your brand's goals and its narrative.

► **2. People Who Need People:** Decembrele urges brands to reveal their human side through posts on LinkedIn.

"People want to hear from people, not companies," she says.

► **3. What Resonates?** Finding executives to write LinkedIn content is only the first step. Decembrele says little about how LinkedIn's algorithms determine

placement, but urges content creators to spend time on compelling headlines and make sure they're "super clear." Compelling images are critical, too. "9 out of 10 times" posts fail because they're not authentic, she says.

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How to Move PR to a More Strategic Role

ensuring that there is authenticity, cohesiveness and substance in a brand's messages across all content, whether advertising or social posts or traditional media relations. Most important, PR is about advising top management and ensuring that ethical business practices, good judgment and transparency are not only communicated, but implemented and enforced, whether that pertains to production, advertising, employee behavior or how customers are treated. If you are **Uber**, **United** or **Pepsi** these lessons are clear by now.

Our job today is about transforming brands from within, coming up with creative solutions to address business challenges and serving as a layer that connects all areas of a business. To achieve these goals, we need to get involved from the early development stages of a new product launch and the very inception of a campaign, and we need to think in ways that transcend the PR silos of the past.

As an industry we need to focus on building our credibility and advocating for our roles as strategic advisors. With change and transformation comes the opportunity to rethink what PR stands for, put new processes in place and showcase the value we bring as thinkers and strategists.

The Reactions: Since all media is social and all social is media, there is no need for the PR industry of the future to be organized around tactics.

We live in world where internal announcements can become news, where social media posts make headlines, where industry press and consumer press collide, where niche and mainstream publications merge into the same feed, and where the idea of pitching U.S. vs. international exclusives or print vs. digital exclusives has become obsolete. If we want to increase our relevance, we need an integrated approach within PR.

Yet PR must also be integrated throughout an organization—and elevated to a role that's central to all business decisions. I see value in getting PR people involved in every element of a campaign and having them function as advisors to oversee and flag issues early, before they turn into full-blown crises. When communicators are not involved in every aspect of the brand they represent, that's when the disconnect happens and a crisis may occur, because context is lost.

PROMOTE AND DEVELOP

The role of the PR professional increasingly must be seen as not only promoting a product, but helping to develop the product itself. I'm fortunate to be part of a team where PR holds an advisory role, transcending platforms, content and business; I'm also seeing more and more examples across fashion, media and tech, where PR is at the very core of the business.

On the agency side, it's important to encourage teams to become immersed in all aspects of the brand or product they're pitching and gain an understanding of the larger strategy, as opposed to parceling out tactics and tasks like

“digital” outreach vs. “traditional” media relations.

For brand communicators, it's about shifting the paradigm from “Here's the finished product. Now go promote it.” Being laser-focused on just one part of a campaign produces a myopic viewpoint and can expose the brand to crisis.

TACTICS

As the definition of PR expands to reflect new business needs and encompass new responsibilities, we must adapt if we want to go along with the growth. Whether you're a small business, corporation, startup or agency, it's important to:

Be flexible and empathetic. Just as media has evolved, we as communicators need to evolve with it. A traditional pitch might not always get you the story you were aiming for, but a social post could spark a news item or contribute to the larger narrative you're building. And at a time where journalists are just a tweet away from reaching your clients, the value you bring is in more than coordinating an interview—it's in helping identify trends, serving as a trustworthy resource and providing research and data.

Think integrated and strategic. As noted above, we no longer have the ability to pitch exclusives based on media outlets' geographical location or to develop separate plans for consumer press, trade media, partners and investors, as all communications have converged. It's crucial that all tactics and teams are aligned as part of one cohesive vision and one consistent strategy.

Remember that there always is a larger context around the story you are pitching. What you release is open to interpretation and any message you communicate can be decoded and consumed very differently from its intended meaning. You have to actively build context and put all messaging and content through the filter of what's happening in culture and society.

Conceptualize every piece of communication like it's a media statement and implement this practice across your business. The internal memo or customer service instant message is a reflection of your brand and can instantly become a social media post or a public statement.

Empower and elevate brand PR teams so that they are closely aligned and in constant communication with top management. And start managing up and advocating for PR's role at the executive table. Involving the comms team after a decision has been reached, after the product has been developed or when the project is ready to be announced is counterproductive and exposes you to vulnerability. ■

[Editor's Note: Adriana Stan was honored as a PR Professional of the Year during *PR News'* 2016 Platinum PR Awards. Entries for the 2017 Platinum PR Awards will be accepted through May 12. Please see: bit.ly/2pDyixR]

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What Brands Can Learn From International Political Crises

The quality of the screens inside the White House situation room wasn't much better than on my grandparents' old television. Images were arranged like *The Hollywood Squares*. The **Central Intelligence Agency** appeared in a small box on the upper right-hand side of the screen, the **Defense Department** next to it and the **State Department** filled out the top row. Despite the poor resolution, the message that came across was clear. Credible reports said there were mass atrocities in South Sudan. This usually is the point in the film where the president sends in the Marines. Cue 1980s rock music.

The music and the Marines were excluded from this drama. Instead, I found myself baffled by how few tools we seemed to have at our disposal to address a worsening humanitarian situation. There were political costs to putting boots on the ground. **United Nations** peacekeepers were largely ineffective. Calling the leaders of each side and using strong diplomatic language wasn't likely to change their calculus. There had to be something more we could do to halt the violence.

COUNTER-CRISIS-CAPABILITIES

I returned to my desk at the **National Security Council**. There were many other crises demanding attention. The office's role in this crisis was limited to pushing American officials responsible for international communications to do more. Yet, I couldn't get this question out of my head: Why didn't the federal government have more capabilities ready to deploy in this kind of situation?

What if we could change the course of the next crisis before it got out of hand? Speaking with people in and out of government, I came to believe that we were missing our moment of maximum impact. If we pre-constructed some of what I began calling counter-crisis capabilities (CCC), they could be ready when problems started to percolate. We might reduce the frenzy factor, increase our focus, and enhance performance. With the benefit of time, we would also be able to build better **Band-Aids** or even perhaps more potent medicine to treat the source of the crisis. More about CCC below.

Getting rival factions to lay down their arms or countries not to invade each other may seem far different from the crises a PR team confronts. They're not.

- ▶ First, the nature of crisis is the same, whether it's local or international.
- ▶ Second, stepping back from a situation is one of the best ways to find a solution.
- ▶ Finally, risk's gone regular. What was once a remote possibility now is a very real likelihood. We live in times where change and uncertainty are constants. You must have more than a crisis plan on the shelf.

We need to prepare to be more agile in the face of adversity. In many respects, today's information environment resembles a battlefield. Our responses need to be ready for this kind of conflict.

BRANDS THAT BEND

First, brands need to be more forgivable. Most companies construct a very strong, but rigid public persona. The problem lies in that fact that brands are so strong as to be inflexible. So, when something does go wrong, it inflicts greater damage than if the brand hadn't held itself up to such high standards.

Consider the case of **Chipotle**. It was built on being far healthier than any other fast food. It may have overdone it a bit. A fairly standard issue emerged in its supply chain that cracked the strong but stiff structure Chipotle erected to support its pristine public image.

In Mexico City when an earthquake hits, which they do often, the buildings are designed to move with the vibrations. If your brand is too brittle, it will break. Just like the construction across this former capital of the Aztecs, you need to bake in some give to the structure of your client's reputation.

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On May 22-24, 2017, hundreds of digital, social media, marketing and PR professionals will gather for the annual Social Shake-Up conference in downtown Atlanta. PR News is hosting this event in partnership with Social Media Today.

Questions? Contact Jessica Placencia at jessica@accessintel.com; 301-354-1641

You don't want to project total perfection since it's too easy to pierce. Instead, emphasize something more like responsive and resilient.

SHAPE THE MESSAGE

If you engage early enough, there often is an opportunity to completely reframe the discussion of the difficulties your brand is facing. Even in the later stages, the frame can be massaged or molded at certain key points. Take the **Transportation Security Administration (TSA)**, for example. Every year a new version of the story emerges about lines growing longer at airports. TSA has done a pretty good job keeping us safe for almost a decade and a half. So why don't we focus on that more significant story, rather than the fact that to do so, we are spending more time in line?

GET EMOTIONAL AND GET OUT OF THE OFFICE

Crises are emotional experiences. Unfortunately, most responses remain formal and fairly cold. This doesn't work, especially in the hypersensitive age of social media. Forget standard terms such as "we are concerned," "regret" or "will carefully review." When choosing your words, find those that will resonate on a more emotional level. How would you speak to your family if a crisis had touched it? Then, don't just write it down. Get out from your offices and deliver it, engage, and ideally do something beyond what would be expected.

FIND THE FUTURE

Amidst the frenzy of crisis we often forget to find the future. No matter how bad the damage, there's always a future to be found. If you leave it to others, it may take a while. One of the most important roles you can play when confronting a crisis is accelerating its arrival. The first step toward the next story is internally accepting, publicly acknowledging and quickly acting at the initial signs of friction.

As Hillary Clinton's challenges with email so painfully demonstrated, failure to fully acknowledge and address an issue only prolongs the problem—sometimes with devastating consequences. Once you have completely and convincingly satisfied the stage of response, pivot to the positive.

CHANGE THE FOCUS

It helps to have an alternative to adversity—a program, a plan or some plausible possibility of what can be done to move beyond the problem. Again, ideally this is prepared well ahead of time.

The most important form of future finding involves countermeasures. Plotting their introduction is tricky. It can't be so dissimilar from the issue at hand so as to be dismissed as a distraction. Instead, it should be seen as a logical evolution, linked to the initial issue. Essential is its ability to capture the public's, the pundits' or their problematic consumers' imaginations. This shouldn't be a dull, technical or complicated concept. You want to be able to quickly, credibly and captivatingly roll it out.

Starbucks killed Christmas. The brand was pilloried as the modern embodiment of the Grinch for the red cup scan-



In Brief: The author briefs President Obama, Vice President Biden and other officials in the White House Situation Room. (Photo credit: Pete Souza, The White House)

dal. The company removed Christmas references and imagery from its red holiday cups. A crisis was brewing, pardon the expression. Yet, the same day, the company announced it would extend its free college education program to children of veteran employees.

While it may not have been designed as a countermeasure to crisis, it played the same role. Stories about red cups dissipated as Starbucks reinforced its image as a company committed to noble causes. It even produced collectable cups that read, "Serving those who serve." Remember, anything you can do to make commitments concrete goes a long way. Whatever you choose, your efforts to find the future ideally makes those still focused on the problems of the past look like they're obstructing progress.

We have to find a better way to manage risk. We need to abandon the outdated notion that by battening down the hatches or hopping in a lifeboat we can weather the storms. Running and hiding is no longer a viable option for most brands. Getting ready for regular risk requires brands to be more adaptive, agile and able to engage effectively in moments of maximum danger.

After the frustrating experience of working on the civil war in South Sudan, I developed an approach for the U.S. Government that I alluded to above, CCC. It ultimately went into the president's budget guidance for all federal agencies. CCC directed agencies to build ahead of time the response tools they needed for key global threats. It wasn't going to create institutional change overnight. Yet it was a strong signal that the nature of crisis was evolving at an unprecedented speed and scale and that structures needed to adapt.

The early results were encouraging. CCC tactics successfully pushed back against Russian propaganda in Ukraine and started a global movement in response to the kidnappings of the schoolgirls in Nigeria. ■

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How Cottman Transmission and Total Auto Care Found Its Storytelling Heart

A key to creative, successful communication and marketing lies in gaining a fresh perspective on the industry you're working in and the brand you represent. We're creatures of habit and can fall into comfortable routines. Periodic brainstorming sessions and adoption of a mindset that embraces being as inventive as possible can counteract a retreat into the same old, same old.

Specific tactics might include giving your website a facelift, developing enticing, consumer-facing promotions or contests or evaluating what competitors in and outside your industry are doing. Return to the basics with a team story idea session—the more originality and variety you incorporate into campaigns, the more effective they can become.

No matter the industry, pushing for creativity allows marketing and communications professionals to tell the most compelling stories possible.

Some of the best marketing strategies revolve around finding untold stories. Here are three tactics that have proven to be invaluable in uncovering untold stories.

LOOK AT WHAT'S MISSING

As alluded to above, it can be easy to fall into a creative silo, which runs the risk of turning your campaigns routine. Sometimes it's merely a



Born of Creativity: Seeking an untold story, Cottman added a female character to its marketing effort.

SOURCE: Cottman Transmission and Total Auto Care

case of being so close to a project that it's hard to see it needs a new element.

For example, the **Cottman Transmission and Total Auto Care** website utilizes a series of marketing videos featuring an animated character called the Cottman Man. As we began planning for a new animated character, we wanted something unique. It didn't take us long to see that an

effective way to differentiate the new character from our existing animation had been right in front of us for quite some time: There was no female representation in our digital characterizations.

As a result, we decided to make our new animated Transmission Physician character a woman. Besides honoring women past, present and future in our industry, it celebrated and recognized our women-run franchises. It also served as a signal to customers and potential franchisees that the brand values an inclusive environment, acknowledging wom-

en's contributions to car care. By taking a step back, we were able to be more creative and inclusive in our messaging.



TALK AROUND THE STORY

Often the most compelling campaigns come from identifying primary and secondary goals, and using one to accomplish the other. This tactic requires a fair amount of creativity. Cottman wants to find new customers and franchisees, but we've realized we can accomplish those goals best by showcasing current franchisees. You could say we come at the situation sideways. A method we employ to highlight our services and draw in talented entrepreneurs is by highlighting our franchisees on local TV news segments, where they give tips on car care specific to the local weather and demonstrate their expert knowledge. Creative marketing efforts like this tell a story to multiple audiences at once, and can accomplish more than one marketing goal in the process. One way to do this is by publicizing smaller features of your business—your delivery people always are on time, customers often call to remark on the quality of your products, store operators regularly become involved with community fundraising—to subtly draw attention to broader narratives of your organization: placing a premium on customer time, following excellent quality control processes, community giveback as a core company value.

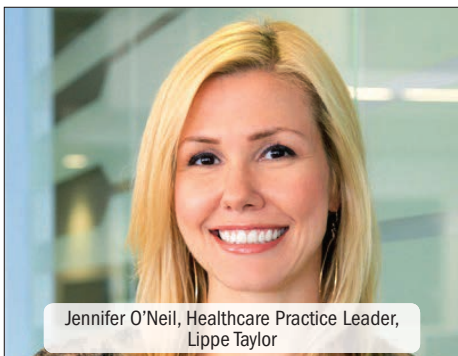
FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

Thinking creatively often means keeping an eye on the larger picture, and for many organizations that have become fixtures in their communities, the bigger picture is the neighborhoods they serve. Sometimes a marketing opportunity may not seem to yield immediate financial benefit for shareholders, or franchisees, but they have a positive impact on your relationship with the greater community.

During the 2016 holiday season, Cottman released a coloring book series featuring the Cottman Man and distributed it to children's hospitals. Our goal was to spread holiday cheer to those in need. In fact, the effort had several residual effects. Focusing on creating a positive, meaningful product for local kids refreshed our corporate and franchise teams. It also further established the brand as a community partner.

Maintaining a perspective on what's really important, and the core values of your organization, can help kick-start creativity by aligning a campaign with a worthwhile cause. As communications pros, it is vital to remember how storytelling fits into the broader corporate mission. Communicators have the chance to tell stories that resonate with internal and external stakeholders. The key to that resonance lies with your ability to push the limits of creativity to produce something truly memorable. ■

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1. Friendlier Skies: Aiming to put its crisis behind it as quickly as possible, **United Airlines** said it settled “amicably” with injured passenger **Dr. David Dao** for an undisclosed sum April 27. In what appeared to be a well-coordinated chain of events that day, United released an 11-page report to media early enough so it could be in that morning’s papers. The package came complete with quotes from an extremely remorseful CEO **Oscar Munoz** who uttered what has to be considered one of the all-time great understatements: “Our review shows that many things went wrong that day.” There also was a conciliatory email to passengers that day. The report lays out policy changes designed to eliminate the chances of a situation similar to the Dao affair reoccurring. To demonstrate further that the incident sparked “a culture shift toward becoming a better, more customer-focused airline,” as the Munoz letter to passengers says, United also unveiled a no-questions-asked policy on permanently lost luggage, including \$1,500 in payment. The next day, April 28, United was set to employ a policy that increases compensation for passengers who voluntarily leave a flight to as much as \$10,000. Perhaps not coincidentally, these changes were made public prior to May 2, when Munoz will face lawmakers on Capitol Hill during a hearing on airline consumer issues. Clearly United remembers the lesson now-ousted **Wells Fargo** chief **John Stumpf** learned from legislators: A recalcitrant attitude doesn’t work.

2. Ripple Effect? Southwest Airlines says it was studying a policy to end overbooking for several years. OK, but the **United** situation made a move

expeditious. Southwest said Apr. 27 it no longer will overbook flights. The policy will begin sometime this month, perhaps as early as May 8. Meanwhile United responded properly to the death of a giant bunny that was being transported in the cargo hold on one of its Chicago-London flights. The bunny’s death “saddened” the airline, which promised an investigation.

3. Internal Communications? Not. As *W* magazine’s **Adriana Stan** says in our lead story this week, there’s no longer a distinction between internal and external communications. What you communicate internally eventually will go public. Sports network **ESPN** is a case in point. For months stories floated in the media that ESPN was preparing to drop the ax on personnel in its 1,000-member on-camera corps. The numbers varied from 40 to 70. Even the red-letter date was out there: April 26. When the date arrived last week, ESPN figured chief **John Skipper**’s letter to employees would leak anyhow, so the sports leader went directly to the public and posted the missive to its media site. While the letter avoided the words “layoffs” or “job cuts,” its message was received. “We will implement changes in our talent lineup this week,” Skipper wrote. Besides discussing ESPN’s revised content strategy, Skipper noted, “a limited number of other positions will also be affected...” Presumably that means off-camera jobs. Skipper failed to mention a specific number of layoffs, though. Fear not, as trade pubs used the Skipper letter to anchor their reports, several also tapped sources to put the layoff figure at 100. Indeed, some of ESPN’s best reporters were cut. Since PR people trade in news, the

same currency as reporters, it was a sad day in our sector, too.

4. Deals and Expansion: **3BL Media** acquired *CR Magazine* from **SharedXpertise Media LLC**. 3BL also will manage the **Corporate Responsibility Association**. *PRN Pro* friend **Dave Armon**, 3BL’s CMO, will become CEO of the **Corporate Responsibility Board LLC**, the new 3BL Media division housing *CR Magazine*. – **Cutler PR** doubled its team and relocated to NY’s Berkeley Building, 19 West 44th Street.

5. People: **FleishmanHillard** appointed **Geoff Bilbrough** GM, Hong Kong operations. Bilbrough was deputy GM/SVP for the past four years. He will report to **Rachel Catanach**, senior partner and president, greater China. 12-year veteran **Patrick Yu** (picture on page 1) was named deputy GM. – **Porter Novelli** named **Alicia Thompson** managing director of its Atlanta office. The former **Edelman** and **Coca-Cola** executive will report to N America president **Jennifer Swint**. – **Lippe Taylor** added **Jennifer O’Neill** to its ranks, naming her healthcare practice leader, a new position. She joins following a 13-year tenure with **inVentive Health**. – Congrats to one of the finest communicators we know, **Sena Fitzmaurice** of **Comcast**, who was promoted to SVP government communications, April 28. – **KNOCK** named **Jillian Froehlich** VP head of digital. She comes from **Fallon**, where she was director of social and digital strategy. – **Phelps** named **Tony Stern** chief creative officer, succeeding **Howie Cohen**, who’s retiring after a five-decade career that included creating iconic **Alka-Seltzer** ads such as “I can’t believe I ate the whole thing.” ■

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