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INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

How a Healthcare Brand Crafted a Multifaceted Plan to Re-Engage Staff After Radical Changes

We hear it repeatedly from communicators at brands large, medium and small: Internal communications is a pain point. One explanation for events at the White House in the past week surrounding a statement the president allegedly dictated, but his lawyer insisted weeks earlier he hadn't, is a breakdown in internal communication (for more see page 8). This prompted us to think about internal communications.

When **Brighton Health Plan Solutions**—a health plan

brand serving employers in the NY/NJ marketplace—set out on a business and culture transformation, it precipitated an internal domino effect. In 2016, Brighton embarked on a radically different strategy to innovate and grow. It meant a change in leadership, including the CEO, as well as a revised mission, vision, values and goals.

All this change, plus an unpredictable health care market, resulted in a reduction in employee engagement. As you

Continued on page 3

SOCIAL MEDIA

BY BRAD ROSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

A Transit Authority Opens Its Playbook on Handling Employee Critics Online

With social media, employees now have a platform to publicly disagree with or challenge something their employer – your brand – has done. This goes beyond customer service and deep into corporate communications and issues management territory.

I'm guessing you're very much like me. I spend my days as an in-house communicator, heading communications for the local transit authority known as the **Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)**. The TTC carries 1.8 million people daily and employs 14,000. It is in the news regularly and on social media around the clock.

As you know, people rely on transit to get to work, school, medical appointments, social engagements...you name it.

Cities would grind to a halt without public transit. It also is news – big news – be it delays, safety, funding challenges or someone capturing events on buses and trains and sharing them on social media. As public entities, accountable to fare-paying riders who also pay taxes that subsidize transit, that accountability demands that we respond to all media queries, good or bad.

What, then, to do about this new front of employee engagement, where workers publicly respond online to media and social media events that directly challenge the decisions

Continued on page 4



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To Avoid Gaffes, Monitor Culture Constantly



A footwear retailer recently emailed an advertisement featuring a photo of a young male runner, striding down a wooded road. Looking longingly from behind a tree is a very large grizzly bear. The ad's headline was "Run with the Bear."

If the ad seems fine, you may be forgetting about these unfortunate, recent news stories:

- **CNN:** "Camping teen awakens to 'crunching sound' as bear bites his head" (<http://tinyurl.com/y926tpr>)
- **ABC News:** "12-year-old rescues family from bear attack" (<http://tinyurl.com/y7uqhkyk>)
- **Fox News:** "Two brown bear attacks reported in Alaska on same day" (<http://tinyurl.com/ya6pyox>)
- **SB Nation:** "Professional runner in Maine gets chased by two black bears" (<http://tinyurl.com/y7fzswut>)
- **Washington Post:** "Bear kills 16-year-old runner who texted to say he was being chased" (<http://tinyurl.com/y8mkoc36>)

We've seen an unusual number of high-profile bear attacks lately. Each was terrible. The final two cases involved bears pursuing runners—images eerily similar to the footwear ad.

The emailed ad came from **Fleet Feet Sports**, promoting its exclusive U.S. distribution of **Karhu**, a Finnish high-performance running wear.



Poor Choice: Recent news warranted another image. Source: Fleet Feet

In fairness, karhu means bear in Finnish and running shoes are both firms' specialty, so it's natural to combine the two concepts. At a time when bear attacks are grabbing headlines and runners are specifically among the victims, however, it's insensitive to employ a promotion where a bear appears to be hunting a runner.

It's hard to understand how a mistake like this could occur. Karhu has a 100-year track record of fitting the feet of runners in the U.S., and Fleet Feet is an American company headquartered in North Carolina, so the partnership clearly has cross-cultural competency. What was missed were two finer points of culture that brands can overlook easily:

1. Culture is multi-dimensional: While a demographic such as age is easy to measure—just ask when the consumer was born—culture is much more complex. It consists of many variables, e.g. food, clothing, entertainment, language, etc. Events such as civil rights protests, Woodstock and 9/11 also shape culture.

Granted, the cultural impact of bear attacks is far less than that of the other event examples, but still they weigh on many people's minds. Communication professionals must take those feelings and perceptions, real or imagined, into account, similar to the way seashore tourism adapted to shark fears after *Jaws* hit movie theaters in the summer of 1972.

2. Culture is dynamic: If news and events are part of culture, then culture is continually changing. Of course, other aspects of culture, like food and clothing, also change over time, but the influence of current events on culture is much more immediate.

For instance, when terrorist attacks occur, individuals adapt their behavior almost instantly. Marketers' strategies and tactics, in turn, must quickly reflect those new norms, whether for the short run or indefinitely.

What can brands do to avoid such promotional gaffes? The most important thing is to consider culture after strategy is created. Monitor the cultural landscape continually, paying particular attention to trending news and stories that may signal shifts in consumer sentiment. When such changes occur, brands must quickly adapt their tactics.

For Fleet Feet and Karhu, this prescription doesn't entail anything extreme, such as changing the brand's name from bear. It means choosing different images and text for ads—ones that don't evoke headlines of bears pursuing people. Such simple and more culturally attuned choices ultimately will yield more effective communication. ■

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Creating a Multifaceted Plan for Engagement

can imagine, one thing that did not decline was chatter. “We needed an established platform to better connect with our [250] team members, who were hearing mixed messages from the rumor mill,” says Julie Bank, SVP, HR. “Particularly during challenging times of change, employee engagement is critical.” Fortunately, Brighton’s new leadership recognized the decline in engagement and made a sizeable investment in internal communications.

BUILDING INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS



Ally Bunin,
VP, Employee
Engagement &
Internal
Communications
*Brighton Health
Plan Solutions*

After reviewing results from an engagement survey and spending time with leaders, Ally Bunin, hired last year as VP, employee engagement and internal communications, says the need for a multi-dimensional platform was recognized. “There’s no one-size-fits-all approach” she adds.

Top priorities included ingraining Brighton’s new mission, vision and values and giving employees more ways to connect with leaders. Another imperative: Getting employees excited about the future.

“It was an incredibly exciting time...but change scares people. Communicating all this in email—the primary communication vehicle at the time—would have been impossible.” It also might have been disastrous.

Instead, Brighton ramped up its internal communications channels and embarked on a yearlong campaign to engage employees called *Our Future is Bright*, a play on the company’s name. The platform includes:

• **e-Newsletter:** A monthly e-newsletter that pulls together in one place the bevy of informational emails sent to employees. The team uses **MailChimp** (\$15/month) to deliver newsletters. The tool also tracks open rates and click-through. Brighton uses **Canva** for graphic design (\$13/month).

• **Videos:** Minimally produced on **Animoto** (\$45/month), videos feature messages from the CEO and other leaders. They are shot on an iPhone and edited with graphics and punchy music. The team’s goal is to produce at least

one brief video per month on business topics. Importantly, though, the video also includes lighter fare, such as thanking employees on *Employee Appreciation Day*. “The videos break up the monotony of traditional email. Having them not too finely produced matches the company’s casual culture and helps employees better relate to the executive team,” Bunin adds.

• **All-Hands Meetings:** Face time during periods of change is essential, she says. Aside from a holiday party, employees, spread across four offices, rarely got together. That changed last year when Brighton held its first all-hands meeting. A video highlighting the new mission, vision and values kicked off the town-hall-style forum. Next was a candid CEO discussion about business strategy and the new values. Every session includes a hands-on activity underscoring the values, helping to reinforce the company’s culture change.

• **Leadership Lunch & Learns:** Every month, senior leaders host *Brighton Brown Bag*, informal sessions for staff.

• **Screensavers:** Messages scroll across all computer screens, serving as reminders about Brighton’s culture, vision and how team members play a role. The screensavers change at least once per month.

• **Intranet:** Launching this month, a SharePoint intranet aims to tie together all internal communications. It also will compile click rates and other engagement metrics. The Intranet campaign message, *Our Intranet is Getting Brighter*, ties back to the broader campaign message.

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Brighton recently wrapped its annual employee-engagement survey. Employees rated internal communications 74% higher than the year previous. Employee understanding of company values rose 35%, with employees rating “this organization has a bright future” 14% higher than the year prior.

Engagement is solid, with an average email open rate of 96% and click-throughs at 50%+. Video viewership is high, too. Participation in the monthly leadership lunch & learn sessions is strong, Bunin says. ■

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Register online: <http://prnew.se/2017big4> | **Questions?** Contact client services at clientservices@accessintel.com

How to Address Employee Complaints Online

and policies of your organization? Right or wrong and under the cloak of anonymity, a vocal few may take to **Twitter** and air grievances or dispute facts with you and your social media team on matters they feel need another voice.

EMPLOYEES ADD COMPLEXITY TO SOCIAL

With accountability for the TTC's reputation, I engage with my 24,000-plus followers on Twitter, an increasing number of whom are employees, although few will willingly identify as such. While most employees pose little concern, few can have a large influence via social, as you know. Managing issues suddenly has become doubly complex when we add employees to the mix.

This May TTC became the first Canadian transit agency to introduce random drug and alcohol testing of its workforce. The public met the introduction of this procedure with applause; some employee groups were concerned.

Ensuring those in safety sensitive positions are fit for duty is job one in an industry where safety tops the priority list. Random testing for drugs and alcohol looks only for impairment at the time of the test. It uses oral fluid samples, as opposed to blood or urine, to ascertain drug impairment.

A Breathalyzer, similar to that used in roadside police tests, measures alcohol impairment. If someone is a recreational pot smoker or likes a few glasses at wine with dinner, that's none of our business. Coming to work fit for duty is what we ask.

CRAFTING A STRATEGIC PLAN

Going in, we thought it prudent to make a decision about how to handle news dissemination. TTC arrived at a decision to publish statistics of test results monthly in a public report that contains a host of other operational stats.

If a journalist called to ask about results in the interim, it was agreed that corporate communications would provide an update. Media members, we believed, eventually would shift their attention to other issues as testing and test results became routine.

Understanding how the media works and being strategic in planning is critical in a media-intense industry like transit. Being secretive, we all know, only serves to heighten interest in a difficult situation.

THE UNLIKELY SCENARIO OCCURS

Extraordinarily, on the very first day the TTC began random testing, two employees tested positive; one for alcohol, the other for drugs. It wouldn't be long, we knew, before a reporter called for an update or comment should the news be leaked.

Two days later, the call came and the story broke. The TTC issued a statement, putting the matter into perspective. The public was concerned at the early positive results. Some employees were upset that information they felt damaged their collective reputation was made public.

The vast majority of workers at TTC, of course, would never



Family Ties? Examples of employee dialogue with the author, as he represented the brand. Source: Toronto Transit Commission

come to work impaired, putting their safety, the safety of their co-workers and that of the public at risk. This is an important message that resonates with the public. A vocal few online were decidedly angry, which speaks more to a misunderstanding about the role of media and how communicators operate than anything else [see graphics on page 4].

THE REACTION

“Why are you throwing your workers under the bus?” was a common refrain from some online when news broke about the early positive drug and alcohol tests. “Why does the TTC want the public to think we’re all stoned and drunk?” was another.

Some employees also openly questioned the tests’ credibility, suggesting mouthwash or poppy seeds can create false-positive results. (They do not.) Some argued that the tests were a violation of their privacy rights, despite a court ruling to the contrary.

It didn’t matter that a rise in workplace impairment since 2010, identified through post-incident and reasonable cause

testing, needed to be brought to an end before a catastrophic event occurred. While not perfect, random testing is a proven deterrent for many.

In addition, it didn’t matter that being silent was neither in the public interest nor something a public entity, like the TTC, could or should keep confidential. For the record, employees who test positive are never identified publicly.

ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE CONCERNS

Employees’ sincere and legitimate concerns, raised in any forum, should be listened to and addressed. Turning to on-line criticism, PR best practice holds that it should be met with facts and treated professionally. In other words, address it directly, though it is a different situation when criticism morphs into personal attacks and the trolls come out and trash your company and identifiable staff.

Ignore the trolls, yes, mute and block as appropriate, sure, but push back with facts, correct false statements and remember that everything you tweet is quotable and official.

Taking on controversial issues directly with customers and employees alike is something an accountable, senior communicator ought to do. You won’t convince everyone or win any popularity contests with straightforward engagement. People online can be particularly blunt, which gives you license, in my view, to do the same.

As I’ve written before (*PR News*, Apr. 17, 2017), we need to be H.O.T. – honest, open and transparent – in all that we do. We don’t do our employers, customers or workers any favors when we’re silent or opaque in our replies. Explain, don’t defend, and help those genuinely interested to better understand what you do and why.

LONG-TERM THINKING NEEDED

Big issues tend also to be long-term issues. Employee satisfaction scores may suffer in the early going, but doing what is right, recognizing employees are online and will respond and react, is an important consideration for issues managers and employee communications professionals.

The media may watch all this unfold from the online sidelines and see the grinding axes for what it is, but they’re also watching for missteps. Don’t be the story. ■

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HOW TO HANDLE EMPLOYEE CRITICISM ON SOCIAL

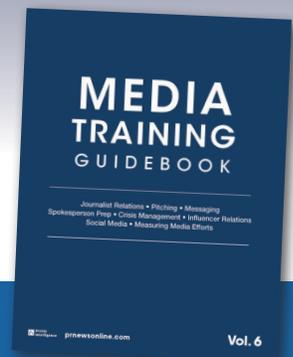
You have a burning issue that’s caught fire online and some of your employees are giving it life. What to do:

- ▶ Honor free speech
- ▶ Be respectful and professional, calling out those who fail to do the same
- ▶ Correct factual errors
- ▶ Challenge misperceptions
- ▶ Take specific, personal concerns offline
- ▶ Mute, block and report abuse and harassment
- ▶ Have perspective, a vocal few usually don’t represent the masses
- ▶ Be prepared, a vocal few may very well represent the masses
- ▶ Issue a *How Communications Works* primer to employees to build trust and understanding
- ▶ Social media strategies must consider the workforce

MEDIA TRAINING GUIDEBOOK.

In this PR News Media Training Guidebook, you’ll find key ways to establish relationships that could yield valuable exposure. Beyond getting your foot in the door with influencers, we’ve gathered authors from various backgrounds—in-house, agency, nonprofit, ex-reporter—to address the evergreen topics of getting your messaging on point, preparing members of leadership for on-camera interviews and more.

- Chapters include:**
- Prepping the C-Suite/Spokespeople Messaging
 - Game Day: Before/During the Interview
 - Crisis Management
 - Journalist Relations
 - Social Media
 - Measuring Media Efforts



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Questions? Contact Laura Snitkovskiy at laura@accessintel.com
www.prnewsonline.com/media-training-guidebook-volume-6/

How Large and Small Brands Monitor to Prepare for Social Media Crises



Preparing your company for a social media crisis has one reoccurring theme: speed. In the past when a crisis occurred, there usually was one day, or at least a few hours, to prepare. Today, as we know, you may have minutes. Or worse, damaging news may be circulating before you're even aware of it.

While social media's speed is a challenge, there are steps brands can take to be ready. The first simply is identifying potential problems. Social media listening and analysis can be a canary in the coalmine for PR. When you learn of a critical issue early, you can prepare for a more favorable outcome.

OWNED AND NON-OWNED SOCIAL MEDIA

To understand social media monitoring for a crisis, it's necessary to differentiate between owned and non-owned social media. Owned social media includes your company's **Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat** and **Instagram** accounts. When someone engages with you on these accounts, you receive a notification.

Non-owned social media is everything else; a virtual jungle of disjointed conversations that defy easy monitoring. These conversations may take place on Twitter or Facebook and not include your company's official name. They may appear on **Reddit, City-Data, 4Chan**, blogs, comment sections under articles, special interest forums and more. There are no notifications when your company is mentioned in these places.

MONITORING FOR CRISIS

There are countless case studies where social media crises caught organizations off guard. Often these companies didn't respond quickly, or at all, and paid a steep reputational price.

Monitoring owned social media can be done via native platforms or third-party response tools. There are plenty available at varying prices. Small and large companies should procedurally require daily channel monitoring. This is critical not only for customer service, but crisis preparedness.

A Checklist for Social Media Crisis Preparedness
1. Daily monitoring of any social media channel your company owns.
2. Third-party tools and alerts for conversations about your organization occurring outside the social media channels you own.
3. Senior leadership educated on the importance of social media. Educate company leaders on the risks organizations face in social media so when a crisis happens you're not starting from social media 101.
4. Assign roles before a crisis: who monitors social; who creates responses that were not anticipated before the crisis; who approves those responses; and who responds to incoming engagements related to the crisis.
5. If you have multiple brands/channels, have an established means of communication to stop publishing content quickly if a crisis develops.
6. Regularly test access to all channels your company owns. A crisis is not the time to learn you lack the new password to one of your social media channels.

Should conversation about your company heat up in a negative way, you likely will be tagged in a mention.

Scans for incoming engagements should be conducted several times daily for owned social media channels. For large companies, the volume of incoming engagements necessitates staff monitoring channels into the evening hours and on weekends. Staffing should be scaled to your company's average volume on owned channels.

NON-OWNED SOCIAL MEDIA

Now for the hard part: Non-owned social media. Since your company is talked about in perhaps millions of blogs, message boards, forums and other networks, there's no way to cast a net that catches all those unstructured mentions in a coherent way. There are a host of free tools, though, and **Google Alerts** is among the most useful. There also are plenty of paid tools that track and analyze social media data.

Paid social media listening tools typically are necessary for a large company with high volumes of conversation. Popular brands average well more than one million social media mentions monthly. Fortunately, listening tools can analyze large amounts of social media data. Most also have alert systems that scan key words and inform you as soon as the tool's web crawlers find them. Some tools also detect algorithmic changes and alert you to signals that something unusual is happening with conversations about your brand.

Influencer identification is another key to catching social media crisis early. Your company may be mentioned every few seconds on social media; you can't keep up with each mention. But if someone who has an unusually large following mentions your company, you want to know right away. A key part of monitoring for crisis is notification as soon as a famous or influential person mentions the company. Most listening tools are capable of providing an immediate alert so you can decide quickly whether to engage with the influencer.

MONITORING COMPETITORS AND CUSTOMERS

Situations may occur outside of social media monitoring alerts. When setting up your listening, be mindful of influential voices in your industry. Do you have customers with a high level of influence? They may be holding conversations not directly about you, but are relevant to you. The same goes for competitors. A competitor may get dragged into a situation that your company can use as an early warning.

CRISIS OR NOT?

Once you've set up an effective monitoring program, you'll likely go through growing pains identifying what is, and what is not a crisis. As you fine tune your listening parameters, learn to filter out irrelevant noise.

It's clear brands should have a crisis plan that includes protocols about who is alerted. Generally this includes your organization's crisis team. Be careful not to cry wolf. If your crisis team is receiving posts every few days and the crises don't materialize, the importance of social media crisis monitoring will be diminished in your organization.

When does an incident become a social media crisis? Ask the following questions:

- ▶ Could this cause long-term harm to our reputation?
- ▶ Could this have a negative financial impact on the company?
- ▶ Could this harm employee morale or recruiting efforts?
- ▶ Could this result in legal issues?
- ▶ Are there environmental, health or safety concerns stemming from this post?
- ▶ Is someone with a high level of influence saying negative things about us?

If yes is the answer to any of the above, it's probably worth consulting your crisis team.

IT'S A CRISIS. NOW WHAT?

As we said above, you may have minutes or days before a social media crisis breaks. For example, if you know there is a product recall or other negative company news that will be announced, you have time to prepare. Whether you have three days or three hours to prepare, there are similar steps that should be taken:

1. Black out your social media: This means no publishing of unrelated content for the duration of the crisis. When a company is in the midst of a storm of negative conversation, publishing product-related content gives the public an impression of an unorganized and tone-deaf organization.

2. Prepare your responses: In a crisis you likely will have many people engaging with your social media channels. Create a list of questions/comments you will most likely receive and prepare responses. Have the planned responses approved so you can avoid getting approvals during the crisis.

3. Extend responding capabilities: For some companies, this means 24-hour-a-day coverage of social media channels. If you're a large, consumer facing brand and your crisis is related to product safety, you likely will see a high volume of engagements from concerned consumers. With extended coverage, your team can quickly answer most concerns with pre-approved responses.

4. Measure your social media crisis: It's easy in the fog of a crisis to forget about measurement, but it's a critical component. Measuring engagement volume, sentiment and demographics of those engaging and times of posts will help benchmarking for your next crisis. Also measure the most influential people talking about the crisis. This data, when viewed visually, can tell the story of the crisis from a unique vantage point and forecast when it will subside.

AFTER THE STORM

Eventually the social media conversation about your crisis will subside and you can return to normal social media op-

Where Social Media Crises Originate

Facebook: The largest social networking channel has made it easy for users to share content, including negative news about brands, companies and organizations.

Twitter: News travels particularly fast on Twitter. Consumers often start complaints about companies on this platform.

Mainstream news: When a story breaks in local or national media, it often immediately makes its way to social media.

Blogs/forums/comment boards: Millions of conversations are taking place on these platforms daily; users typically are passionate about the niche subjects these platforms cover.

YouTube: One of the original corporate social media crisis cases began on this platform. While it's not the most active platform for engagement, videos negatively focusing on companies can quickly gain traction.

erations. While there is no standard time to wait until resuming normal posts, it's worth noting that when **United Airlines** faced its well-documented crisis earlier this year, it stopped publishing non-crisis-related content on Twitter for nearly one month. Similarly, it's important to establish and communicate a date when the crisis is over officially and social content publication can resume.

Within one week of the crisis, while it's still fresh, create a report that visually shows the impact on social media. This will help your organization better understand social media. It also will help you benchmark for the next time your company faces a crisis. ■

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NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS: For more on crisis management and crisis communication, please visit the PR News Essentials Page at: <http://bit.ly/2mUP2OR> New to the Essentials Page this week are several contenders for awards in the annual report category of PR News' Platinum PR Awards. For information about attending the Platinum PR and Agency Elite Awards, please see: <http://bit.ly/2vfD0F6/>

Takeaways

1. While speed can kill on social media, monitoring a brand's owned and non-owned social media can afford it time to respond to and shape conversations about the crisis.

2. In addition to monitoring your brand's social media for inconsistencies in activity, keeping an eye on a competitor's social media can provide a heads-up about a potential crisis.

3. Part of your crisis planning must include procedures for determining whether a situation has the potential to become a crisis. Should it be determined that a crisis exists, another set of predetermined steps should follow, such as halting non-crisis-related social media publishing and starting crisis-mode monitoring and response operations.

4. A crisis is a bad time to educate senior executives about the risks organizations face on social media. Make sure they're briefed in advance.

5. Similar to #4, a crisis is a poor time to be crafting responses to questions from the public. Ready pre-approved answers for as many questions as you can anticipate.

1. Truth Be Told: Presidential attorney **Jay Sekulow** appeared on Sunday news shows last month and said emphatically **President Trump** played no



Donald Trump Jr.

part in a statement sent to the **NY Times** regarding **Donald Trump Jr.**'s June 2016 meeting with Russians and PR man **Rob Goldstone** (*PR News*, Aug. 1, 2017). The statement was in conjunction

with Trump Jr. releasing his email regarding the meeting. As you likely know, last week a **Washington Post** story claimed the president dictated the statement. Following the Post story, the White House admitted the president contributed to the statement. As communicators tell us often, internal communications can be challenging (see story, page 1). For argument's sake, we'll assume Sekulow was briefed badly before appearing on the news shows. With his damaged reputation, the issue for the White House communications team now is whether/how to use him. Sekulow spoke to the media Aug. 4, telling **Fox News** the president has no intention of firing special counsel **Robert Mueller**. Is that true?

2. Googled: Internal communications figures in the above item and our lead stories (see page 1). It also plays a role in the weekend story about a 10-page memo from **James Damore**, a **Google** employee who blasted the company's diversity effort. When word of the Damore screed went public, new diversity VP **Danielle Brown** and other Google execs quickly discounted its contents. Damore was fired Aug. 7. Google CEO **Sundar Pichai** cut short his vacation to attend to the situation.

3. Fakebook News: As *Mad Men*'s **Don Draper** said, "If you don't like what's being said, change the conversation." By extension, if you don't like what's being reported on the news, create your own newscast. Debating July 30, *Real News*, with anchor **Lara Trump**, wife of presi-

dential son **Eric Trump**, provides stories **President Trump** presumably wants reported. "I bet you haven't heard about all the accomplishments the president had this week because there's so much fake news out there," she said during the initial videocast, available on the president's **Facebook** page. Former **CNNer Kayleigh McEnany** took the anchor's chair for the Aug. 6 videocast.

4. Well Done: Props to cable network **Sundance TV** for being upfront and clever about reminding journalists to disclose gifts (*PRN*, April 24, 2017). Late last month Sundance TV gave **Television Critics Association (TCA)** members bottles of wine during TCA's annual summer confab. Affixed to a carrying case for the bottles was a tag touting the network's fall slate. The tag's bottom read: "If you post or blog about any of our great TV shows, please make sure to disclose that you received a gift from us."

5. Uber Headache: It's obvious the last thing **Uber** needs is more ugly PR as it looks to boost its image and hire a CEO to replace **Travis Kalanick**. Unfortunately, **The Wall St Journal** reports Aug. 4 Uber executives in Singapore last year



Travis Kalanick, Former CEO, Uber Technologies

leased 1,000 used **Honda** Vezels to its drivers despite knowing the cars contained a defective device that could result in overheating and eventually fire. Honda recalled the cars in April 2016, yet Uber let drivers continue to use the unsafe autos. How could

Uber have continued to operate cars that Honda recalled? The Journal says Uber didn't buy the cars from Honda, but from less-expensive gray market importers, who are less vigilant about things such as recalls. After one of the leased cars caught fire, Uber deactivated the device responsible for the fire in each of the cars. As it told **CNBC**, "As soon as we learned of a Honda Vezel...catching

fire, we took swift action...but we...could have done more—and we have...we've introduced robust protocols and hired three dedicated experts...whose sole job is to ensure we are fully responsive to safety recalls."

6. Speed Trap: While mobile's ascendance isn't breaking news, **Facebook's** move last week to speed up News Feed on mobile is yet more evidence that brands with mobile-unfriendly sites and slow-loading pages need to join the 21st century. Facebook engineers **Jiayi Wen** and **Shengbo Guo** say 40% of web visitors will abandon a site after waiting three seconds for it to load. Their post covering 10 ways to improve mobile site performance is a good read. Among their suggestions: Minimize landing page redirects, plugins and link shorteners; compress files; utilize multi-region hosting; and remove render-blocking Javascript. Their full post is at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7knwpl>

7. People: Congrats to *PR News* friend **D'Arcy Rudnay**, CCO, EVP, **Comcast**, on being named a *Woman of the Year* by **Women in Cable Telecommunications** (picture, p. 1). – **Marriott International** named **Sarah Walker Kerr**, VP, communications Middle East and Africa. Previously she was regional director of PR, **Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co.** – **ABC Entertainment** promoted **Rebecca Daugherty** to EVP, marketing from VP, dramas, movies and specials. She'll oversee marketing of **ABC's** primetime, daytime and late-night lineups, as well as shows on ABC and third-party platforms including **CBS, Freeform, Showtime, Netflix** and **Hulu.**



Rebecca Daugherty, EVP, Marketing, ABC Entertainment

– **Rasky Partners** promoted **Jessica DiMartino** to VP, marketing. **Michael Morris** was named VP/general counsel and cybersecurity practice lead. – Presidential adviser **Stephen Miller** seems the favorite to be White House communications director. ■



The Finnies

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