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MEASUREMENT

Cutting Through the Data Wilderness: Next-Gen Communicators Preach Data With a Human Heart

[Editor's Note: In the last article of this five-part series created with partner **PublicRelay**, a media monitoring and analytics firm, we profile a trio of rising communicators who embody many of the ideas about measurement and data analytics examined in earlier articles.

The first article (*PRN*, November 7, 2017) looked broadly at communications data and measurement. The second article (November 21) examined how data can be mined to offer significant operational directions to companies. The third article (December 12) reported on a forum where 12 senior PR leaders commented on the state of data and measurement. The fourth article (*PRN*, January 9, 2018) examined the challenges associated with reputation management.]

True, there's more data available to communicators than ever and it's likely data will grow, not decline, in the years ahead. Fear not, though, this article won't be about math nerds or numbers jockeys.

Indeed, it seems entirely fitting that the three rising communications stars who were profiled for this article embraced the idea of measuring communications data *after* they began their careers as PR pros and marketers.

When we interview David Chamberlin, SVP, CCO, **PNC Financial Services Group**, who is featured prominently in this series, and ask him to provide insight for an introduction to this article, the first thing he mentions is the need for next-generation communicators to come out of school writing well and thinking clearly. "It drives bosses crazy when people can't write. And believe it or not, some people in communications can't write well."



David Chamberlin
SVP, CCO,
PNC Financial
Services Group

Chamberlin adds, "Having a well-rounded background...[and] intellectual curiosity...as well as an ability to understand and dig through various issues" is critical. In addition, knowledge of history is important, since "history repeats itself." He next mentions, "It's incredibly helpful to have the ability to read a balance sheet."

Since Chamberlin's a staunch advocate of measurement, we ask where an ability to work with data figures on his list of needs for young communicators. "The young people I'm seeing don't have a good grasp on data and analytics...so it's going to be hit or miss [if they eventually gain a good understanding of communications data]." It depends, he says, on where they end up working. "If they focus on social media, then yes, they'll have to learn analytics," he says.

With social media's rise in the past 10 years, "you hope they'd come out of communications school having a feel for the importance of analytics and...the ability to predict what's going to happen based on data and big data."

Knowing how to work with data early "will make a huge difference" in a communicator's career progress, he feels. "If they seek to be a CCO or a CMO or just a part of a marketing organization, it'll be really important for them...because so much of the job in certain places is becoming, 'Hey, what do we do with the data? How do we do it?'"

A more immediate challenge, Chamberlin says, is being able to "translate what's happening in social media and

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PR Pros Take Many Paths to Data

bringing it over to communications and corporate communications and applying it there.” In this he echoes a point made in last week’s *PR News*: it is critical to decide what is most important to measure (*PRN*, January 23, 2018).

THE POET



Ethan McCarty
Global Head,
Employee &
Innovation
Communications,
Bloomberg

None of the educational backgrounds of our young communicators include analytics. Ethan McCarty, global head, employee & innovation communication at **Bloomberg**, for example, has an undergraduate degree from **Ohio University** in creative writing. His graduate degree from the **New School for Social Research** in liberal studies had him “taking classes with **Christopher Hitchens** and reading **Marx**.” Ironically, McCarty recently began teaching media and analytics at **Columbia University** at the graduate level. “I love it,” he says.

Having never studied communications, McCarty’s education in analytics was obtained during a 13-year stint at **IBM**. He joined the company as a writer and editor after having been a journalist prior to that. McCarty credits his appreciation for communications data to working under “great managers” at IBM like **Jon Iwata** and **Ben Edwards**.

“The DNA of [IBM] is very oriented toward a data view of the world,” he says. IBM, he adds, sees the world as being composed of data.

“As communicators we can seek observable phenomenon and see if we can design communications programs that work back from the desired observable things in the world, whether they are behaviors or progressions of thinking... this became part of my world view” and would lead him to data-heavy Bloomberg.

A CONVERT TO DATA

Despite his background in poetry, “I forced myself to become comfortable and fluent in data.” The transition was critical. “The idea of analytics in the communications practice is so important because what we do is help shape beliefs that drive action...we can measure whether our efforts are improving outcomes, having no effect or making things worse.”

Owing to the profusion of digital data, communicators can see more steps than ever along the

route to that desired behavior. “These little changes we observe give us the ability to do two things: report back to management and continuously get better at what we do, because we can do more of the stuff that works and less of the things that don’t work. That’s what so important about it.”

DATA AND A YOUTUBE CHANNEL

The communications team at Bloomberg lacked an outlet for video it had shot showing the quality of work life at the company. A few years back the team created a **YouTube** channel called *In-side Bloomberg*.

“One of the first things we did was for every video that was on the channel we put a bit.ly link that directed interested viewers to open job positions in the company,” he says. For example, a video about the company’s philanthropic work in Singapore had a link to open positions in Bloomberg’s Singapore office.

Now with more than 7,000 subs, the channel has resulted in numerous new employees. “We’ve used these data to show how we reduce cost in recruiting and maybe attract candidates that we otherwise wouldn’t have found,” he says.

Through measurement “we’ve been able to get a better sense of what’s actually playing (well) for this audience. That’s influenced how we produce [these in-house] videos. The quality gets better and the yield gets better.” Each year the team has tracked an increasing number of candidates who’ve come in via the video door.

SERIAL READERS

McCarty’s team, he says, is highly oriented toward “iteration based on observable data...we inspect the data across all our platforms” from internal newsletters to external blogs “pretty much every day.” That’s led to some interesting operational changes.

For example, the team broke away from the usual tendency to address a subject internally with a huge article. Most companies try to write articles about an important subject that is a comprehensive, loaded with facts, figures and expert opinions. When it’s done, the article is enormous. Bloomberg’s communications team did this, too.

Through measurement, the team observed such articles would get about 15% of the company to read it. “That makes sense,” he says. “If it’s an article about sales, maybe the sales team reads it and that could be about 15% of

the company, which is fine. But when we have stories meant to be global, about the company's direction or culture, we want everyone to read it."

What the team discovered through measurement is that a better bet is a series of articles, perhaps one per month, on a given subject. "And when we look at the data we find that we get something like 80% penetration of the whole company. Maybe 80% of the people at the company read one [article in the series]...[and so] they all get that message. That's been a guiding principle of our editorial strategy for the last three and a half years."

Another tidbit: Bloomberg's most-opened emailed newsletters have 15 or fewer characters in their subject line.

GREEN WITH DATA



Marisa Long
VP, PR &
Communications,
U.S. Green
Building Council

One of the savviest communicators in Washington, Marisa Long, VP, PR & communications, **U.S. Green Building Council** (USGBC), immediately dismisses thoughts that she's completely comfortable working with social and communications data. "It can be daunting...and a little humbling," she admits. "But it is one of the things I love most about what I do." Long particularly likes the ability to measure and "take our work to the next level."

Like McCarty, she learned data on the job and the education is constant: "I learn as much from our staff...as I do from my mentors in the industry."

Long, like McCarty, is a proud Ohio University grad, where she studied journalism at the **Scripps School of Journalism**. The school, she says, "rightly prides itself on being at the forefront of industry trends and education to prepare its students for their careers."

Yet at the time of her education, fewer than 20 years ago, "we were still faxing press releases, scanning hard copies of media clips and just starting to see journalist data bases and measurement tools online."

It's amazing how the industry has evolved, she says, to the point where "we are completely reliant on online data and metrics to do our jobs. I've really had to learn how to navigate this digital landscape on the job throughout my career."

A JOB THAT LEEDS WITH DATA

While some PR pros see measurement as a chore that helps justify their existence to the C-suite, Long's job at USGBC makes using data part of the culture. USGBC created LEED, the world's most widely used green building rating system. "LEED's success is rooted in using data and measurement to set the bar and create a more sustainable built environment," she says. "I'm fortunate to work for an organization where using data to make informed decisions is ingrained in the culture and an expectation of the job."

One of the more interesting insights Long and her team at USGBC have discovered through measurement involves external communications. During the last several years USGBC has advanced its stakeholder engagement strategy as part of its PR campaigns. This has resulted in better local coverage in target markets, in the U.S. and internationally. "As a mission-based nonprofit, we know the best way for us to tell our story is to get our community to share theirs. Our measurement and data tracking show that this strategy works at the local, regional and global scale."

Data reporting has changed recently at USGBC. Long's team moved from quarterly to monthly reports and switched monitoring systems "so that we could create more visuals with our measurement data." Creating a regular maintenance and monitoring routine, she says, will help the team "stay on top of our results and share them with our leaders more frequently and efficiently." Also, for the first time, Long's team created an in-house video in 2017 that provided an overview of the work of the entire marketing department throughout the year. It was shown at the end-of-the-year all-staff meeting.

DATA PLUS HEART TAKES FLIGHT



Brooks Thomas
Social Business
Advisor,
Southwest Airlines

A gifted storyteller, **Southwest Airlines** social business advisor Brooks Thomas got a feel for numbers at **Southern Methodist University**, but it wasn't social measurement. With a degree in broadcast journalism, he started to gain an appreciation for **Nielsen** ratings and viewership, particularly ages 25-54.

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“I learned early the importance of relating a solid news product to numbers,” he says. Social media was confined to college-only **Facebook**, so he gained his measurement chops on the job.

Like Long and McCarty, Thomas is enmeshed in a data culture at work. At Southwest Airlines, he says, “the data charts our course and our hearts lead the way.” Knowing customers, prospective and current, and employees through measurement and instinct, “allows us to best serve their needs. If our storytelling was born only out of what we *thought* was good for everyone, then it would be narrow-minded and niche.”

More than that, data sometimes moves Thomas and his colleagues in unexpected directions. “We must force ourselves to be comfortable outside of what we know; data often can tell us when or how to pivot, ahead of our own instincts.”

A STORY OF CARGO AND DATA

Recently Thomas has been working with the airline’s cargo & charters department. Part of his charge is to spread the word that Southwest ships just like traditional shipping companies. He’s using data to inform Southwest how to build out a bigger social and digital footprint. “One of the ways to identify an audience, of course, is through content.”

Thomas is diving into different commodity data points to examine seasonality, volume and approachability, both attitudinally and visually. From there, Southwest reached out to cargo customers to gauge their interest in being featured in a storytelling series.

Thomas says the airline used data points and optimization throughout each story in the series to cut the cost per lead (CPL) in half. “The more of these we do, the deeper down the funnel we’ll be able to refine, and it’s exciting because not only is it increasing our cargo customer base, but it’s also great for general brand awareness.”

HEARTY COOKING

For Thomas, it’s a combination of data and heart that creates the secret sauce. “Qualitative data matters so much, but oftentimes needs to be activated by the quant. Having a good foundation of creativity, compassion, and ethics cannot be replaced, but neither can numbers...the numbers tell you where to begin, but your heart should be where you end.” ■

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TRUST

Edelman Study Urges CEOs to Lead as Trust in Government is Low; Trust Index Way Down in U.S.

The start of the year means many things: new goals, fresh opportunities and, of course, the **Edelman Trust Barometer**.

For the past few years this indicator of global attitudes has been a sobering read. The 2013 report was called “Crisis of Leadership.” The 2017 report was subtitled “Trust in Crisis.” This year’s tome seems slightly less depressing; its subtitle is “The Battle for Truth.” In short, trust in U.S. insti-

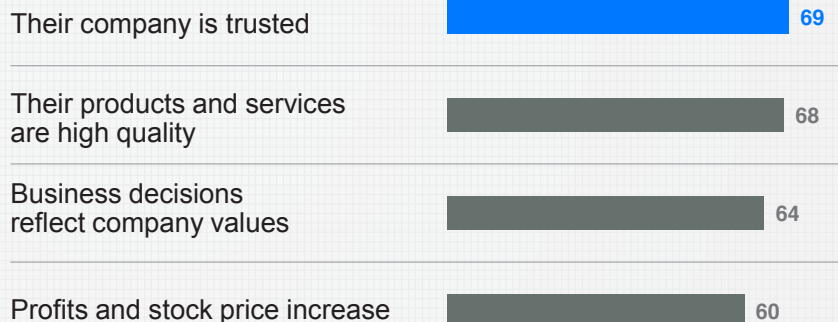
tutions (see chart, p. 5, top) fell the most, trust in China’s institutions rose the most.

With the rise of social media and branded newsrooms, an often-cited section of the report in PR circles is the one that looks at trust in media. On that count, though, this year isn’t all bad. The 2017 mark for trust in media in what Edelman calls “the general population” was 43%.

Percent who say that CEOs should take the lead on change rather than waiting for government to impose it

64%

For CEOs, building trust is job one



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
U.S.							
Government	32%	38%	32%	35%	39%	47%	33%
Media	37%	38%	35%	39%	47%	47%	42%
Business	44%	50%	48%	51%	51%	58%	48%
NGOs	49%	52%	52%	52%	57%	58%	49%
TRUST INDEX	40	45	42	44	49	52	43
25-Country Global Total							
Government	38%	41%	39%	42%	43%	43%	45%
Media	46%	49%	48%	46%	49%	43%	44%
Business	47%	50%	49%	49%	53%	52%	52%
NGOs	50%	53%	54%	51%	55%	53%	53%
TRUST INDEX	45	48	47	47	50	48	49
28-Country Global Total							
Government					42%	41%	43%
Media					48%	43%	43%
Business					53%	52%	53%
NGOs					55%	53%	53%
TRUST INDEX					50	47	48

Although that's a low mark—nothing is lower, actually—the 2018 grade is exactly the same, 43%. In terms of “the informed public,” both government and the media are at 53% in 2018. Both were at 53 in the 2017 report.

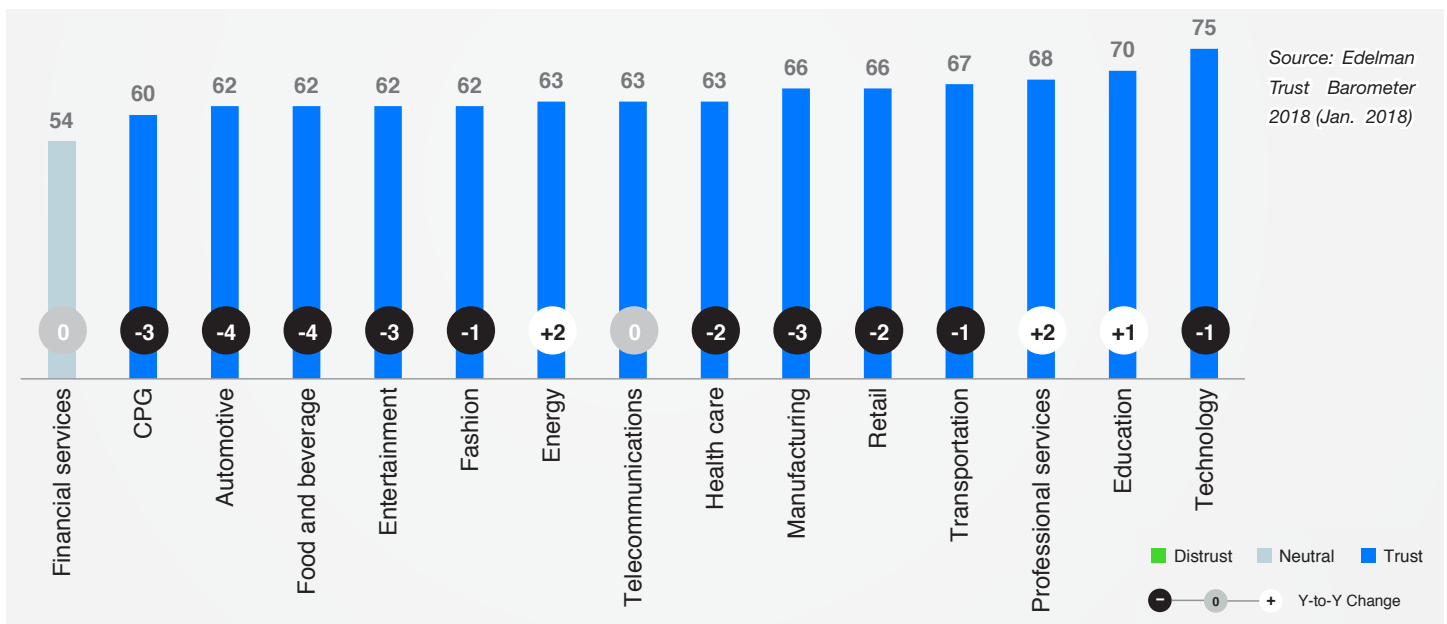
The findings about trust in media from the **Knight-Gallup** report detailed on page 6 in this week's edition are very similar to those Edelman raises. Fake news again looms large.

When people lack trust in media, they turn elsewhere for authoritative voices. Edelman points to the rise in trust of CEOs (see chart on page 4), up 7 percentage points in a ranking where people were asked to rate each spokesperson as “very or extremely credible.”

Somewhat surprisingly, the report also notes the rise in trust of journalists, up 12 percentage points vs 2017. Yes, trust in journalists is up, while trust in media is down.

In contrast, trust in what the report calls a “person like you” has dipped to a record low (down 6%).

Still the person like you is relatively high on the “Voices of Authority” ranking at 54, following only technical expert (63) and academic expert (61). Journalist (39) leads only government official (35). CEO is just a bit higher, at 44. Employee is at 47. The table below shows trust in industries; as you can see, trust in most is down. ■



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Data: U.S. Public Blasts Media Again, So Where Does That Leave Traditional Media Relations?

It's traditional to see choice as one of the prizes of capitalism. More choice equals increased happiness. Maybe not when the choice in question is media.

A recent survey has adult Americans saying (58% to 38%) that it's harder, not easier, to be a well-informed citizen. The culprit, they say, is the plethora of media sources. When more sources are available, the amount of misinformation is, too.

Another takeaway applicable to brand communicators in the study of 19,000 U.S. adults, 18 and older, that **Gallup** and the **Knight Foundation** just released, is that Americans lack confidence in their media sources. As the table below shows, 43% of those polled have an unfavorable view of media; 33% have a favorable view.

While this puts the onus on PR pros to think carefully about earned media, the divide along party lines may help. Democrats (54%) have a favorable view of the media (18% are negative), just 15% of Republicans do (68% are negative).

In addition 66% said the media does a poor job of separating fact from opinion, up from 42% in 1984. Fewer than half (44%) say they can name one media source that presents news objectively.

Overall Opinion of News Media, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
% All	33	23	43
% 18-29 years old	22	31	45
% 30-49 years old	29	26	44
% 50-64 years old	35	20	44
% 65+ years old	43	15	39
% White	28	20	51
% Black	51	26	21
% Hispanic	38	29	32

Source: *American Views: Trust, Media & Democracy*; Knight Foundation/Gallup (Jan. 2018)

Another useful nugget for brand communicators: Americans have the most trust in national network news and local and national newspapers to provide mostly accurate and politically balanced news.

After that they trust cable news most; internet news sources come in last. Still, equal proportions of Americans rely on social media as rely on newspapers to stay informed.

73% of Americans say the spread of inaccurate information on the internet is a major problem. A majority of U.S. adults consider fake news a very serious threat to democracy. Here it's a bipartisan sentiment: 71% of Democrats and 76% of Republicans say the spread of inaccurate information on the internet is "a major problem."

Perceptions of media bias, though, are divided along party lines. 67% of Republicans say they see "a great deal" of political bias in the news, only 26% of Democrats agree. ■

Perceptions of Problems With News Coverage Today, by Age and Race

Figures are the percentages who say the matter is "a major problem"

	18-29 YEARS OLD	30-49 YEARS OLD	50-64 YEARS OLD	65+ YEARS OLD
The spread of inaccurate information on the internet	80	75	73	68
Owners of news outlets attempting to influence the ways stories are reported	71	69	69	65
News organizations being too dramatic or too sensational in order to attract more readers or viewers	66	68	67	62
Too much bias in the reporting of news stories that are supposed to be objective	72	67	65	59
Too much bias in the selection of what stories news organizations cover or don't cover	72	67	64	57
Increasing number of news sources reporting a specific ideological viewpoint rather than being neutral	61	61	63	61
Not enough investigative journalism to uncover important facts	62	59	60	58
News organizations reporting information they think is accurate but turns out to be inaccurate	58	57	58	56

McDonald's Leads Brands in Average Monthly Number of Unique Photos on Instagram & Twitter

You'd have a decent start on a nestegg if you had a dollar for every time you'd heard a presenter at a social media conference say something like, "With social media, a picture is worth a lot more than a thousand words."

No doubt, imagery and video are pushing aside words rapidly on social media as the communications device of choice at the moment.

As you know, video in particular is hot. As our regular reports from data partner **Shareablee** demonstrate, likes, comments and re-tweets and shares of video are powering the growth of consumer engagement with social content posted by B2B and B2C brands as well as nonprofit organizations (PRN, January 23, 2018).

The table below, compiled by **Brandwatch**, shows how often on average during a month unique images of brand logos appear in **Instagram** and **Twitter** posts.

Is **McDonald's** a surprise at the number one slot? Certainly the rising phenomenon of people snapping pictures of their food should make it less so. The chart's figures include both brand-sanctioned imagery and snaps that enthusiasts (and perhaps critics) post socially.

Interestingly the food and beverage sector is just the fourth-most photographed industry, at least where Instagram

and Twitter are concerned, Brandwatch says. The top industry is sports, with 381,600 images per brand per month, followed in the distance by technology (28,800) and retail (28,500).

The food and beverage sector (11,700) is next, but is a distant fourth. Then it's aviation (9920) and next is fashion (7041).

The importance of athletes as well as selfies on social might explain the strong showing of **Nike** and **Adidas**.

A FEW SURPRISES

Puma seems a bit of a surprise, though, as does the relatively low ranking of **Apple**. (It would be interesting to find out how many of the images counted for the rankings in this table were taken using Apple products.)

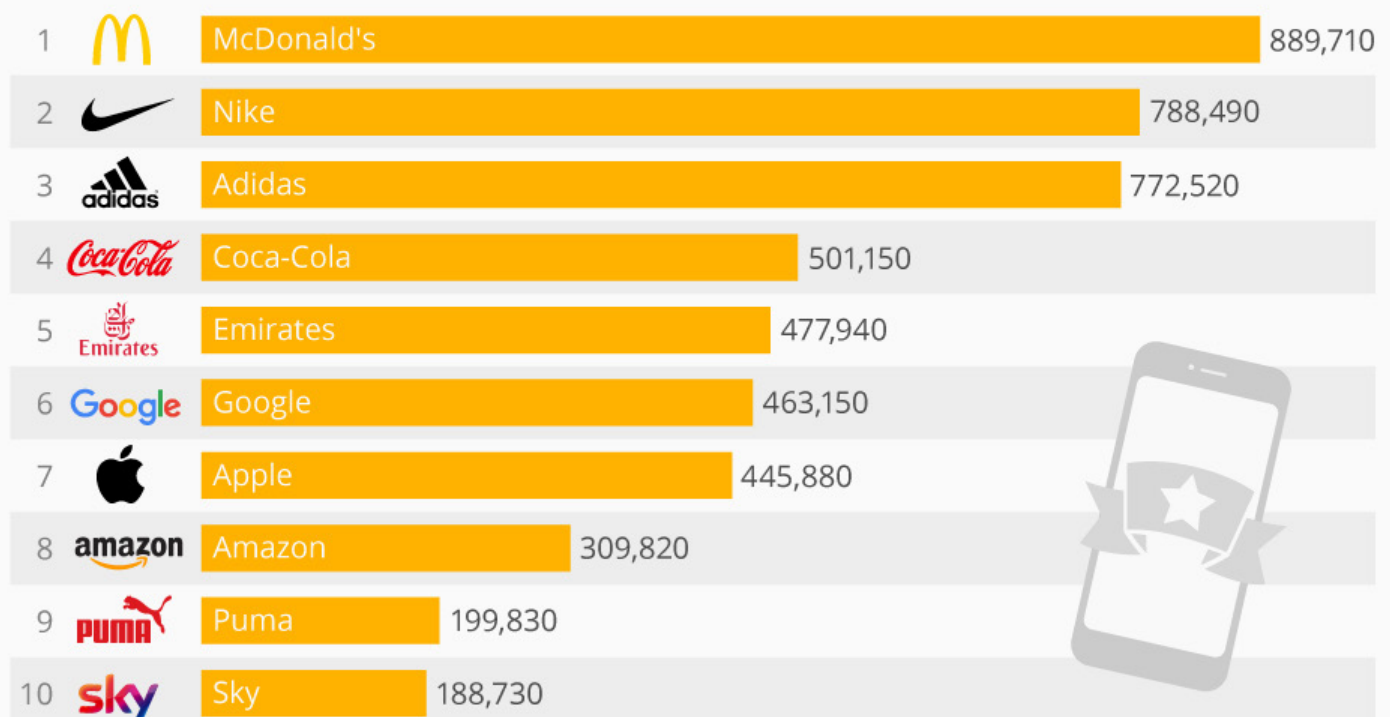
And it seems surprising that there is no fashion brand on this list. **Emirates** seems a quiet surprise on this list, too.

Another thing to think about is how all this would change if videos were included along with still images.

In terms of engagement, the brands with the highest percentage of mentions by influencers (10,000+ followers) on Twitter are: McDonald's (12%), **Disney** (11.9%), **Coca-Cola** (11.5%), **Vodafone** (11.1%) and Nike (10%). ■

The Most Visible Brands on Social Media

Average monthly number of Instagram/Twitter photos the following brands appear in



Source: Brandwatch's Brand Visibility Report (Jan. 2018), Statista Chart



Lou Anna Simon, former, president, MSU

1. Gymnastics Onion: As crises have a tendency to do, the **Dr. Larry Nassar** situation continues to spread its tentacles. As we reported (*PRN*, July 17, 2017), the initial focus was **U.S.A. Gymnastics** (USAG). The entire board eventually resigned, just after Nassar's sentencing was announced last week. Still, that part of the scandal may not yet be done. Several heads, if not the entire board, at the seemingly inert **U.S. Olympic Committee** could roll also.

At the moment, of course, most of the attention is centered on the campus of **Michigan State University** (MSU), the second of Nassar's former employers, where conditions for a perfect storm are right: the media's klieg light is shining brightly and sports network **ESPN** is reporting other MSU coverups; momentum from #MeToo helps encourage the story to remain alive; apparently plenty of malfeasance, inaction and covering up took place, leading to the abrupt "retirements" last week of MSU president **Lou Anna Simon** and athletic director **Mark Hollis**; and Michigan politicians, mainly attorney general **Bill Shuette**, are cocked and primed for the 2018 election. You might recall that when politicians detect a meaty target prior to an election the result can be ugly. (Remember the reception then-**Wells Fargo** chief **John Stumpf** received from ravenous lawmakers on Capitol Hill in September 2016 during the bogus credit card scandal? Enough said.)

The Lessons: Crisis management 101 says the board of an organization in crisis should order an internal investigation as a prelude to recommending

fixes. It's critical that the investigation seem above reproach. The MSU board may have missed that lesson. The goals of its internal investigation of the Nassar situation seem murky at best, duplicitous at worst, according to a page 1 article in the *NY Times* (Jan. 28). The board launched an internal review last year as reports of complaints against Nassar rolled in. In December 2017, the review's chief, **Patrick Fitzgerald**, wrote MSU staff knew nothing of Nassar's illegal activities. (Several victims, claim they'd informed MSU staff of their complaints years ago.) The rub: critics say Fitzgerald and his team were employed to keep the school out of legal trouble, not to rigorously investigate Nassar. The Times even quotes an MSU trustee, **Joel Ferguson**, saying the same thing: "We have the person who was defending us investigating us... There was a conflict." The **Federal Education Department** and Michigan, under Shuette, its attorney general, began their own investigations last week.



Angela Povilaitis, Nassar prosecutor

Free Press: One of the few good things to come out of the Nassar debacle was it emphasized the need for a free press. During the trial, prosecutor **Angela Povilaitis** noted, "We...need investigative journalists more than ever," as she hailed the *Indianapolis Star's* reporting, according to *Poynter's Morning MediaWire*. As we mentioned in our initial coverage (*PRN*, July 17, 2017), Nassar might have escaped punishment had it not been for the *Star*, which in 2016 reported on 100 instances of Nassar's sexual misconduct against MSU and Olympic athletes. Nassar was forced to resign relatively quietly from USAG in 2015 for what was called "athlete concerns."— Another good thing from this ugly affair: House and Senate

bills were approved requiring athletic organizations to immediately report complaints of sexual harassment to police.

2. Platform Prater: *Wall St Journal* proprietor **Rupert Murdoch** said if **Facebook** and **Google** want to carry "trusted" media sources to combat bogus info, they should pay publishers a carriage fee. Neither Facebook nor Google responded.

3. Growth: **Beckerman**, parent of **Beckerman PR**, acquired marketing agency **Chicago Digital**. No financial details were provided. — **Cision** finalized its acquisition of **PRIME Research** (*PRN*, Jan. 9). Cision also said PRIME founder/president **Dr. Rainer Mathes** will lead **Cision Insights**. — **Walker Sands** opened a Seattle office. **Annie Gudorf** (photo, p.1) will lead it.

4. People: **Cohn & Wolfe** named **Gary Goldhammer** EVP of its digital innovation group, U.S. Goldhammer joins from **Hill + Knowlton** where he was U.S. creative director. — **Greenough** promoted 13-year vet **Scott Bauman** to GM. Previous to Greenough he'd been at **Weber Shandwick**. — Congrats to **Jake Basden** of **Big Machine Label Group**, named the **Country Music Association** publicist of the year. — **Dessler Media** promoted **Kevin McDaniel** to SVP, PR, He'll lead the physician protection organization plan. — **Finn Partners** said veteran pharma exec **Christopher Bona** has joined the company as a partner in its Chicago office health



Chris Bona, partner, Finn Partners

group. — Congrats to **Robert Gard**, who recently joined the **Greater Madison Convention & Visitors Bureau** and was promoted to director of PR & communications. — **DiMassimo Goldstein** named **Wendy Lurie** chief client growth officer. Lurie was managing director and president of **Gyro's** NY office and **Gyro: human**, its healthcare operation. ■