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WEB TOOLS

Snap to It: Tips for Brands to Get Started on Snapchat or at Least to Think About Now

Like all social media platforms, **Snapchat** is tweaking itself, and the social community responds with changes of its own. Just weeks ago it was accurate to say Snapchat contained no e-commerce ads, that it averaged 8 billion daily views and that curated content on the evanescent platform was strictly verboten, a liability for brands intent on having maximum control of the message.

Each of those statements now is untrue. Quickly to the first two: Snapchat began accepting e-commerce ads May 1

and it now says it is averaging 10 billion views daily. While those first two points are important to brand communicators, especially those interested in speaking to a millennial demo, the curated content piece may be the most important.

Instead of depending on influencers to snap appropriate photos and videos, brands using a tool like **Mish Guru** have control. “The influencers send snaps directly to the brand’s account, allowing the brand to repurpose any of the original

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WRITING WELL

BY KELLY MAHONEY, MANAGER, SOCIAL MEDIA, COMPTIA

How to Use Old-School Journalism to Help Your Brand Stand Out on Social

Social media is a green field for PR pros. Virtually every person you want to market to spends time online engaging with a social media platform. The catch is you must stand out. In a world where everyone wants just a minute of your time, asking for the mere seconds it takes to read and like a post is a tall order.

The nonprofit association **CompTIA** faced this challenge. To get results it failed to attain previously, the association had to do things it hadn’t done before. By going back to journalism basics it rebooted its approach to social media, and increased engagement by as much as 180%. Thinking like a journalist will not only help you achieve your goals, it

will make you indispensable as this niche grows in professional relevance.

At the heart of social media is communicating quickly and clearly. The challenges you face in crafting the perfect update are similar to what a reporter working on an article must overcome. You have to distill the facts for your audience and remove extraneous material. The more work you leave for readers to do, the more likely it is they will opt out and skip your messaging altogether.

Traditional journalists operate by a series of rules to

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Revenue Grows, But Labor Costs Stop Firms From Reaching 20% Profitability

Confucius said, “Life is simple, but we insist on making it complicated.” The same holds for PR firms and profitability. Data supplied exclusively to *PR News Pro* by **Gould + Partners** reveals none of the 106 PR firms, which were grouped by net revenue, reached 20% profitability, the industry benchmark. Individually, some firms polled for this 2016 study had 30% profitability, others were far less. The groups failed to reach 20% profitability in the '14 and '15 surveys, too.

The group of 6 Canadian firms (Line 10) was more profitable than its U.S. counterparts. The reason is simple: “The Canadian CEOs keep a closer eye on base labor” costs, says Rick Gould, managing partner, Gould + Partners. As

U.S. firms provide staff with raises and incentives, billing rates remain relatively stable, which cuts into profitability. The goal for labor costs is 55% and 25% for overhead, Gould says.

Why are U.S. PR chiefs averse to raising client fees? “They fear client pushback,” says Gould, who’s been monitoring the industry for 30 years. He advocates firms employ CFOs, even part-time, to monitor labor costs.

Nearly 85% of firms surveyed return annually, Gould says, naming **Edelman, Finn Partners** and **Taylor**. On the upside, Gould is “thrilled” with PR’s growing net revenue of 8-10% annually. “I thought with that sort of growth, we’d see profitability come closer to 20%, but we didn’t.” ■

PR Firms’ Operating Profits Grouped by Net Revenue

Size of PR Firms by Net Revenue	# of Firms Responding	Total Labor*	Operating Expenses/Overhead*	Operating Profit*
Size	#			
<\$3 Mill	23	60.6%	25.9%	13.5%
\$3 Million to \$10 Million	52	58.1%	27.5%	14.4%
>\$10 Million to \$25 Million	19	58.4%	23.7%	17.9%
> \$25 Million	12	55.9%	24.8%	19.3%
All	106	58.5%	26.2%	15.3%
Regions				
1. NY & Metro	26	58.4%	27.0%	14.6%
2. D.C. & Suburbs	9	59.8%	23.7%	16.5%
3. NE	10	58.1%	28.1%	13.8%
4. SE	10	58.6%	24.8%	16.6%
5. Midwest	22	59.5%	25.4%	15.1%
6. SW	10	59.6%	25.1%	15.3%
7. Southern CA	4	58.8%	31.1%	10.1%
8. Northern CA	6	60.0%	22.2%	17.8%
9. NW	3	52.3%	26.0%	16.7%
10. Canada	6	52.3%	29.0%	18.7%
All	106	58.5%	26.2%	15.3%

Source: 2016 Best Practices Benchmarking Report: By Agency Size (2015 Results), Gould + Partners
 * As a percent of net revenue, which is defined as fees plus markup.

Curation Comes to Once-Informal Snapchat

photo or video snaps into the brand's own snap story," says Laura Wilson, director of digital engagement & social media, **Georgetown University**. She does this with 12 paid influencers, who also are Georgetown students. "We don't have to give away the keys to the kingdom," she says. It also allows Wilson to "create really interesting snap stories using content we select from a number of different students."

Another platform, **Snaplytics**, allows brands to upload and schedule Snapchat content from a laptop, so it could be used to curate, but would be more difficult, Wilson says.

Now what about the pesky measurement issue with Snapchat, which is off limits to 3rd parties and requires a lot of work by hand? (*PRN*, May 9). Well, that might be changing. Yet another platform, **Delmondo**, is "part agency and part tech platform." It provides a platform for brands to find and contract with Snapchat influencers to produce content together and a proprietary analytics tool to measure results.

So, should your brand still ignore Snapchat? Probably not. But perhaps your brand isn't ready to dive into the Snapchat foray today. Fine. That might be reasonable, Gavin Donovan, digital strategy lead, **Mission Foods**, says. Still, even if the brand is on the sidelines, decide today on a Snapchat handle and reserve it, he says. "The last thing you want to do is lay out your Snapchat strategy for the C-suite and then have to say your brand's name already has been taken."

Another tip for PR pros whose brands elect to pass on Snapchat: Educate your executives now about the channel. While the CEO might not want to engage the brand on Snapchat today, "You don't want the neighbor's kids educating the CEO about Snapchat," Donovan says.

Once your brand decides to commit to Snapchat, though, make sure you have a coherent strategy for it. Decide where you fit in on Snapchat, he advises. Do you want to use Snapchat to advertise, to recruit, to tell stories? As you would with any PR initiative, think strategically about your goals before diving in, he adds.

For Wilson having the brand active on Snapchat is a bit of a no-brainer. Again, it's those 10 billion daily views, including 60% of U.S. high school students (read prospective Georgetown students) using it at least once daily. Similar to the

White House's reasoning for starting a Snapchat account, "It's about meeting people where they are," Wilson said.

So, if you dive in, "A Day in the Life" makes for strong content, she says, and it's a good way for brands to get started on the platform. **Amazon** has done something similar, showing staff members doing fun things at their office, she says. Another winner is live events. Wilson shows Snapchat content featuring a Georgetown cheerleader. The cheerleader took viewers behind the scenes at the Verizon Center hours before a Georgetown-Syracuse basketball game. "This is a view most people won't ever see," Wilson says.

Wilson also touts using coupons and incentives on Snapchat. For example, **GrubHub** did a series of snaps where a pizza pie was slowly disappearing, slice by slice. At the end of the series the bottom of the pizza box showed a coupon for a discount on GrubHub.

A few creation hacks she recommends that will greatly improve a brand's snaps: 1. It seems basic, but have a backup battery for your mobile phone. "Snapchat really drains your battery," she says. 2. A simple stylus, costing about \$20, allows you to write on your snaps. 3. An extra snap-on lens for your mobile phone will help the quality of your snaps. 4. A glider or stabilizer steadies the phone. 5. A selfie stick. Total cost: \$200-\$300.

She also touts on-demand Geofilters, which can be used by brands even if they lack a presence on Snapchat. Recently introduced, Geofilters "usually are approved within one business day," Wilson says. If a Snapchat user is posting from a particular area, say on a college campus, he or she can choose a filter that will place their snaps in a border with a brand's name and message on it.

J.P. Morgan Chase used a Geofilter at Georgetown's graduation. The cost "is a lot less than you'd think," she says, noting the price is decided in an auction style. ■

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Editor's Note: Don't miss PR News' Snapchat Bootcamp, July 12, NYC. Info: <http://www.prnewsonline.com/pr-news-snapchat-boot-camp-2016/>

VISUAL STORYTELLING GUIDEBOOK

PR News' Visual Storytelling Guidebook is packed with how-to's and case study examples on how to use visuals to tell new stories about your brand and connect with new audiences and customers. You'll learn how visuals can enhance and complement the stories your brand has to tell, discover what tools and resources are available to you and connect with new audiences—audiences that increasingly expect and consume visual information on digital channels.

Chapters include:

- Getting Started
- Creating Great Images
- Instagram
- Snapchat, Pinterest and More
- Live Streaming
- Video

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Questions? Contact Laura Snitkovskiy at laura@accessintel.com
www.prnewsonline.com/visual-storytelling-guidebook



Old-Media Tricks to Help You on New Media

make their stories clear and succinct. First, before crafting a story or update, savvy reporters will consider the audience. Who is it that we're writing for? Depending on your audience, your venue, tone and composition will change. Knowing how your audience wants to receive a message is crucial to reaching it. Look at your analytics for clues, whether it's the onboard insights from **Facebook**, the analytics tab on **Twitter** or software like **Iconosquare** for **Instagram**. Where your audience resides will dictate how you address it.

Journalists use another rule of storytelling: "Show, don't tell." If a picture is worth a thousand words, then use one! Don't waste your words where an image tells the story better. Using facts and figures is a great place to brainstorm a way to tell the story visually. One of CompTIA's biggest bumps in engagement and reach came from looking at ways to visualize research studies. By going from text-only Facebook posts to a graphics-first approach, it increased reach on these weekly posts by as much as 671%. This significant increase provided greater exposure to the people it wanted to connect with week after week.

The third, and perhaps most important, journalistic idea to think about is avoiding wasted words. To borrow from Shakespeare: "Brevity is the soul of wit." Journalism schools used to teach that the first paragraph should capture the audience in fewer than 32 words. Today, the word count varies based on where your message will be delivered. Regardless of if you're crafting a tweet or a **LinkedIn** company page update, the more concise, the more eyeballs you will earn and keep.

To that end, reporters are tasked with eliminating jargon and acronyms. If readers need a dictionary to understand your post, they will simply scroll on. Journalists are taught to spell out most acronyms on first reference, which is a rule to adhere to in social media. Unless the shortened version is part of your organization's online identity, you should spell out these items in tweets and updates. Better yet, explain them as you would to someone who is unfamiliar with the material.

A fourth characteristic of a successful journalist that lends itself to the world of social media is having a knack for being timely. The reporter who finds a way to provide a local angle on national news or can scoop the competition with a breaking update is the most valuable name on the

masthead that day.

Look for ways to creatively align your PR goals with current events and holidays to take advantage of trends. For example, CompTIA regularly monitors trending tech memes and seeks ways to add spin to it, such as the Charmander or Be Like Bill memes. It looks for quirky holidays that matter to its audience, such as Talk Like a Pirate Day or World Nutella Day. While these may appear to be fun gags, they serve the greater purpose of engaging followers in a timely way, highlighting CompTIA's relevance in the marketplace and ability to react quickly. A great place to find these holidays is through **Encore's Weekly Sidekick**, which sends email about upcoming holidays, premieres, birthdays and dates in history.

Editors tell reporters they must circulate to percolate. This means understanding what stories to tell. Quality journalism that engages, incites and intrigues often is the result of working your beat daily. Instead of leveraging old-school phone calls and shoe leather, social media writers must keep an ear to the digital ground through online listening.

People share huge windows of their lives online. It's up to you to intelligently eavesdrop to make the most of these insights. Follow your influencers on Twitter. Set up **Google** news alerts for your company name, leadership and hot-button issues. Take your Facebook reviews and page comments to heart. And respond! You should spend 50% of your time online engaging with your audience—asking for feedback, answering questions, thanking people for their insights and congratulating followers for their assorted accomplishments. In embracing the social aspect of social media, you ingratiate yourself to the audience, and ingrain your message into its online experience.

Social media is a complicated beast to contend with, yet winning the game of online engagement can be done using basic journalism rules: Listen, simplify and publish wisely. Stop your audience mid-scroll by looking for ways to visually impress your readers. The shorter and more streamlined your messages are, the more likely they are to get read, liked and shared. Never miss an opportunity to join a conversation through the thoughtful use of relevant memes and holidays. And be proactive. The more you interact with the world, the more you will understand it. ■

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4 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR SOCIAL MESSAGES

- ▶ Who is this message for? Understand your audience and where it resides online to get an idea of what the post will look like.
- ▶ What kind of image will make this pop? If possible, every post should have a graphic, whether it's a photo from an event, a graph illustrating data or a logo for your brand.
- ▶ How short does the post need to be? Your venue will dictate how brief you need to be.
- ▶ How soon does this need to happen? Social media has a short half-life and an even shorter memory. If there is a time element to your update, time is of the essence.

Tips and Tactics to Ensure Your Online Content Is Optimally Optimized



There was a time, not too long ago, when PR and digital were acutely divided disciplines, often competing with one another for budgets. While that still may be the case for some, more and more PR and digital strategies such as SEO are integrating, working together to reach target audiences, improve user experience and garner a greater ROI.

As a PR pro in this ever-changing landscape, it can be tough to navigate. The rules of SEO change almost daily thanks to **Google**.

Penguin or Hummingbird ring any bells? They should. These are two of a slew of Google algorithm updates that have changed the way we (as marketers) approach content and (as users) search online.

So, why does Google continue to change the rules? Simple answer: It's meeting the demands of users. Who doesn't want a better digital user experience? As a 24/7 society, we demand instant information. After just a few minutes of searching online, if we don't find what we're looking for, we're frustrated and seeking the information elsewhere. Google, and others like **Yahoo!** and **Bing**, constantly are making updates to improve this experience. It's up to us as marketing professionals to stay relevant and adapt.

As skilled writing professionals trained to craft messaging for specific target audiences, the writing part comes fairly naturally. The biggest challenges lie within thinking through where the content will live, which audiences will consume it and on what channels. It's the reason we once called on our digital

and developer counterparts to help us optimize press releases and bylined articles for search.

That's no longer how the majority of the PR industry operates. We have come a long way from faxing press releases and measuring column inches. We craft content that resonates with target audiences, measure the effectiveness of our efforts through Google Analytics dashboards and track user clicks throughout online news stories and blogs. We are still very much PR pros, but have adapted, taking on the roles of content marketers, social media strategists and SEO advisors.

Given these new roles, consider these top SEO best practices the next time you're perfecting a press release, editing an article or updating website copy.

If nothing else, commit to crafting and promoting content that users want to engage with. Do not stuff random keywords into an article or a blog just for the sake of SEO. This tactic no longer works and will likely bury your content 10-plus pages deep on Google.

Always strive to create useful, meaningful content. From bylined articles and blog posts to curated videos and news stories, be authentic and use language germane to the topic at hand. For a good start, look at Google Trends. It's free and will help identify popular keywords and phrases in real time.

Some best practices:

- ▶ Plug your list of keywords and phrases into the search bar and review the results to see where your content is likely to land.
- ▶ Research successful competitor websites to find content that's resonating with users. This can help with inspiration.
- ▶ Feature a variety of content on the site or web page. For example, include long- and short-form blog content and bylined articles, and incorporate visual content like infographics and videos.
- ▶ Search engines require quality and variety when it comes to SEO.

Third-party validation is key. The more relevant links directing back to your site the better. Backlinks from news outlets

Continued on page 6

SEO SUPPORT TOOLS

To search for backlinks to a site: tools.seobook.com/general/keyword-density

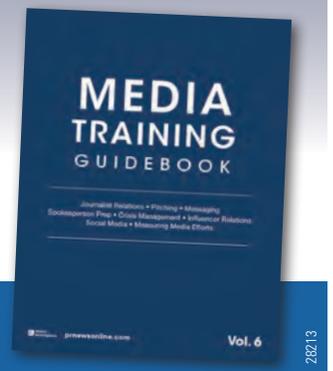
To check for keyword density: smallseotools.com

For algorithm updates: searchengineland.com/library/google/google-algorithm-updates

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/

like CNN.com or WSJ.com are excellent ways to improve a site's search. Search engines view backlinks from reputable sources as positive, and they will help with a site's ranking.

For example, an article on **CNN's** website linking back to the brand's blog is incredibly valuable. Placing that same blog link in the comments section of an article you just read is not. It's actually a spam comment and can get a website blacklisted quickly.

Take time to build backlinks organically by engaging with like online communities and audiences, and consistently publish relevant and informative content.

Incorporate appropriate anchor text. Anchor text, or hyperlinks, as they are also referred to, is text that appears on a website or in a digital press release that links to another page or site. The anchor text and content topic should be complementary, as should the site or page that the text is linking to.

There's no magic number when it comes to including anchor text within content, but don't overdo it as it will have the reverse effect on SEO. Stick to two or a maximum of three links for a 500-word press release.

This may seem like a no-brainer, but the functionality of the website influences SEO greatly. This is where those developer friends may come in handy once again. When a site

takes too long or features Flash, for example, search engines react negatively. The search ranking is hurt as a result.

Also be aware of broken or expired links, and fix those as soon as they're found. If search engines find these in content or on a site, it too damages SEO rankings.

Overall, the website or page should be well-organized and easy to navigate. Users shouldn't have to dig too deep or go through multiple clicks to find the information they need. Be an advocate for users: Test the functionality of the site firsthand.

In the end, technology will change, the PR industry will continue to evolve, and PR pros will need to adapt to it all. By implementing these four basic best practices, you can start to organically improve search across digital platforms. Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet. It takes a combination of efforts to gain significant results. Ultimately, quality content that is easy to find is one of the best ways to start to build a foundation for long-term organic search success. ■

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ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE SEO

- ▶ Use tags and categories to sort your content on the site in a logical and easy-to-find and understandable manner.
- ▶ Create titles and subtitles to make sure that search engines (or online crawlers) will find your content easier.
- ▶ Provide a short (up to 50 words) description of your product. Write a byline for your article and/or an abstract.
- ▶ Use keywords that are similar to the most popular keywords in your industry.
- ▶ Follow the 3/100 rule. Make sure that everything you write contains at least three keywords associated with your product per 100 words of text.
- ▶ Follow the 300 rule when writing posts for your blog or placing content on your site. If the article contains 600 words, split it in half, so that its second part is hidden and its first part serves as a stimulus to open the second part of the article.
- ▶ Supply the transition from the first part of the article to the second part of the article with a catchy phrase. "Look here for more lucrative news about Brand B!"
- ▶ Italicize or bold the most important content.
- ▶ Augment your stories with photos.
- ▶ Rely on bullets to make reading easier.
- ▶ Make sure that your content is posted at noon, and take note of what time zone your clients reside in.
- ▶ Avoid generalizations when describing your product or service.

RESEARCHING ONLINE CONTENT

When used in **Google** search, the following phrases will help you learn more about your online competition. Let's say the site is changeads.wordpress.com

- ▶ What is known about a specific website?
type: info: <http://changeads.wordpress.com>
- ▶ What kind of blogs are linked to a given page?
type: link: <http://changeads.wordpress.com>
- ▶ How many blogs are there with a given word, say "change," in their title?
type: in blog title: change
- ▶ How many articles did a specific author write?
type: in post author: change
- ▶ How many sites that raise issues similar to those you raise are there?
type: related: <http://changeads.wordpress.com>
- ▶ What are the top sites mentioning a specific word?
type: change + "top 10 sites/"top sites"

Use these queries to check if your site's SEO is functioning properly. If they fail to provide the desired result, rethink the positioning of your product and your company online and how its story is communicated. To do so, make sure that you work closely with a programmer to write the description of your website or blog, product or service.

This usually can be done in the area allocated for the meta description of the HTML code of the site.

Insist that you have access to HTML code so you can make changes to the site when necessary.

Even though there are free options for sites and blogs, some only allow you access to HTML code (or sell you a plugin for access to it) after you subscribe to its service.

Contact: Dr. Olesya Venger, assistant professor, Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, wrote these sidebars. She can be reached at: olesya.venger@unlv.edu

How to Ensure Your PR Team Is Engaged, Motivated and Appreciated



In most cases employees are, and will always be, a brand's greatest asset. They drive in-house and agency success. Engaging them should be the highest priority.

It's the CEO's responsibility to help achieve a singular, straightforward vision that propels the business and energizes employees to be best in class, renowned for unrivaled talent, forward-thinking capabilities and unrelenting client service.

Achieving a vision like this requires building an incredible company spirit where every employee feels that "we are in this together" and maintaining an exceptional culture that embraces doing something different for clients, colleagues and the community. Central to the creation of this shared passion for success is a dedicated plan for actively engaging and motivating employees.

ENGAGEMENT TIED TO CLIENT ACHIEVEMENTS

It's critical to motivate employees to avoid settling for the status quo and encourage them to think deeper, go the extra mile and do things differently and better. A lot of cliches, yes, but they are keys to better performance. To help staff live, breathe and celebrate great thinking and outcomes and to integrate this into a company's culture, there needs to be an ongoing commitment to harnessing employees' dedication to their work. Several of the following have proven successful:

- ▶ An awards program that recognizes employees who epitomize the values of the company.
- ▶ Monthly spotlights of great initiatives to highlight teams that execute new, different and effective programs.
- ▶ Timed to the **NCAA** men's basketball tournament or some other sporting event, an annual competition among teams. The teams are awarded points for receiving accolades, growing revenue, orchestrating program milestones and sparking innovation.
- ▶ Welcome lunches with the CEO for new employees. This allows the CEO to meet new staff and share the company's vision.
- ▶ "High fives" at monthly staff meetings to honor people who have done things differently and better.

These are examples only. Options are limitless, of course. The point is to find what works best with your employees and have fun doing it.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT & DISTINCT NEEDS

To help foster a culture built on achieving greatness, it's important to offer employees highly experiential and hands-on experiences that relate directly to the transforming and diverse work they do.

For example, as we know, PR today is global. As boundaries disintegrate it's essential that all employees and PR

teammates have an understanding of the regional and local nuances that color effective communications around the world.

To that end, companies have given staff the opportunity to spend time working in overseas offices to help expand their global mindset. Incidentally, the same holds true for overseas employees—having them work for a period in your U.S. office(s) can be beneficial. Beyond that, encourage employees to work in other offices throughout the U.S., should they have the desire to temporarily relocate to a new city.

One area that always seems to be a challenge in engaging employees is new business. This is true particularly when it comes to balancing and prioritizing new business with existing (and paying!) work.

On the agency side, to elevate employees' comfort with—and love for—new business, consider staging a "new business boot camp," where you introduce formal methodology and approaches to new business and provide resources to support these activities.

In addition to formal programs, "lunch & learn" opportunities are an excellent way to train staff through highly interactive sessions. Outside experts should be considered to help facilitate discussions with senior managers on communications best practices, managing people and teams for success and mastering sound financial management.

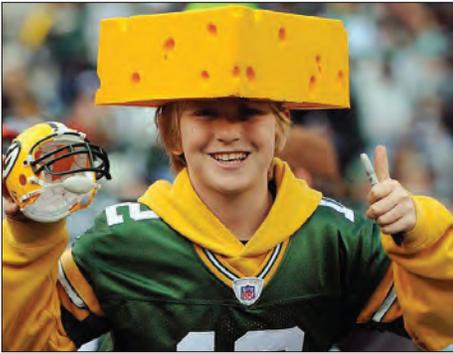
MAINTAIN A WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Various efforts to engage employees are all fine and well, but how can you keep staff refreshed, at the top of its game and motivated? It's critical to pay close attention to specific needs of each employee and ensure a good work-life balance. As previously mentioned, employees likely are your greatest asset, and everything we as managers do should be carried out with an eye toward creating a superior work experience.

From encouraging team members to live a healthy lifestyle to allowing them to take the time they need with their families (and actually use their vacation time) to providing a liberal telecommuting policy to something as simple as a Summer Friday program. All of these can make employees feel good about themselves and their work. I find that the quality of the work and the team spirit is best when employees know that they and their work-life needs are being considered.

By treating staff as your brand's greatest asset and making sure that its every contribution is valued, you will be able to pull greatness out of every employee and achieve your company vision. ■

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DeVries Global COO Ivette Sanz Osso



APCO's house warming

1. Say Cheese No More: Sometimes brands respond to an issue with a statement. Other times a good response is to monitor the situation and work behind the scenes. For most brands, it's barely noticeable when **Green Bay Packers** quarterback **Aaron Rodgers** decides to eschew milk and cheese to gain strength, reduce inflammation in his joints, lose weight and extend his career. If you're a Packers fan, who affectionately dons a cheese headpiece on fall Sundays, such intolerance for lactose is a concern. Should you happen to be from top U.S. cheese maker Wisconsin, whose license plates declare it the Dairy State, well, the 32-year-old's oath could be tantamount to an affront to good manners. After all, for years **Sargento**, the family-owned, Wisconsin-based cheese maker, has been kicking in \$1,500 after every Packers touchdown to charities feeding the needy. The official cheese of the Packers, Sargento has sent nearly \$1 million to help feed the state's needy as a result of touchdowns thrown by Rodgers, the team's biggest cheese. "As some of the world's greatest Packer fans, the dairy farm families of Wisconsin are, of course, disappointed by this news," the state's **Milk Marketing Board** uttered. "While we trust and respect Aaron Rodgers and his nutrition team, we stick by the **USDA** recommendation of three servings of dairy per day for anyone age 9 and older." It also refused to kowtow to the inflammation piece. "The **National Institutes of Health** says there is no proof dairy causes inflammation in muscles and joints," its statement said. Sargento decided to monitor the conversation, resisting the urge to whey in publicly, an official

told us. It quietly milked its Packers contacts, including urging the team's dietician to rethink his counsel to Rodgers. As of press time, the story had cheesed it out of the news cycle.

2. News Bits: Sometimes a quick, transparent response takes a brand only so far. In March tennis star **Maria Sharapova** told the media she'd failed a drug test due to her taking Mildronate, a heart medication whose active ingredient meldonium had been placed on the sport's prohibited list Jan 1 (*PRN*, March 14). Sharapova claimed she hadn't known meldonium was proscribed. In May, the **International Tennis Federation** agreed that her violation was unintentional, yet June 8 it slapped Sharapova with a two-year suspension from tennis. It said her prompt admission of guilt reduced the penalty from four years. The 29-year-old will appeal. "I cannot accept an unfairly harsh two-year suspension," Sharapova wrote on her **Facebook** page.

3. Bye-bye Buy Buttons? A concept we heard often during the *PR News Digital PR Conference* June 6-8 in Miami Beach was that communicators should pay attention to the entire customer journey, not just the purchase decision. A report from **GlobalWebIndex** bears that out. It says millennials are forgoing social's buy buttons, yet they're avidly researching brands on social prior to purchase. Globally, 40% of consumers 16 to 24 use social media to research products; 30% of the general population use social to research before purchasing. Just 1% of all e-commerce orders in 2015 were tied directly to social media, e-commerce software maker **Custora** says.

4. People: **Aetna** named **Kathryn Metcalfe** CCO, replacing **Tom Sanford**, who'd left the company. Metcalfe was **Deloitte's** CCO since Nov 2011 and was with **Pfizer** and **Novartis Pharmaceuticals** previously. The former **Cohn & Wolfe** CEO joins Aetna during its \$37 billion acquisition of **Humana**. – **Qorvis MSLGROUP** lured **Edelman** and **Ogilvy** vet **Joshua Gardner** to strengthen its sustainability and social purpose team. The new VP also will focus on corporate communications. – **DeVries Global** promoted 10-year veteran **Ivette Sanz Osso** to COO from EVP, global practices. – **Mark Kern** is rejoining **Crown Media** in the newly created role of SVP, corporate communications & media relations, charged with publicizing the **Hallmark** cable TV channels. Previously he'd been with **Discovery** and **Fox Broadcasting**. – We're sad **Shareable** CMO **Tracy David** stepped down June 7. She helped the social measurement firm from startup to today's 200+ employees. We know she'll be back soon. – **The Connect Group** named food PR pro **Gennifer Horowitz** to lead its brand strategy and consulting practice. Horowitz joins from **Porter Novelli**. Connect also promoted culinary expert **Cassandra Pallas** to VP, talent management. – Good food and drink, plus live jazz made for a fun evening June 8 as **APCO Worldwide** debuted its swanky, new, high-tech HQ on Pennsylvania Ave. in D.C., a stone's throw from the White House. – Executive search firm **PR Talent** named former **Weber Shandwick** exec **Dan Lee** as VP to launch its Seattle office. PRT says PR salaries in Seattle are on par with those in Chicago, and slightly lower than NY and San Fran. See its salary survey at: <http://prtalent.com/seattle-pr-salaries/> ■

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