



THE HOLMES REPORT 2017

The Best Agencies, Campaigns, Influencers and Stories of the Year



THE HOLMES REPORT

“Proving and improving the value of public relations”

Paul Holmes

The Holmes Group is dedicated to proving and improving the value of public relations, by providing insight, knowledge and recognition to public relations professionals.

The Holmes Group was founded in 2000 by Paul Holmes, publisher and CEO, who has more than two decades of experience writing about and evaluating the public relations

Holmes Report’s delivers — not only the most sophisticated reporting and analysis on PR trends and issues — but also the industry’s most sought-after awards and events around the world.

Paul Holmes
Founder & Chair
pholmes@holmesreport.com

Arun Sudhaman
CEO & Editor-in-Chief
+852 96187774
arun@holmesreport.com

Aarti Shah
Head of Strategic Partnerships
& Operations
+1 510 808 5855
aarti@holmesreport.com

Diana Marszalek
Senior Reporter (New York)
+1 914 450 3462
diana@holmesreport.com

Celeste Picco
Administrative
+1 212 333 2300
cpicco@holmesreport.com

Patrick Drury
Event Manager
+1 732 299 1847
pdrury@holmesreport.com

Annabel Davis
+44 (0) 203 238 2048
adavis@holmesreport.com

North America
The Holmes Group
271 West 47th Street
Suite 23-A
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 333 2300

Europe
The Holmes Group
6 Sussex Mews West
W2 2SE
United Kingdom
+44 (0)203 238 2048

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Contents

Foreword by Paul Holmes	4
2017 Agencies of the Year - Global	6
2017 Agencies of the Year - North America	23
2017 Agencies of the Year - EMEA	55
2017 Agencies of the Year - Asia-Pacific	95
The Global SABRE Awards	119
The SABRE Awards North America	121
The IN2 SABRE Awards North America	124
The SABRE Awards EMEA	127
The IN2 SABRE Awards EMEA	131
The SABRE Awards Asia-Pacific	133
The IN2 SABRE Awards Asia-Pacific	136
The SABRE Awards South Asia	138
The SABRE Awards Latin America	140
The SABRE Awards Africa	142
2017 Global Creative Index	145
The Influence 100	149
The Influence 100 Insights	155
The Crossover Stars	168
The Rising Stars	170
The Innovator 25 - North America	172
The Innovator 25 - EMEA	175
The Innovator 25 - Asia-Pacific	178
Global Top 250 PR Firms	181
The Events	190



Foreword by Paul Holmes

The public relations industry found itself at the center of a storm in 2017, a year that saw geopolitical chaos (from the election of Donald Trump to Brexit, from increased tension on the Korean peninsula to new turmoil in the Middle East); a crisis of confidence in the media (from the manipulation of social media by foreign governments to ubiquitous claims that traditional media were producing “fake news”); and increased competition in the communications business (with ad agencies and digital specialists expanding into the public relations realm).

The resulting turmoil clearly took its toll on publicly-traded public relations businesses. The major holding companies, which grew by 3.8% in 2016, saw that growth stall in 2017-while the fourth quarter results have not yet been announced, it is doubtful whether the largest holding company agencies will contribute anything at all to industry growth this year. And while one would expect the independent sector to sustain its recent ability to outperform publicly-traded agencies, it's unlikely that smaller firms can make up for the decline at the top.

And yet, all of this is happening at a time when demand for public relations should be at an all-time high. The rise of social media has given rise to new reputational challenges: damaging stories-think back to United Airlines and Pepsi at the start of the year-create an immediate and potentially overwhelming online backlash. The crisis of confidence in major institutions clearly extends to corporations (a trend likely to accelerate next year as the fundamental iniquity of the US corporate tax cuts become reality) and means that trust is more valuable than ever.

The question must then be asked, whether public relations is equipped to handle these new challenges, to respond in real-time to reputational crises, to build trust based on transparency and authenticity, to tell the kind of brand stories that build genuine engagement with consumers. And the answer, it seems, is no-or at least not yet. The industry is struggling to keep up with the pace of change. The larger agencies in particular are challenged by the need for rapid transformation. And as long as many clients continue to see PR as primarily

about media relations, opportunities for growth will be limited.

This is a critical inflection point for our industry, but the way forward can be found in the profession's past-it's earliest days, when public relations really was about building relationships between an organization and its public, and not about generating news coverage. Because relationships are critical to business success today, and the ability to build, nurture, protect and leverage stakeholder relationships ought to be a unique advantage for PR as it competes for budget share with other adjacent disciplines.

There are other issues-not particularly new issues-that need to be addressed: increased gender and ethnic diversity, enhanced metrics, improved ethical performance (particularly in light of this year's Bell Pottinger scandal), and new skill sets (from data and analytics to visual storytelling and content creation). But at the end of the day, the focus on relationships will be key to see the industry bounce back in 2018 and beyond.



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2017 Global PR Agencies of the Year

The 2017 Global PR Agencies of the Year are the result of an exhaustive research process involving more than 400 submissions and face-to-face meetings with the best PR firms across North America, EMEA and Asia-Pacific.

The winners were announced at the 2017 Global SABRE Awards, which took place at the PRovoke17 Global PR Summit in Miami on 25 October.

Global PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

WEBER SHANDWICK (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

There's an impressive restlessness about Weber Shandwick, despite the fact that the world's second largest public relations firm continues to outperform all of its immediate rivals in terms of growth—up 6.5% last year to \$825 million (the strongest growth among the top 8). An evolving organizational structure builds on the firm's existing strengths with the creation of internal “value-based communities” dedicated to client experience, insights, integrated media and content, while reinforcing a collaborative culture that is clearly one of the firm's major competitive advantages. And, lest we forget, the agency this became the first to sweep our regional Agency of the Year honors this year in North America, EMEA and Asia-Pacific.

North America fees were up 11% last year, with 7% organic growth supplemented by the ReviveHealth acquisition, with new business from Chevrolet, Kellogg's, the Los Angeles 2024 Olympic bid, Monsanto, Takeda,

and Unicef, while clients such as Bayer, Ericsson, GSK, Mastercard and Verizon all grew—Weber Shandwick now works for almost half of the Fortune 100.

EMEA revenues were up by close to 7% (on top of 11% growth the previous year) to around \$125 million. New business came from Bayer, Boehringer Ingelheim, British Gas, Ericsson, Forever 21, HSBC, MasterCard, Pearson, Philips, Qualcomm, UNICEF, Unilever, and Virgin Atlantic. The flagship UK operation turned in solid growth; the Middle East and Africa both continued their impressive expansion; and six markets reported double-digit growth, including Spain, for the second consecutive year.

And in Asia it is easy to forget that just a decade ago the firm's presence often registered as less than the sum of its parts. Since then a cohesive regional strategy has added considerable geographic breadth and specialist depth across the region, with the agency tripling in size over the past seven years, to around \$110m in fee income after another

double-digit return in 2016. Much of that is the by-product of a stable leadership team and impressive growth in both multimarket accounts and Asia-based clients. — PH/AS

Finalists

COHN & WOLFE (WPP)

Global growth of 12% last year cemented Cohn & Wolfe as the best performing of the WPP-owned agencies, and the fastest-growing PR firm in the world's top 12, with every region making a contribution. The most interesting development, though, is an effort to go beyond “integration” to use the full range of paid, earned, shared and owned channels in order to create what Imperato calls an “immersive brand experience.”

The US led the way, up 15% thanks to a number of major global assignments from clients such as Barclaycard, Bayer, and Colgate. New business came from Applebees, Newell Brands, Novo Nordisk, 20th Century Fox, and a host of others. Just as impressive, the majority of C&W's assignments are now

genuinely integrated—typically traditional PR blended with digital, social, and a heavy dose of experiential; less than 10% of the business four years ago, integrated now accounts for almost three-quarters.

In EMEA, the firm was our Creative Consultancy of the Year as it brought its “Dig Deeper Imagine More” mantra to life in ways that emphasize just how different C&W is today compared to five years ago, and compared to most of its peers. The digital team in EMEA has expanded from 23 to 56 over the past two years, with capabilities in social analytics, community management, influencer marketing, film production, paid media, and mobile. As a result, the growth story is impressive: across EMEA, the firm has grown by 35% over the past five years (12% last year), with the UK doubling in size over the past five years.

And in Asia, after a series of acquisitions in Southeast Asia, Greater China and India, it now has impressive regional scale and more stability following the arrival of former Burson-Marsteller executive Matt Stafford to lead the region last year. Growth of 11% in 2016 took Cohn & Wolfe to around \$22m in regional revenue—still smaller than many of its peers but clearly heading in the right direction. — PH/AS

EDELMAN (DJE HOLDINGS)

Such is the blazing pace set by Edelman—still the world’s largest public relations agency—over the past decade that a year in which its financial results came in around the peer group average indicated a “transition” year, a shift to broader, more integrated work as Edelman seeks to develop its paid capabilities and build on its long-time leadership in digital.

US growth was a solid 2.3%, as Edelman came out on top in a Hewlett-Packard consolidation; picked up additional agency-of-

record assignments from KFC, PayPal, and the American Optometric Association; digital work from the Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau and Bush Brothers & Company; and played a key advisory role at Wells Fargo as the financial services company went through a high-profile client. But the real story was the growth from 33 of the firm’s top 50 clients and industry leading creativity—the firm won Best in Show at each of the last two North American SABRE competitions.

Edelman picked up Digital Consultancy of the Year honors in EMEA, the payoff from a pioneering approach that saw it invest heavily in social media and community building well ahead of the curve. Much of the firm’s best work reflects both the integrated mindset and the blend of capabilities, often brought to life by its Swedish Deportivo unit. And while Edelman’s growth dipped across Europe, digital proved to be a bright spot, driving expansion in the UK, Germany (+20%), France, Italy (+20%) and Spain.

And while Edelman’s Asia-Pacific revenues only grew 1% during its 2017 fiscal year, the regional offering remains one of the most dynamic in the region, encompassing considerable geographic breadth (1,340 employees across 11 markets) along with service depth in such areas as digital, research and creative. As a result, it is forecasting 10% expansion for the current fiscal year based on approach that brings earned media ideas to life across the full spectrum of marketing communications. — PH/AS

GOLIN (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

It has been almost six years since Golin introduced its revolutionary g4 model, which restructured the agency into communities of strategists, creators, connectors, and catalysts, and there is no sign that the momentum generated by that move is diminishing, with global growth of close to 8% setting the

pace among the world’s top 10, and a new leadership team: Jonathan Hughes, Matt Neale and Gary Rudnick sharing the CEO role.

In the US, last year saw growth in the mid-single digits, strategists, with new business from Abbott (fostering dialog on infant feeding), Atos (Olympic sponsorship), California Department of Public Health (tobacco control), Cancer Treatment Centers of America (corporate reputation), ConAgra (social engagement), Facebook Messenger, Hyatt Hotels (for multiple brands), Koch Industries (reputation management), J&J’s Motrin, and more.

Firmly established as one of this era’s iconic UK PR firms—after consecutive UK Consultancy of the Year honors in 2013 and 2014—Golin’s London office now resembles a high-performance Formula One car, with momentum assured after a seamless leadership transition and another year of double-digit growth, with a 150-strong team combining serious consumer and corporate heft with some excellent digital and social media capabilities. The remainder of Europe may not quite have reached that level, but it is developing in both scale and quality.

And while the Golin brand has been present in Asia for the better part of two decades, it is only in recent years that the agency has made credible strides in turning itself from a federation of unrelated local offices into a cohesive network that aspires to the same kind of performance demonstrated by Golin’s operations in Western markets. The G4 model has now been deployed across all Asia-Pacific offices, which includes owned operations in Hong Kong, Singapore, China (bolstered by the acquisition of Magic Group), India and Taiwan, up around 9% in 2016 to an estimated \$20m in revenue. — PH/AS

KETCHUM (OMNICOM GROUP)

Ketchum grew by 6% last year, and once again ranked in the top five in our Global Creative Index, reinforcing its status as the flagship PR agency of the Omnicom group.

In the US, Ketchum is still generating more SABRE Award nominees than any other brand, and the firm has consistently ranked as one of the two or three most creative large agencies in North America. In 2016 the business performance matched the quality of the work, with revenue growth in the mid-single digits—with the digital business growing at four or five times that pace. A stellar new business record in 2016 included

assignments from FC Barcelona, Corona, Macy's, Philips Lighting, Samsung, 7-Eleven, Tostitos, and Zespri, while the firm continues to work for longstanding clients such as Clorox (35 years), IBM and Procter & Gamble (20 years each).

In EMEA, the Benelux and Russian operations earned Consultancy of the Year nominations, as did the firm's digital capabilities, which have not always punched at the same weight. The firm's Storyworks unit in London delivers real-time content marketing as sophisticated as anything in the market and the firm's sports and entertainment practice has also emerged since launching in London

in 2014, developing a strong influencer marketing capability.

Meanwhile, in Asia-Pacific — long considered the weakest of Ketchum's three regions — a quiet transformation appears to be underway, led by a Singapore operation that now ranks as one of the best in the city, and supplemented by existing strength in China and India. In particular, there has been credible investment to build Ketchum's digital offering across the region, resulting in standout work for P&G and others, along with elevated capabilities in research, planning and analytics. — PH/AS

Global Consumer PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

ZENO (GLOBAL, DJE HOLDINGS)

When Barby Siegel took the helm at Zeno seven years ago, the firm had 55 people, \$10 million in fee income, an almost exclusive focus on consumer, and was viewed by the marketplace as “Edelman's conflict agency.” Today, after seven years of double-digit growth, Zeno has 400 people around the world, fees of close to \$60 million, a balanced portfolio of consumer, corporate, health and tech business, and a global footprint (enhanced by last year the acquisition of UK agency 3 Monkeys).

The US operation, which still makes up more than half the headcount, grew by 23% last year to a little over \$42 million, with new business coming from Pizza Hut, Easterseals, Britax, Air Asia, Microsoft Bing, Serta, Ubiquity and more. They join a roster that includes Kia Motors (a client for 13 years); Turtle Wax (10 years), AstraZeneca and Starbucks (seven years), and Bausch + Lomb (six).

But it's the work that really impresses, from helping Starbucks defend itself against charges that it was part of the “war on Christmas” to

supporting Spin Master's launch of toy sensation Hatchimals to a data-driven micro-targeted marketing campaign for Bernzomatic that really drove sales. The thought leadership isn't bad either, particularly the firm's Human Project, a multi-generational study that helps brands forge deeper connections with consumers. — PH

Finalists

ELEVEN (AUSTRALIA/TBWA)

Last year's Australasian Consultancy of the Year continues its reign as one of the most creative agencies in one of the world's most creative PR regions. Indeed, Eleven actually managed to take things up a notch in 2016 and 2017, winning every single one its pitches, including major consumer accounts such as McDonald's Australia, Campari Group, Crown Resorts and David Jones.

All of that helped power revenue, profits and headcount to record levels, with revenue and profit more than doubling. The firm retains a core belief in the power of public relations to drive conversations and cultural relevance, and continues to develop

cutting-edge products and campaigns to support this vision, in particular the Disruption Live methodology of insights mining, open briefing and audience planning that has helped return some tremendous work for Lastminute.com.au, ANZ and MJ Bale. The agency also launched a Back\slash cultural capability that focuses on Instagram and daily video, powered by culture spotters from the broader TBWA global network.

Other new business included Australia Turf Club, Carousell, Schweppes and Lastminute, joining a client roster that features Tourism New Zealand, MJ Bale, Gatorade, ANZ, Philips and Krispy Kreme.

Roberto Pace has served as MD of Australia since mid-2015, helping to renew the firm's reputation for innovation, alongside new Melbourne-based MD Fee Townshend and GM Fiona Milliken. There is a strong focus on training and development, to immerse staff in relevant cultural trends, while a trainer was hired to shape bespoke programmes for individual staffers.

All of that paid off with some inspiring work. Lastminute.com.au's

‘Cards of Spontaneity’ gamified the travel experience via a bespoke card game and generated a significant uplift in web traffic. ANZ’s #HoldTight, meanwhile, won two Bronze Lions at Cannes, designing a custom wearable tech wristband to promote inclusion and diversity. — AS

M BOOTH (US, NEXT15)

The 2016 North American Agency of the Year, M Booth kept the momentum going in 2016, picking up new business from a host of blue-chip clients—General Motors (for Buick/GMC), Johnson & Johnson (for its sponsorship of Global Citizen), The Coca-Cola Company (Honest Tea), Estee Lauder, Sam Adams, Tinder, Priceline, Etsy—on the way to another year of impressive growth, with fees up 50% over the past two years.

The firm is still best known for its work in the consumer space (food and drink, travel and tourism are particular strengths), including its Made@MBooth design and content creation studio—with animators, videographers and others creating digital product, VR and 360 video—and its Micro-Tribes research, an important piece of thought leadership. But the corporate practice was the fastest-growing last year, with work for American Express expanding to include employee engagement, a three-year Google relationship growing to include education issues and cloud computing, a repositioning of Tinder (from hook-up app to a brand about forming real-world connections), and the issues-heavy work for Beyond Meat.

Other highlights of the work in 2016 included breast cancer awareness work for Weight Watchers, the launch of noosa yogurt, influencer work for Boston Beer, and a campaign that connected Carnival Cruises with

singer Carrie Underwood and military families for a unique event.

The firm has also been adding talent, with FleishmanHillard veteran Nancy Seliger joining as executive VP, and new senior VPs Scott Varland (leading innovation) and Michelle Overall (entertainment and marketing partnerships) joining founder Margi Booth, CEO Dale Bornstein, chief creative officer Adrianna Giuliani Bevilaqua, and insights and planning chief Bonnie Ulman. — PH

MARINA MAHER COMMUNICATIONS (US, OMNICOM)

There are some things Marina Maher’s firm has always done well: it always viewed its role in terms of brand-building rather than product publicity and emphasized engagement over coverage. And there are some things that it has learned to do more recently, staying ahead of the changes roiling the PR industry: MMC has an impressive commitment to data and analytics, and to integrating digital and social tools, content creation, and brand activation in service of its clients’ marketing objectives — and, rather than resting on its many laurels, took the opportunity last year to reorganize its offering into four groups: brand and business leadership; strategy and insights; content, engagement and influence, creative ideation and execution.

From a single office in New York (albeit supplemented these days through partnerships with Omnicom global sister agencies), MMC manages efforts for global giants such as P&G, Johnson & Johnson, Celgene, Eisai, Galderma, Bayer and Merck, as well as for new clients such as Coty, Glenmark, Happy Family Brands, and Braun Grooming.

The scope of the firm’s consumer work remains highly impressive, netting it plenty of metal at awards shows, including the In2 SABRE competition, where its work for Covergirl, Kotex and Head &

Shoulders all won acclaim from judges, while its Merck for Mothers work also stands out. That helps to explain how MMC grew more than 20% last year, bolstered by a number of new hires in key strategic growth areas including creative, digital, healthcare, corporate and data analytics.

MMC’s understanding of consumer work, underpinned by an industry-leading approach to insight and creativity, also extends to corporate work — in recognition of the ways that brand marketing work now requires a sophisticated understanding of corporate reputation. And there has been considerable innovation in terms of MMC’s product offering, covering such areas as social engagement, influencer ‘acceleration’, ‘moments-based marketing’ and trend analysis — all pointing to an agency that is at the top of its game, regularly outperforming larger global networks when it comes to coveted marketing assignments, and often producing work that delivers ROI and emotional resonance.

While the new structure means that there are a number of new titles, the senior leadership team remains settled. The firm continues to be led by founder and CEO Marina Maher; supported by chief integration officer Diana Littman, executive director Nancy Lowman LaBadie; chief engagement officer Susan Bean; ECD Ted Sabarese; chief strategy officer Joydeep Dey; and, David Richeson, chief of digital innovation and influence.

Great work included Covergirl’s Star Wars product integration; real-time marketing for Head & Shoulders; work to help Merck for Mothers address maternal mortality; and a great new digital campaign for Acuvue. — AS/PH

W (UK/ASIA, INDEPENDENT)

In the UK market that often appears to prize creativity above all else,

former Freuds executive Warren Johnson has stolen a march on many of his consumer rivals by demonstrating the kind of hard-nosed business acumen that has led his firm to £5.8m in eight years, expanding by an eye-catching 44% in 2016 alone. Increasingly acquisitive after buying two small UK shops, it is tempting to think that W is just about the money — which would be unfair, given the firm’s ability to deliver creative work that is as good as anything on the market, including some strong digital and influencer marketing activity and a nascent ability to blend consumer marketing with corporate positioning.

For example, an ice-cream-powered direct-action campaign for Ben &

Jerry’s persuaded more than 5,000 voters join the electoral roll in time for the London Mayoral election, while a Lynx effort took suicide from taboo to national talking point. There were also comedy brand films for tech brand Relish, and the Millennials First campaign for Marmite. Not that the commercial performance should be overlooked, of course. In 2016, the firm continued its stellar new business record, adding major assignments from Major League Baseball, Carabao, Laurent Perrier, WeWork, Shortlist Media, AB Foods, Argos, Camden Town Brewery, Cancer Research UK and MoneySuperMarket to a client roster that already features Unilever (Lynx, PG Tips, Ben & Jerry’s and Marmite),

Levi’s, Evening Standard, Princess Yachts, V Festival and Kopparberg.

In Asia, meanwhile, W has grown to a team of 12, with turnover tripling in 2016. More importantly, the firm has displayed a penchant for working collaboratively with small brands in a bid to innovate beyond the region’s tradition PR offerings. That has helped it net business from bigger brands too, including Princess Yachts, Moet Hennessy Diageo, Bawah Island, Park Hotel Group, Happn, PS Cafe, Ce La Vi, Festival Asia and Marc Jacobs Beauty. And it helps explain the firm’s SABRE-winning ‘Paper Lantern’ campaign for unknown craft distiller Pozible, which helped spur not only heightened awareness but \$40k in sales in a month. — AS

Global Corporate/Financial Agencies of the Year

Winner

JOELE FRANK (US, INDEPENDENT)

It was no surprise to see that Joele Frank’s firm was number two in the US in terms of the number of financial transactions worked last year (and number one in terms of deal value). After all, Joele Frank Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher has been topping those charts for a while. It was a little more surprising to see the firm come in fourth on mergermarket’s global table (second in value), because it’s one of only a couple of major players without formal international links. Clearly, that’s no disadvantage—in fact, its ability to work with multiple global partners may be an advantage.

The firm represented Monsanto in its \$65.7 billion sale to Bayer; Agrium and PotashCorp in their merger-of-equals; CenturyLink in its \$33.5 billion acquisition of Level 3 Communications; Enbridge in its \$28.0B merger with Spectra Energy; as well as deals for Symantec and Salesforce. But M&A is only part of the story at the firm, which has been a leader in investor activism,

bankruptcies and restructurings, and in 2016 developed a new capability dedicated to helping companies deal with the reputation threat posed by cybersecurity breaches.

An expert when it comes to helping companies play defense in activist battles, the firm supported Arconic against Elliott Management; Buffalo Wild Wings against Marcato Capital; Chipotle Mexican Grill against Pershing Square; iRobot against Red Mountain Capital; and The Williams Companies against Corvex Management. It also counseled Arch Coal on its successful emergence from Chapter 11; Caesars Entertainment on its complex, contested Chapter 11 reorganization; and CHC Group on the successful confirmation of its plan of reorganization.

The firm also continues to add blue-chips clients such as Chinese giant Anbang Group Holdings, Buffalo Wild Wings, Chipotle, FMC Technologies, Gannett and Yahoo! to a client roster that includes the likes of American Airlines, General Electric, Johnson & Johnson, Merck,

Monsanto, and Procter & Gamble. — PH

Finalists

INSTINCTIF (GLOBAL, VITRUVIAN PARTNERS)

Three years after rebranding and repositioning as a international business communications consultancy, Instinctif Partners is effectively unrecognisable from the firm once known as College Hill. That is probably for the best, because Instinctif today is a multi-specialist consultancy with significant depth in capital markets, corporate and public policy, bolstered by considerable breadth across content, creative, research and insights. And much of the firm’s work involves multiple practice areas, reflecting an interconnected approach that now accounts for 29% of its revenue, up from 19% in 2015.

Aiding that approach are internal initiatives which celebrate collaboration, part of a substantial cultural effort which saw the firm’s 386 employees co-create a new set of values. Staff retention and client

retention have both improved considerably, and these days Instinctif looks like an agency that takes its internal outcomes as seriously as its external results.

Those results remain in very good shape, with revenues up slightly to £34m, with the UK driving much of the firm's global growth, which included an 18% uptick in Continental Europe. Unsurprisingly, given its own positioning, Instinctif has carved out a credible niche working for challenger brands, including Purple Bricks, World First, Secret Sales, graze.com and Made.com. There was also new business last year from Majestic Wines, Biffa, UK Power Networks, Redrow, University of Portsmouth, Shepherd Neame and Eve Mattresses, joining an existing roster that already features eBay, Jupiter Asset Management, AGCO, Thomson Reuters, Aviva and Cushman and Wakefield.

Meanwhile, the best of the firm's work demonstrates its approach to disrupting the traditional corporate PR template. For its largest client eBay, that involves re-engaging the company's global community around a new global mission. For Aviva, that means work to establish its brand with multiple customer demographics. And for graze, made.com, Purple Bricks and Eve Mattresses, that featured a range of communications strategies that improved the bottomline. — AS

LDWW (US, INDEPENDENT)

Helping Carnival Cruises introduce the first US cruise to Cuba in four decades; coordinating a nationally televised discussion on the issues of sexual assault and campus violence; helping a client manage a crisis situation in Yemen; supporting a national campaign encouraging people to talk openly and honestly about mental health; producing more than 100 pieces of content to promote an athletic scholarship. That would have been a bumper year for

many large agencies—for a four-year-old firm with a team of 15, it was remarkable.

Perhaps that's because LDWW is headquartered in Dallas, where the competition from national agencies or local specialists is limited—despite the fact that Texas is home to more Fortune 500 headquarters than any state except New York. Perhaps it's the ability to deliver creative consumer campaigns and strategic corporate and crisis counsel, as well as content creation capabilities.

Or perhaps it's because founder Ken Luce has decades of experience in senior roles with Weber Shandwick and Hill+Knowlton, and has assembled a senior team—Chris Craddock, Mike Flanagan, Ken Maxwell, Jody Venturoni—with impressive credentials.

In any event, LDWW now has fee income of around \$6.5 million and a client list that includes Bell Helicopter, Carnival Cruises, GameStop, Omni Hotels and is making a name for itself with 19 national awards last year—making it one of the top four firms on our Creative Index weighted for headcount. — PH

PROSEK (US, INDEPENDENT)

Another of the growing cadre of midsize players that are outperforming the overall market, the 25-year-old Prosek Partners benefits from in-depth knowledge of the financial and professional service sectors, bringing a broad range of services and skills from an entrepreneurial culture that is led by CEO Jennifer Prosek. In 2016, fees grew by an eye-catching 29% to \$31.5m, powered by new business from Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Glenview, Blackstone, EY, Prudential and Nuveen, and by the acquisition of LA's Muirfield Partners to extend geographical reach and strengthen

M&A and crisis communications capabilities.

That deal resulted in Mickey Mandelbaum joining the agency as partner, with the hire of partner Andy Merrill also helping to expand Prosek's already strong financial services offering into transactions communications, issues and crisis management services. Indeed, Prosek has always prided itself as functioning as something of an 'outsourced marketing department' for its key clients, illustrated well by work for EY (an 'extreme makeover' of its annual TAS report) and PGIM (successful reputation building for Prudential Financial's \$1tn investment management business). — PH

SPRG (ASIA-PACIFIC, INDEPENDENT)

It is now 22 years since Richard Tsang launched Strategic Public Relations Group in Hong Kong, and while it has expanded into a network of 10 offices across Asia and established capabilities in consumer marketing and corporate social responsibility, it remains best known as a market leader in the financial communications space in what remains one of the world's most dynamic business centers: consistently ranking among the region's top 20 M&A advisors and dominating the IPO business, with 10 new listings in 2016 (taking it past the 350 mark).

Longtime clients include Fitbit, Google, H3C, Hong Kong Deposit Protection Board, Hershey, Lenovo, Microsoft, Melco, P&G and UC Rusal, and there was new business over the past year from the likes of ABM AMRO Bank Hong Kong, Asiaray Media Group, Fox Networks, GuocoLand, Land Transport Authority, Lee Tung Avenue, Merck, Nippon, Puma, World Ventures. In terms of capabilities, SPRG made an acquisition to expand its public affairs offering, delivered environmental and social governance reports for several clients, and has

continued to expand its digital and social expertise.

The firm now has 300 employees across Asia, generating fee income in excess of \$22 million, making it one of the largest independents in the firm—and perhaps the Asia-based agency with a geographic network—

there are offices in Hong Kong, China (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou), Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia—that can offer coverage to rival the western multinationals. It continues to differentiate itself by its focus on a culture where local staff can flourish (15 members of the management

team have been with SPRG for 15 years or more, 15% of the 300 staff have been with the firm for a decade) and on a philosophy of giving back to the community that has seen the agency reap numerous awards for its own corporate social responsibility initiatives. — PH

Global Creative PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

MULLENLOWE (US/IPG)

Since 2015, MullenLowe has consistently delivered Best in Show caliber work in both the Gold and Innovation SABRE Awards. Its signature work for American Greetings — “World’s Toughest Job” — clearly wasn’t a flash-in-the-pan, not that there should have been any doubt.

For example, its JetBlue FlyBabies campaign won the Brand Video category at the Innovation SABRE Awards earlier this year while also making the Best in Show shortlist. “This changes my perception of babies crying on flights and I’ll think of this every time I hear one now” is what one of the judges said. That’s exactly what this campaign intended. Also consider MullenLowe’s follow-up work with American Greeting. The campaign disrupted SXSW by going totally analog at a digital festival as a way to combat the notion that greeting cards are dead. The “Give Dad Nothing” work with Century 21 allowed people to literally give their dads “nothing” on Father’s Day with a parcel of Nothing, Arizona — an uninhabited ghost town about 120 miles from Phoenix.

Over the past year, the firm has bundled more of its services within the larger MullenLowe brand adding new dimensions like CEM/CRM, shopper marketing, SEO and experiential to its PR work. Managing partner Sheila Leyne has overseen the PR group for more than 20 years with a leadership bench that includes

SVPs Tony Labriola, Kelly Burke and Jaclyn Ruelle.

Revenues grew by 18% in 2016, making this the sixth consecutive year of double-digit growth (the agency as a whole has grown more than 100% over the past six years). In addition to American Greetings and JetBlue, clients include Capital One, Century 21 Real Estate, Naked Juice and Tropicana Probiotics, Unilever (new), Country Crock (new) and Atrium Innovations (new).

MullenLowe has again and again proven itself reliable for creating buzzworthy pop culture moments that actually break through. — AaS

Finalists

FAKTOR3 (GERMANY/INDEPENDENT)

Started with three entrepreneurs in 1995 who formed the agency to launch AOL, Faktor3 has grown to 190 employees with 85 clients — and has continued to thrive despite the faltering of its first client. Not only that, the firm has transformed from a media relations shop to employing editors, analysts, engineers, motion designers on top of communications consultants. The firm’s headway towards digitalisation also includes its approach “Content Relations” which is “a permanent cycle of development and distribution of content, as well as the fostering of genuine, sustainable relations.”

The firm partnered with Microsoft to tell its story on the future of work, that told a four-part story through #worklifeflow and other thought-

leadership. The team also launched LogiTech’s Jaybird wearables in Germany to many journalists and influencers.

Fees are up more than 22% to €15.3m fueled by clients like Microsoft, Sopra Steria Consulting (new), Samsung Electronics, Logitech, Tourism Australia, Audi, Porsche, Adobe, eBay, GroupM, among others. Founders Sabine Richter and Stefan Schrapf run the agency. — AaS

MARCO DE COMUNICACION (SPAIN/INDEPENDENT)

When fast-growing Spanish agency Marco de Comunicación beat out a number of multinational agencies—as well as independent firms from across Europe—to handle communications for COP22, the UN Climate Change Summit in Marrakech, it was vindication of founder Didier Lagae’s aggressive growth strategy over the past couple of years, which has seen the firm double-down on its expertise in Africa and its ability to deliver (often through its affiliation with MSLGroup) international reach. For COP22, MdC engaged more than 200 journalists from all over Africa in a set of unprecedented press trips and generated more than 44,000 news pieces globally, underscoring the event’s key messages.

With offices in Madrid, Barcelona, Lisbon, Paris, Casablanca and Miami and a team of close to 100 professionals, MdC offers a full range of services including publicity, events, audiovisual and design, as

well as online communications, public affairs (including a new EU affairs offer), social media, and influencer campaigns. It has been growing by about 25% a year over the past three years, with 28% growth in 2016 thanks to new assignments from COP22, the Union for the Mediterranean, Kaiserwetter, World Water Council, SMC, the International Monetary Fund, Ivanhoe, Springfield, Idealo and Herbalife, and continuing assignments for Netflix (which helped drive the firm's expansion into the Portuguese market), Unilever, Etihad Airways, Springfield (Cortefiel Group), Conforama, Mexican Tourism Board, and AFEVI / Friends of Glass.

MdC was a pioneer in digital and social in the Iberian region, and quickly realized that new media knew no geographic boundaries. As a result, the firm has built a team multilingual consultants from 17 different nationalities. It has also launched a dedicated digital marketing agency, Influencia. And last year it introduced another innovation, an "experience room" located in Madrid's barrio Salamanca that serves as a showcase for consumer clients. — PH

UNITY MARKETING GROUP (UK/INDEPENDENT)

The sheer volume awards is almost certainly what strikes more Unity observers as most remarkable. The UK firm ranked number in our Global Creative Index weighted by headcount, making it pound-for-pound the world's second-most creative PR firm for the second year in a row. That might have left Unity feeling a little miffed after ranking first in 2016, but the good news is they were overtaken by sister firm Tin Man, in which they hold an ownership stake under the Unity Marketing Group.

For Unity, last year's haul included one Global SABRE, four EMEA region SABREs, and six In2 SABREs, which recognize excellence in insight and innovation. The latter wins point to

something that's even more impressive than the numbers: Unity specializes in creativity with a purpose and a process. Its mission is "to increase human happiness," which might sound like a lofty (even pretentious) goal for a PR firm, if founders Gerry Hopkinson and Nik Govier did not clearly believe it so strongly and bring it to life in both the agency culture and the work. And all of the big ideas are driven by a suite of strategic tools such as Brandcestry, a brand planning process that draws on clients' heritage, and CommUnity, an approach for planning and launching CSR strategy.

Launched in 2013, meanwhile, Mandy Sharp's Tin Man differs from other boutique firms by bringing a considerably stronger focus on planning and creativity, along with a level of business savvy that has seen it achieve profitability since year one. As the name suggests, the firm's positioning revolves around creating 'campaigns with heart', and the volume and variety of its award nominations and wins over the past couple of years suggests that it has been able to bring a level of emotional resonance that many PR firms would struggle to match. That may also be because Tin Man has always been just as comfortable declining clients as it is winning bigger briefs such as Monarch Airlines, Justgiving, William Grant, Cartoon Network, ITV and Trainline. — PH/AS

VERITAS (CANADA/MDC PARTNERS)

Originally established in 1993 as a healthcare communications specialist, Veritas has diversified over the years and today focuses on 'influencing the influencers,' drawing on a 'custom convergence' model that brings together cross-functional teams and multichannel solutions to ensure the appropriate solution for a range of complex challenges. Based in Toronto, Veritas has built its reputation by staying ahead of the

increasingly complex and changing media universe, an approach that is clearly paying off if the firm's stellar growth and campaign work is any guide.

Now numbering 65 people across offices in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, Veritas grew its fee income by 12% in 2016 to US\$8.3m, powered by new business from Audible, Kijiji, General Mills, Bayer, Kimberly-Clark, Revlon, Collegium Pharmaceuticals, Tangerine, Metro/FoodBasics and Volkswagen. They join a client roster that already includes Microsoft, CBC, Subway, Labatt, Church and Dwight, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, and other brands from Kimberly Clark and Bayer.

The new business haul is impressive enough, but under president/CEO Krista Webster, it is Veritas' development into a credible creative contender that is particularly worthy of recognition. Veritas' 'Bring Back the Bees' work for Honey Nut Cheerios represents an ideal example of this approach, blending word-of-mouth and influencer marketing to deliver real business results and win numerous awards. The firm's workplace culture, via the ROWE (Results-Oriented Work Environment) concept, also stands out, as does its commitment to influencer research, via its proprietary Influencer Impact methodology. — AS

Winner

BLUEFOCUS DIGITAL (CHINA/ BLUEFOCUS COMMUNICATION GROUP)

Since its launch in 1996 (then known as Blue Focus PR), Oscar Zhao's company has grown into the largest public relations consultancy in China and one of the top 10 public relations business in the world, with 2016 fee income (per our 2017 Top 250 ranking) of close to \$270 million—up by 17% last year.

Today, BlueFocus Digital Marketing Agency is the main subsidiary of the BlueFocus Communication Group in China, employing 1,300 people and offering a unique blend of digital marketing and public relations services in China across offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Xi'an. The firm is led by CEO Richard Jiao, supported by COO Stanley Xiao, chief strategy officer Yorf Guo, VP Bruce Zhu and SVP Donna Li. Key new hires last year included chief technology officer Su Zuan and Otype VP River Wu.

As such, it represents many of the country's largest companies (Lenovo, Baidu, JD.com, Tencent, FAW-Volkswagen, Volvo, Canon, GAC Toyota and NETS). New business over the past 12 months came from Bybo Dental Group, Ferrero, Nestle, WMF, China UnionPay, Chevron, L'Oréal, vivo, Lianjia and 5i5j. That helped BlueFocus Digital grow its revenues by 8.9% in 2016, despite a challenging market that included many clients looking to optimise their marketing budget. In response, BlueFocus has built a more modern purchasing and operation department, supported by upgraded client servicing capabilities. The firm has also stepped up its creative capabilities, because of the demands placed on its digital work. A central creative team is supported by investments across big data, artificial intelligence and cloud technology,

reflecting BlueFocus shift towards digital CRM and social media marketing.

High-profile work includes developing Infnit's customer loyalty platform, a mobile effort that leveraged big data to optimise the carmaker's marketing experience and led to a substantial increase in owners' usage. For Baidu, meanwhile, BlueFocus supported the transformation of visual art into music via artificial intelligence, and also developed an AR-fuelled restoration campaign of nine city gates in old Beijing. — AS

Finalists

ALLISON+PARTNERS (GLOBAL/MDC PARTNERS)

We've long recognized Allison as one of the most well-rounded firms in its size category, even while it didn't quite have the game-changing signature campaign to cap its digital and creative investments. That's no longer the case. In North America over the last year, the firm worked on a stunning portfolio of campaigns. Among them, Allison teamed up with MDC sister firms 72andSunny & the Media Kitchen for a Seventh Generation campaign that features Maya Rudolph riffing a jingle about feminine care ("Vajingle" was also included in our top 40 global campaigns, meanwhile Allison was shortlisted as 11 Innovation SABREs and 6 Gold SABREs in North America this year.) This creative surge coincides with Allison launching its All Told digital storytelling department last year.

Meanwhile, four years since entering Asia via a deal with China's Wolf Group Asia, Allison+Partners has built a credible regional presence, bolstered by further acquisitions in China (Century PR) and, last year, Japan (Focus PR), along with expansion into Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Sydney, including the

hire of former Upstream Asia co-founder Paul Mottram to lead its All Told content practice.

Yet in the US business performance did soften with single-digit growth bringing revenues to \$47.2m, but the Asia operation saw topline growth of almost 100% in 2016 to \$6.5m in revenue. The firm also now has around 15 employees across EMEA and the UK, and is growing its influence in the region. Global revenues were \$55million.

North America clients include Samsung Electronics America and Toyota North America (Allison became the automaker's national AOY in 2016) Hulu, PepsiCo, Quaker, Fox Home Entertainment, Progressive Insurance, Auntie Anne's and Dignity Health. In Asia (particularly in China), it's the firm's B2B capabilities that lead the way for clients like Schneider Electric, Canola Council of Canada, Textron Aviation, Tencent, Baidu and iRobot. — AaS

EDELMAN (DJE HOLDINGS)

Edelman's digital capabilities have always been a notch above most of their rivals, the consequence of a pioneering approach that saw it invest heavily in social media and community building well ahead of the curve. In the decade since, much of that works has migrated in-house, so Edelman's digital capabilities — which account for around 20% of global revenue — are reorienting themselves towards such areas as influencer engagement, search, video content and paid media. 'Pure' digital revenues are growing by upwards of 10%; the firm has hired more than 600 creatives and planners for its multi-channel content creation operation; and it now manages more than 900 social media communities for clients from Olive Garden to Disney.

That growth rate, of course, only accounts for the firm's pure-play digital activity—the content creation,

digital design, and community management work delivered by a specialist team. The real story, instead, lies in the network's fundamental restructuring of its operating structure to ensure that all aspects of digital — including those more readily associated with advertising agencies — are delivered across its agency model. Edelman has invested significant sums in this initiative, across such areas as search engine marketing, social media optimisation and measurement/ analytics, building centralised hubs that features skills and talent that each of its markets can tap into on a local basis.

Much of the firm's best digital work, meanwhile, reflects both the integrated mindset and the blend of capabilities. Notable campaigns included the 'Give a Beep' cycling safety effort; Tele2's 'Settle For More' in Sweden; 'Jacks150 Barrel Hunt' for Jack Daniel's in Spain; the Grohe 'Senses' content series in Germany; and a string of UK campaigns including Xbox's Halo Wars 2, Janssen's 'Make Blood Cancer Visible' and global engagement for what3words. In Asia, meanwhile, the firm's sophisticated use of digital marketing includes developing Pond's global influencer program; creating compelling online video for iRobot and Mirinda; Weibo work for Joie; and using AR to support Samsung's swimming safety program. — AS

RFI (GLOBAL/INDEPENDENT)

Ruder Finn's digital capabilities in Asia were transformed by the 2016 acquisition of Daylight Partnership, the firm founded by former WE Communications regional chief David Ko. Combined with Ruder Finn Innovation Studios (RFI), that gives the firm a 50-person digital presence across China, Hong Kong, Singapore and India — with specific strengths in product development and analytics. Unsurprisingly, that helped fuel 25% digital growth in 2016, with around

half of Ruder Finn's regional revenues now being drawn from digital work.

RFI Asia Limited's work, meanwhile, demonstrates a clear focus on innovation, via such efforts as immersive storytelling, marketing chatbots and interactive content. That is supported by an array of products, including new influencer analytics tool Beacon, a risk management app called Riskstat and the Sonar crisis simulation platform. All of this adds up to an impressive array of clients, including new business from Nike, HSBC, Pacific Place and Macy's while also helping it expand existing relationships with such clients as Prudential and L'Oreal. And the work is suitably compelling too — including an immersive 360-degree video and VR mini-movie for Sino Group; Hong Kong's first marketing chatbot for Pacific Place; UGC campaigns for Swire Properties; and live streaming Prudential's Relationship Index Forum.

In North America, meanwhile, RFI's consistent progress gives it one of the most well-rounded digital offerings in the market, under the leadership of chief digital officer Scott Schneider. — AS

W2O GROUP (US/INDEPENDENT)

W2O Group has now outgrown the category it won last year (Midsize Agency of the Year) with several acquisitions that powered its 33% surge to \$123m. And the firm hit another big milestone last year when it sold a stake to Mountaingate Capital. Impressively, these changes have resulted in its long-standing market differentiator — digital analytics — becoming sharper and more disciplined.

Two of its three acquisitions last year deepened its digital expertise that is already great heights above many of its closest competitors. These were Marketing Tech, a social media research and insights that unearths insights for patient and healthcare

professionals. In buying in Sentient W2O added digital, paid and owned media analytics to its arsenal. The private equity investment also forced the firm to make operational efficiencies including cutting away the digital services that weren't working — mainly VinTank and NextWorks.

Meanwhile, the firm's longstanding marquee digital offering, M Digital Life, continued to grow in 2016 with more than 700K digital footprints mapped across healthcare influencers around the world. For pharma clients, the W2O Group Value Report mines 2,000 conversation driving tools and maps this against an analytics framework that pulls in data on 30 different variables that impact pricing risk. It's worth noting, 80% of W2O's revenue comes from the healthcare sector with key clients like Merck, Pfizer, Medtronic, Verizon, PepsiCo, Intel, IBM Watson Health. New wins include Sony, Philips, Comcast, Ingersoll-Rand, United Technologies, Tesco and Prostate Cancer.

W2O's analytics business — which includes social and web analytics, data analysis, PESO media attribution, conversation aggregation and blueprinting and campaign optimization, among other areas — grew 77% in 2016 and now accounts for 23% of its revenues. Of course, there's still considerable work to do, the acquisitions are often the easy part — the real test comes with integration. But even amid relative chaos, W2O reputation as the firm that challenges boundaries more aggressively, boldly and successfully than its peers remains untarnished. — AaS

Global Healthcare PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

GCI HEALTH (GLOBAL/WPP)

WPP's GCI Health unit has been the most consistent performer in the healthcare public relations space over the past five years, distinguished by a balance of stability—Wendy Lund and her management team providing a steady hand on the tiller—and restless innovation that has seen the integration of social media and content creation and a willingness to “break the rules” (in a good way) of traditionally staid healthcare marketing. Growth was a very impressive 21% last year, and the firm now has 150 people globally (with new offices in Philadelphia, Boston and Denver added over the past 12 months).

The firm's “Putting Patients at the Center” initiative was launched three years ago and informs almost all of GCI's work these days, from its work launching new products in areas from oncology to spinal cord injury to the opioid crisis—as well as several rare disease categories—to its expansion in biotech and medical technology.

The GCI Health brand may have launched in London in 2013, but it began life with two significant advantages: it is part of arguably the hottest healthcare firm in the US right now, and the London office essentially spun out of sister agency Cohn & Wolfe, itself an impressive force in healthcare. It has grown at a healthy rate, with a team of 20 consultants delivering impressive work in four categories: life sciences (mostly pharma), consumer health, market access, and—a real differentiator—strategic consulting. — PH

Finalists

HANOVER (EMEA/INDEPENDENT)

At first glance, one of Europe's best public affairs firms might seem like an odd choice for the healthcare list.

But much of Hanover's stellar growth in recent years has been powered by a healthcare policy practice that blends policy, advocacy and government affairs to impressive effect under MD Andrew Harrison, who has been with the firm since 2002. And the healthcare unit grew by an impressive 43% last year, moving increasingly beyond policy and public affairs into communications work, with new business from Mundipharma and Boehringer Ingelheim joining existing clients such as Lilly and Shire.

Indeed Hanover's approach to healthcare is consistently grown-up, illustrated by its ability to secure a major healthcare technology assessment reform assignment ahead of McKinsey and Deloitte. The launch of a market access practice involved work for Lilly's Alzheimer's drug, and reflected an ability to navigate an increasingly complex European healthcare landscape. And much of Hanover's healthcare work is led by Brussels office, as demonstrated a big-budget campaign to persuade EU and national policymakers of the possibility to eliminate Hepatitis C in Europe, leading to the European Commission's decision to invest €1m in a new project to improve early diagnosis rates of viral hepatitis. — AS

SPAG ASIA (INDIA/INDEPENDENT)

Launched just four years ago, SPAG has already established itself as an industry game changer in the Asia-Pacific market as a cross between a public affairs and healthcare shop with three distinct brands: SPAG Asia, D Yellow Elephant and Giga Health (which was acquired in 2016). The group has grown more than 100% year-over-year since its 2013 launch while still keeping headcount low with the philosophy that one right individual is worth more than 10 others. The team works on clients that include PhRMA,

Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, US Chamber of Commerce, Hilleman Laboratories, Intertek, ResMed in addition new clients include AdvaMed, Novartis, Cipla, Dr. Reddy Laboratory Abbott, Boston Scientific, Abbott Vascular, Biocon and Pfizer Nestle. The firm holds the unique positioning of never yet losing a client.

Its work has garnered SPAG recognition as the Holmes Report's New Agency of the Year in the region two years ago, in addition to multiple SABRE Awards for work with clients like PFCD and US Chamber of Commerce. — AaS

SPECTRUM (US/INDEPENDENT)

Leadership changes have derailed many PR firms, but Spectrum continues to demonstrate how well-executed transitions can make an agency stronger than it has ever been. Spectrum (last year's healthcare agency winner) had another stellar year with 34% growth, reaching \$20m in revenues in its 20th year in business.

New CEO Jonathan Wilson is constantly evolving the firm by building teams that reflect the style and speed of the five main business areas the agency serves: biopharma, biotech, consumer science, healthtech (new in 2016) and public affairs (new in 2016). Spectrum's Lab—its digital, creative and social capabilities—cuts across all sectors.

Eighty-five employees work across offices in Washington DC (HQ), New York, Atlanta and Chicago (new in 2016). Clients include Astellas, Medtronic/Covidien, Roche, Zafgen, 23andMe (new), AdvaMed (new) and Dermira (new), among others.

The agency's work with Astellas Oncology C3 Prize won an Innovation SABRE Award for pulling together a

dynamic multi-channel campaign that engaged influencers and produced strong web analytics. — AaS

VIRGO HEALTH (GLOBAL/GOLIN)

Now in its 13th year, and fourth since it was acquired by Interpublic Group agency Golin, Virgo Health has successfully managed the transition to new ownership and management with aplomb, retaining its spot as one of Europe's top healthcare agencies. The firm grew around 4% to \$11m in 2016, despite a challenging marketplace that involved fewer blockbuster drugs and a reduction in big-budget retainers. Organic growth

of 26% pointed to Virgo's continued ability to diversify its services for such clients as Novartis, Roche and Abbvie, supplemented by new business from Ipsen and Santen.

That has involved considerable investment in digital and content, with Virgo's in-house Pharmacy creative hub particularly busy, bolstered by the appointment of Paul Andrews as head of design and Nicole Burns as senior social strategist. A new innovation hub called Egg includes two proprietary white-label products, one focused on collaboration, workspace & ideation technology, and the other a platform for clinical trial efficiencies, reflecting

Virgo's continued ability to change with the times. And Sue Neilsen arrived as head of communications to help refocus Virgo's corporate unit.

All of that helped drive some impressive campaign work, including a major employee engagement effort for Roche; getting men aged 60+ to talk to their GP about atrial fibrillation for Bayer; and getting RB onto the Lions Health 2016 agenda via an innovation challenge to solve the devastating effects of air pollution in India. In line with its 'Being Human' positioning, furthermore, Virgo's workplace culture remains a notch above most of its rivals. — AS

Global Public Affairs Agencies of the Year

Winner

HANOVER (EUROPE/INDEPENDENT)

Since its inception 19 years ago Hanover has evolved beyond its UK roots to become one of the world's top public affairs consultancies, winning EMEA Consultancy of the Year honours in 2016 and taking home the Global Public Affairs trophy one year earlier. But even by those standards, 2016 counted as a remarkable year for Charles Lewington's firm, which grew 22% to more than £11m in fee income, its third consecutive year of 20%+ growth. Much of that was led by the firm's healthcare practice, but its flagship public affairs and corporate advocacy offerings continued to evolve too, bolstered by the deep insight into financial services, technology and healthcare sectors that has characterised its growth since it launched.

Unsurprisingly for a firm with this much momentum there were no shortage of high-profile account wins and senior hires. There were several confidential corporate wins while, in healthcare, the firm beat McKinsey and Deloitte to a brief on Healthcare Technology Assessment reform. And,

in Brussels, Apple and Liberty Global were among the many wins for the growing EU policy team. All of those join a blue-chip client roster that features Goldman Sachs, Sky, Lucozade Ribena, Suntory, Tata Steel, Cuadrilla, Lilly, Airbus, Shire, De Beers, and Microsoft.

In terms of personnel, the biggest catch was undoubtedly former BT corporate affairs chief Michael Prescott, who came onboard as group MD of corporate and political strategy. Also arriving were industry veterans Alastair Gornall as Hanover's first non-executive chairman, and Hanover Health chair Anna Korving. Threepipe co-founder Eddie May joined the firm as MD of its new Playbook creative comms consultancy, and there were also senior hires to lead the new Dublin and London operations. They join a well-established leadership team that features former Downing Street press secretary Lewington, supported by Andrew Harrison, director and global head of the healthcare practice; Laura Swire, director and head of Hanover's advocacy team; and director and head of Hanover's corporate and consumer practice,

Gavin Megaw. Brussels is led by MD Christian Hierholzer.

And, like many of its better rivals, Hanover's work reflects the shifting public affairs landscape, enabling it to position Tata Steel as a responsible owner amid intense media scrutiny; establishing a Brexit consulting partnership with German firm Johanssen + Kretschmer; successfully launching flood reinsurance scheme Flood Re; and, helping the Hepatitis B & C Association to raise awareness among EU and national policymakers. — AS

Finalists

APCO (GLOBAL/INDEPENDENT)

APCO has been growing its corporate and financial (and even, to a less extent, consumer) capabilities in recent years, so the leadership is sometimes frustrated when we continue to pigeonhole the firm as a leader in public affairs—but that is more a reflection of the way in which public affairs has expanded than the notion that APCO has been standing still. Nothing could be further from the truth. APCO's public affairs expertise includes the obvious (with

the inauguration of a new president, areas such as trade policy and climate change have come to the fore) but also areas such as purpose and the challenge of corporate leadership that is both responsive and responsible, and nation branding, which has political and economic development implications. And APCO has long been a leader in applying the latest technology—digital and social—to public affairs, with its new Telescope offer applying the techniques of influencer marketing to the policy environment.

Revenues topped \$120 million in 2016, with new business from the likes of Consumer Reports, Exelon and its Pepco Holdings subsidiary, The Partnership for a Healthier America's Fruit & Veggies campaign, McCormick, the Nuclear Energy Institute, and the Embassy for Switzerland.

The firm's 300-strong EMEA presence includes 123 people in the Middle East, with Continental Europe contributing around €15.5m in revenue last year. There are strong operations in the UK (where James Acheson-Gray up 16% since 2014 to around £6m); Germany (up 16% last year to around €3.5m, its third year of double-digit growth); and Brussels (now around €5.3m following a turnaround in recent years). Today, about \$11.5 million of its revenue is spread across 11 offices in the region, where the past 12 months saw a host of new clients, with the Government of Guangzhou retaining the firm in China and for international markets, and major assignments from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Oculus, Marriott International, IKEA, Michelin, Elsevier, Janssen, and WhatsApp. — PH

FTI CONSULTING (GLOBAL/FTI)

Ranked as the fastest-growing midsize company in Brussels by Trends/Tendances, the leading Belgian business and financial magazine, FTI Consulting has a team of 70 public affairs experts from 22

different countries and has consolidated its leadership position in the Brussels public affairs market in recent years, growing by 30% a year, benefiting perhaps more than any other unit of the FTI communications business from synergies with other practices within the broader management consulting business: corporate finance, economic consulting, forensic and litigation expertise. Those capabilities mean a unique cross-disciplinary approach to problem-solving for clients. And in addition to the powerhouse Brussels office, the public affairs team has a presence in wholly-owned offices across the firm's global network, with particularly eye-catching growth in London under Alex Deane — who has helped build one of the city's strongest Brexit practices — and supplement by substantial capabilities in Washington, DC.

Major clients in 2016 included MasterCard, Google, Facebook, Epsom, Bayer, the TransAdriatic Pipeline, Exxon Mobil, Johnson & Johnson, Walk Free Foundation, Zalando, BNY Mellon, Netflix, Apex-Brasil, Booking.com, and Amazon, and high-profile assignments included generating support for the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (a proposed natural gas pipeline through Greece, Albania and the Adriatic Sea landing in Italy) across the EU; helping to launch the Hydrogen Council, a newly formed group of global energy, transport and industry companies.

The firm has expanded its presence in financial services, building out expertise in asset management, insurance and exchanges; technology and media, focusing on the disruptive platforms and technology changing sectors such as automotive; energy and agri-chemicals; and healthcare. And it has specialist groups focused on competition, cyber, trade, tax categories, and of course Brexit, where it draws on tailored research from an in-house

polling group to develop a “war-gaming,” scenario-planning approach to the issue. — PH

GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP (GLOBAL/INDEPENDENT)

Election years tend to be particularly good for New York-based Global Strategy Group, which has a rich heritage in the world of polling and campaign management and continues to supplement its corporate and public policy work with those activities. But underlying growth in the core public affairs and reputation management business was solid in 2016, with new assignments from the likes of Americans for Responsible Solutions (a grassroots gun control group), Bloomberg Philanthropies, CVS Health, the League of Conservation Voters, PHRMA, Skanska and more.

The firm continues to play a leadership role in some of the vital issues of the day. It has been working on gender equity issues (the Rockefeller Foundation's 100x25 campaign for women's leadership); environmental concerns (for NextGen Climate, the Sierra Club, and more); immigration reforms (for FWD.us) and reproductive rights (Planned Parenthood). And GSG client The Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform played a major role in informing Mayor Bill DeBlasio commitment to closing Rikers Island. The firm also handled crisis and issues work for CVS Health, football association CONCACAF, Pershing Square, General Motors, and commercial drone company JDI Group.

The firm's thought leadership on the role of business in political discourse is also looking more and more relevant in the new political environment, in which companies are either choosing or being forced to join political debates around gay rights, immigration and host of other hot-button issues.— PH

SEESAME COMMUNICATION EXPERTS (SLOVAKIA/INDEPENDENT)

Originally founded as Interel Public Relations, a Slovakian subsidiary of the highly regarded Brussels-based public affairs consultancy of the same name, Seesame achieved its independence following a management buyout 10 years ago and has gone from strength to strength ever since, building on its public affairs heritage to establish itself as arguably the pre-eminent corporate affairs, issues management, and strategic communications firm in Eastern Europe—with a reputation for ethics and integrity as well as results.

Seesame has also always enjoyed success in the international awards

arena, winning SABRE Awards in crisis communications and public affairs categories in 2013 and 2014, but celebrating its 20th year in business in 2017, it is a finalist for three awards—and the work involved underscores the firm’s ability to help clients deal with critical issues. For non-profit SPOSA Bratislava, the firm created the “autism simulator” to provide people with a perspective on the condition, combining its strong healthcare credentials with an innovative use of virtual reality. For the Slovak Insurance Association, it launched an intensive grassroots public affairs campaign that fended off a potentially damaging tax. And for the Myeloma Association, it created an awareness campaign to

educate the Slovakian public about an invisible disease.

Under the leadership of founder and managing director Michaela Benedigova, who has more than 20 years of experience, the firm has a depth of experienced professionals unmatched in the local market: head of real estate Adriana Catlosova, public affairs practice leader Anna Michalkova and Juraj Caranek, head of the the FMCG practice) each have a decade of experience handling major issues. They serve a client list that includes Dell, Dr.Oetker, Electrolux, the European Commission, Henkel, IKEA, Pfizer, Shell, YIT, with new business in 2016 from AbbVie, adidas, and Adient. — PH

Global Technology PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

HARVARD (EUROPE/CHIME)

EMEA Technology Consultancy of the Year for two consecutive years now, Harvard submitted another standout year in 2016, ensuring that memories of its 2011 nadir (when the UK’s oldest specialist tech consultancy was down to 14 people and £1.6m in revenue) are firmly in the rearview mirror. Indeed, Louie St Claire and his leadership team (Ellie Bennett, Pete Marcus, Phil Szomszor and Gareth Clark) have revolutionised the firm to the extent that 29% growth to £4m is now seen as business as usual. Of course, Harvard’s business today certainly cannot count as commonplace among its tech rivals, having chosen to restructure its offering last year from a position of strength, creating three core division (PR/AR, digital engagement and marketing) that underscore its diversification across the full spectrum of technology marketing budgets, supplemented by a credible planning capability, along with demand generation, account based marketing and sales enablement

capabilities, with the marketing services practice growing from 4 to 18 people.

New business remained in fine fettle, with the firm adding such clients as Propel/Disney, Lloyd’s of London, Linn, Dun & Bradstreet, Azimo, Hired, Stuart, Mimecast, Habito to join an existing client roster that features Fujitsu, Ricoh, Vodafone Cisco, Arbor Networks, Sennheiser, Digital Catapult, Lycamobile, Salmon and Zappar.

The firm’s work reflects an impressive focus on integration, via a full-service offering that extends beyond PR and digital into such areas as advertising and direct marketing, all centred on the idea of being audience engagement experts for the technology sector. There was impressive campaign work Fujitsu (‘A New Pace of Change’); Salmon (‘Black Friday’); Azimo (#BetterThanThat); Lloyds and Propel. The firm’s workplace initiatives also merit a mention, including roles-specific forums and new training programmes. — AS

Finalists

BATEMAN GROUP (US/INDEPENDENT)

There was a time when the Bateman Group was looked on as a challenger brand in Silicon Valley — a scrappy upstart with a passionate founder. Over the last decade, the Bateman Group has become a steady PR force that consistently delivers on respectable growth and noteworthy work. This continued into 2016 when the firm hit 21% growth reaching \$10.5m, shedding the “boutique” qualifier.

The creativity of its thinking was demonstrated in its work for security startup Area 1 that resulted, not only two feature stories in the New York Times, but also a request from a Hollywood production house for the rights to buy the story. When Hollywood notices, you’ve probably crafted a very good narrative. Other clients include Google, LinkedIn, L’Oreal, Betterment, Ultimate

Software, Virtustream, QuickBase, Tegile, Relay Networks and Atlassian.

Interestingly, in 2016 Bateman split its enterprise practice in two: the Future of Work (products that touch on workplace productivity and collaboration) and the New Stack (products that make data processes and center more efficient) to give clarity and focus to its domain expertise.

The firm also actively advocates for the industry to back away from the antiquated relationship, press release and persistence trifecta to yield media coverage — and in doing so has taken on the challenge of educating executives on the realities of the new media environment.

Bateman also added an Innovation Lab practice this year, which includes clients with truly disruptive technologies like Ginkgo Bioworks, a startup that designs custom microbes across multiple markets to develop new organisms that replace technology with biology .

CEO & founder Fred Bateman continues to helm the firm with support from partner/president Bill Bourdon, partner/GM Tyler Perry and EVP Syreeta Mussante. New hires include former IDG News Service journalist James Niccolai as content and media strategy director adding to the 53 full-time employees across offices in San Francisco and New York. — AaS

BRANDS2LIFE (UK/INDEPENDENT)

After three consecutive years as EMEA Technology Consultancy of the Year, Brands2Life secured its status as one of the decade's defining UK agencies by being named UK Consultancy of the Year in 2016, recognition of how the 130-person agency has demonstrated a singular ability to evolve with the times. As comfortable handing B2B tech PR as it is with straight consumer or C-suite corporate counsel, Brands2Life is today bolstered by an impressive digital capability and a staff culture

that remains one of the best in the country, with founders Giles Fraser and Sarah Scales bringing the kind of restless, slightly paranoid leadership that often characterises the better PR consultancies.

Launched in 2000 and still fiercely independent, Brands2Life's momentum showed few signs of slowing down in 2016, even if growth tapered off after four record-breaking years to 1.2%, reaching £11.7m thanks to work that is increasingly integrated, supported by sustained investment in digital/social, paid media and content development, along with the firm's first international office launch in San Francisco.

Two-thirds of Brands2Life's business still comes from the technology sector, reflecting a mindset that has helped the agency diversify and grow as technology becomes a critical component of every industry. In addition to a decent consumer practice that features such clients as Gatwick Airport, Appletiser, Virgin Media and Match, there has also been expansion into property & construction, destinations & travel, industrials and professional services, and recent wins have been as diverse as Carpetright, Rydon Homes & Tottenham Hotspur. Meanwhile, the group's technology capabilities remain in fine fettle, evidenced by new business from Dell, Experis and Emarsys, along with existing clients like Vmware, LinkedIn, Nikon, Gemalto, Intuit and USwitch.

The firm's ability to back its vision with investment continues to give it an edge over rivals, illustrated best by a string of senior hires in the digital and content space, notably head of digital Alan Parker from MullenLowe. That also pays off in the work Brands2Life does, which has always demonstrated a creative verve in a market that sets the bar high. Last year, that included the #AccountsDone campaign for Intuit QuickBooks, which stretched beyond

the bounds of traditional PR by including Brands2Life's first ever mainstream TV ad, generating the client's best sales week ever. There are also EMEA SABRE nominations for Bouncingham Castle for King; Better Family Life Index for uSwitch; along with an In2SABRE Awards for Arup (Best Use of LinkedIn). — AS

IN.FOM (SINGAPORE/INDEPENDENT)

Last year's Asia-Pacific Technology Consultancy of the Year, IN.FOM is in the vanguard of a new generation of Asian PR firms—all launched in the early years of this decade—that have eschewed the scale and bureaucracy of established firms, for an approach that prizes sustainable employee and client relationships.

The leadership team includes managing partners Wong Voal Voal and Mike Liew, who bring impressive pedigrees with global agencies H+K and Burson-Marsteller, respectively, and who understand the transformation of marketing and technology. Xiuwen Lien heads its key Microsoft relationship, which has been a consistent award-winner in recent years.

Last year saw continued healthy growth, with fee income up by more than 20% to around \$3.3 million, with Microsoft adding Xbox Asia-Pacific work to the firm's existing Singapore and Asia-wide assignments, and new clients including UnionPay Southeast Asia, Parallels, Nokia Networks Asia Pacific, Intralinks, Expedia and Logicals joining a client roster that also includes CA Technologies, Herbalife, Intel, and Singtel.

As ever, the work impresses: the firm managed Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella's tour of nine Asian cities in 2016, picking up a SABRE Award for media outreach that generated more than 1,800 stories across six countries. This year, the firm promoted the software giant's regional Digital Transformation Study and "youth and technology" outreach. — PH

TEXT100 (GLOBAL/NEXT15)

Throughout Text100's 36-year history, the Next15 firm has been best-known for its technology expertise, with its North American operation establishing itself via long-term relationships with Xerox, IBM and Cisco. In recent years, however, Text100 has begun the inevitable effort to diversify its offering, around a 'Vision 2020' plan that includes a refresh of our company's vision, purpose and mission. After merging with two marketing-focused firms in London, Text100's capabilities are far removed from a narrow focus on the technology industry and much of the agency's new business — including a number of assignments in North America — favour the consumer and corporate sectors, including Egon Zehnder and Suntrust Bank. Indeed the firm's embrace of broader content, digital and data capabilities (which includes a 'dynamic newsroom' capability) helped underpin global growth of 5.3% to \$66m, of which around \$29m is derived from North America.

In Asia-Pacific, meanwhile, a 20-year-old presence translates into strategic

depth in key markets across India, Australia, Southeast Asia and Greater China. And while the firm's 'Vision 2020' global restructuring has dominated the headlines, a quiet transformation is also underway in Asia under the leadership of new regional chief Lee Nugent. Overall revenues grew 7% to around \$20m in 2016, with profits up 24% to around \$3.6m from 313 staffers in the region. There was significant new business (much of it multi-market) from Red Hat, NetApp, Rolls Royce, China Telecom, Nvidia, Alibaba, Bosch, Harman, Netsuite and TVS Motors — joining an existing client roster that features IBM, Adobe, Lenovo, Cisco, Four Seasons, DHL, Telenor, Swift, Ikea and Gartner.

After a relatively difficult period in EMEA, furthermore, Text100's London office is an increasingly vibrant presence, thanks in large part to the merger with two sibling firms in the UK — Republic Publishing and IncrediBull — bringing expertise in content and brand marketing, and helping fuel a restructuring of its broader regional offering around five distinct service groups — strategy,

content, influence, social and digital. EMEA revenues reached £9m, with 145 staff working across offices in the UK, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. And the firm's momentum is particularly evident from its new business performance, where it added Brightstar, Canary, Xerox, Tata Communications, Bupa, Surf Air, Avios, Stripe and Nintendo to such key clients as Suntrust, Brightstar, Vodafone, IBM, Lenovo, HARMAN, Red Bull, Microsoft, Facebook and NCR.

Not only did the UK mergers bring a welcome change to Text100's capabilities, though, but they have also served as a beacon for the firm's global approach to the convergence of technology and consumer communications. It is not a stretch to say that Text100 now has a credible point of view that distinguishes it from its rivals, focusing on a new agency structure that dispenses with traditional PR roles in favour of specialist skills such as brand strategy, content, film, digital design/build and activation. — AS

Global New PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

VESTED (US/INDEPENDENT)

Billed as a 'new communications agency for a new financial industry', Vested was founded in 2015 by CEO Dan Simon and president Binna Kim, who previously led the US offices of Cognito. During its first year of operation, the duo were joined by other ex-Cognito alumni, including COO Ishviene Arora and chief creative officer Ali Wells. The leadership team is rounded out by Kevin Trowbridge, a software consultant who serves as Vested's chief technology officer.

Vested's spectacular growth (up 317% in 2016 to \$3.5m) is underpinned by a commitment to understanding the transformation

underway in the financial industry. As technology changes the way people think about financial services, Vested has focused on helping banks, asset managers and other institutions navigate this shift, resulting in significant assignments from Axioma, Backstop Solutions, Bloomberg, Carbon Trade Exchange, Elevate, Golub Capital, Investopedia, MoneyLion, PeerStreet and Xenomorph, along with new business from Clarity Money, D+H, Diebold Nixdorf, The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation, Misys, Oakam, Quantitative Brokers, Rockefeller & Co., SmartBiz Loans and WorldRemit.

Now numbering 16 staffers, Vested's approach reflects a willingness to

embrace change. Like any new firm, Vested makes much of its model, which involves employee ownership, an unlimited vacation policy and a fresh perspective on an industry that is much-maligned. The agency has established an investment fund, Vested Ventures, that makes direct investments in startups, while Vested's chief economist sells economic and financial forecasting to clients. The firm also plans to enter the news publishing and events businesses soon. That disruptive mentality is also showcased in Vested's client work, notably the 'Business of Star Wars' effort for storied hedge fund Citadel. — AS

Finalists

BYDESIGN COMMUNICATIONS (SOUTH AFRICA/INDEPENDENT)

Kevin Welman's 20-year career at FleishmanHillard helped establish the firm as one of the top consultancies in Africa. So his departure last year was keenly-watched, particularly when he re-emerged soon afterwards with a new consultancy called ByDesign Communications. Welman and co-founder Vanessa Baard might have thought that an easier life beckoned but they can probably throw those plans out of the window. Not only has ByDesign already landed a staggering 10 major clients since it launched, but the 8-month-old consultancy has also showcased the kind of boutique positioning that is the lifeblood of PR agency renewal in more mature markets.

New business has included blue-chip companies such as Mercedes-Benz, SAP, Anglo American, Adidas and Coronation Fund Managers. The firm also showcases a progressive blend of content, public relations, digital strategy and crisis communication — signifying a relatively disruptive approach in a market that still thrives on media relations. Standout work includes supporting Anglo American's education-focused projects, helping News24's native digital project, working on SAP's Africa Code Week and on Mercedes-Benz's #EveryTerrain campaign. — AS

REDHILL COMMUNICATIONS (SINGAPORE/INDEPENDENT)

Before launching Redhill in September of 2015, Jacob Puthenparambil had held communications positions with Government of India's Ministry for External Affairs, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller in the Middle East, and the UN's MURgency global response network in San Francisco. Partner Surekha Yadav, meanwhile, has a background that spans software development and finance. Together, they bring a wealth of international

and business experience to a new firm, which helps to explain how Redhill has grown from five people in 2015 to about 25 today.

Those people are spread across offices in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Colombo—giving Redhill good reach across South-East Asia—and serving a roster of about 20 clients, including seven of the region's largest venture capital firms. The client roster includes Jungle Ventures, Wavemaker Partners, Venture Craft, SoCash, Zumata, BankersLab, RHL Ventures, and Vickers Venture.

The firm worked with Jungle Ventures to announce that the firm had successfully raised an initial \$50 million for their first investment round of 2016, while respecting the insistence that some aspects that the company wished to keep confidential, generating good coverage without awkward questions. It also helped SOCash, a socialised cash payment system, persuade consumers that cash can still be king in a world focused on cashless transactions. — PH



2017 North America PR Agencies of the Year

The 2017 North America PR Agencies of the Year are the result of an exhaustive research process involving more than 150 submissions and 50 face-to-face meetings with the best PR firms across the US and Canada.

The winners were unveiled at the 2017 North American SABRE Awards on May 2 at Cipriani 42nd Street in New York.

North America Large PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

WEBER SHANDWICK (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

There's an impressive restlessness about Weber Shandwick, despite the fact that the world's second largest public relations firm continues to outperform all of its immediate rivals in terms of growth (North America fees up 11% last year, with 7% organic growth supplemented by the ReviveHealth acquisition).

New business in 2016 came from Chevrolet, Kellogg's, the Los Angeles 2024 Olympic bid, Monsanto, Takeda, and Unicef, while clients such as Bayer, Ericsson, GSK, Mastercard and Verizon all grew. Weber Shandwick now works for almost half of the Fortune 100, and has been working overtime to deliver a customer experience—featured in a new book from former HBR editor Thomas Stewart, *Woo Wow and Win*—that ensures client longevity.

An evolving organizational structure builds on the firm's existing strengths (last year we called WS the world's most complete PR firm, and nothing has happened to change that view)

with the creation of internal “value-based communities” dedicated to client experience, insights, integrated media and content, while reinforcing a collaborative culture that is clearly one of the firm's major competitive advantages.

Finally, there's the work, which ranges from earned-centric consumer campaigns like Barbie's election-related efforts to inspire the next generation of women leaders to employee engagement at the highest level for Boehringer Ingelheim and Newell, from well-rounded public affairs work around infrastructure issues for the American Society of Civil Engineers to helping Busweiser launch “microgravity beer” for the journey to Mars, from positioning Qualcomm as a leader on the road to 5G to helping Honey Maid make the internet more wholesome. — PH

Finalists

COHN & WOLFE (WPP)

Cohn & Wolfe proved that last year—when it was named our Large Agency of the Year in North America—was no fluke, delivering another year

of double-digit growth (12% globally and 15% in the US) that ranked best among large agencies and helped Donna Imperato's business continue to stand out in comparison to its sluggish WPP sister agencies.

One key to success is the growing number of major global assignments, from clients such as Barclaycard, Bayer, and Colgate. New business came from Applebees, Newell Brands, Novo Nordisk, 20th Century Fox, and a host of others. Another key is that the majority of C&W's assignments are now genuinely integrated—typically traditional PR blended with digital, social, and a heavy dose of experiential; less than 10% of the business four years ago, integrated now accounts for almost three-quarters.

The most interesting development, though, is an effort to go beyond “integration” to use the full range of paid, earned, shared and owned channels in order to create what Imperato calls an “immersive brand experience.” That means using everything from virtual reality and other wearables to add a new

element to experiential marketing, whether that's creating a VR platform for jewelry brand Pandora at Coachella or helping tell Barclaycard's technology story by creating a bartender-less pub experience.

At the same time, the firm is doubling down on data and analytics with tools such as Nuvi, People Pattern, and WPP's Data Alliance, and adding new digital offers that include social selling and social recruiting—all of which is helping to bring Cohn & Wolfe's "Dig Deeper Imagine More" mantra to life in ways that emphasize just how different the firm is today compared to five years ago, and compared to most of its peers. — PH

EDELMAN (DJE HOLDINGS)

Such is the blazing pace set by Edelman—still the world's largest public relations agency—over the past decade that a year in which its financial results came in around the peer group average counts as a disappointment, although in what CEO Richard Edelman described as a "transition" year, US growth was a solid 2.3%.

It was still a pretty good new business year: Edelman came out on top in a Hewlett-Packard consolidation; picked up additional agency-of-record assignments from KFC, PayPal, and the American Optometric Association; digital work from the Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau and Bush Brothers & Company; and played a key advisory role at Wells Fargo as the financial services company went through a high-profile client. But the real story was the growth from 33 of the firm's top 50 clients, representing broader, more integrated work as Edelman seeks to develop is paid capabilities and build on its long-time leadership in digital.

Having won Best in Show at each of the last two North American SABRE competitions—for CVS and then REI—Edelman's creative reputation

has never been higher, and last year's work did nothing to diminish it, as the firm worked with Unilever's Axe brand to help consumers celebrate their individuality; assisted Starbucks with its cause-related and CSR initiatives; worked with the American Lung Association on its "Lung Force" campaign; promoted Dos Equis' "most interesting man in the world"; and helped PayPal and GE with corporate transformation.

Much of that work is driven by Edelman's relentless innovation, some of it expected—the emphasis on data-driven influencers, the expansion beyond earned into paid; and some of it surprising—expanded employee communications capabilities in support of change management, investment in multicultural expertise, and a surge of work in "translating Trump" in terms of what the new president means for consumer marketing, corporate reputation, and public affairs.— PH

GOLIN (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

It has been almost six years since Golin introduced its revolutionary g4 model, which restructured the agency into communities of strategists, creators, connectors, and catalysts, and there is no sign that the momentum generated by that move is diminishing, even in a year when the firm was looking to the future and naming three new joint-CEOs—Jonathan Hughes, Matt Neale and Gary Rudnick—as it gets ready for its second 60 years.

Last year saw growth in the mid-single digits, strategists, with new business from Abbott (fostering dialog on infant feeding), Atos (Olympic sponsorship), California Department of Public Health (tobacco control), Cancer Treatment Centers of America (corporate reputation), ConAgra (social engagement), Facebook Messenger, Hyatt Hotels (for multiple brands), Koch Industries (reputation

management), J&J's Motrin, and more.

More than half the firm's work is consumer focused (with the rest split pretty evenly between corporate, healthcare, and technology) and it is there that firm's has focused its innovation in recent years: its Bridge real-time marketing offer remains unrivaled in the industry; its acquisition of creative agency Brooklyn Brothers enhances its creative offer and its strategic thinking; and its focus on "relevance" has seen the development of new products, one tracking 15 elements that give brands extra relevance and another informing a new approach to influencers and media.

The work that all this drives has been getting more and more impressive: the firm's work introducing McDonald's all-day breakfast has won multiple awards; its creation of an animal sanctuary for the National Aquarium is winning plaudits; its B2B marketing efforts for Cisco's WebEx have driven a huge increase in audience engagement; and Brooklyn Brothers' "ask Gudmundur" campaign for Iceland got a shout-out from President Obama. — PH

KETCHUM (OMNICOM GROUP)

Still generating more SABRE Award nominees than any other brand, Ketchum has consistently ranked as one of the two or three most creative large agencies in North America, and in 2016 the business performance matched the quality of the work, with revenue growth in the mid-single digits—with the digital business growing at four or five times that pace. The DC office has made a particularly impressive turnaround in the past three years, with social marketing leading the way but digital capabilities expanding there also.

A stellar new business record in 2016 included assignments from FC Barcelona, Corona, Macy's, Philips Lighting, Samsung, 7-Eleven, Tostitos, and Zespri, while the firm

continues to work for longstanding clients such as Clorox (35 years), IBM and Procter & Gamble (20 years each). All of the top 50 clients—44 of them with the agency for five years or more—were retained.

Just as important, Ketchum is innovating across multiple practice areas: the StoryWorks unit, which helps brands engage and inspire consumers, has been instrument both in new business and creative execution; the influencer marketing practice has expanded to include

consumer, business-to-business and corporate reputation, with an emphasis on earned, and on relevance and resonance rather than reach alone; the issues and crisis practice and employee engagement practice (the latter strengthened by the integration of Omnicom sister agency Daggerwing) are developing new tools.

Strong creative ranges from election-related marketing efforts for Doritos to an attention-grabbing publicity stunt for Kit-Kat; from an effort to

remove cats from the internet for the anti-tobacco education Truth Initiative to supporting P&G's mom-focused Olympic sponsorship; from insight-driven cause-related marketing for Whirlpool to innovative metrics for the Cleveland Clinic.

And all of this happened during a year of internal change: Barri Rafferty was named president of the firm in July and a new “break through” advisory board was formed in September to ensure the innovation continues. — PH

North America Midsize PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

ZENO

When Barby Siegel took the helm at Zeno seven years ago, the firm had 55 people, \$10 million in fee income, an almost exclusive focus on consumer, and was viewed by the marketplace as “Edelman's conflict agency.”

Today, after seven years of double-digit growth, Zeno has 400 people around the world, fees of close to \$60 million, a balanced portfolio of consumer, corporate, health and tech business, and a global footprint (enhanced by last year the acquisition of UK agency 3 Monkeys).

The US operation, which still makes up more than half the headcount, grew by 23% last year to a little over \$42 million, with new business coming from Pizza Hut, Easterseals, Britax, Air Asia, Microsoft Bing, Serta, Ubiquity and more. They join a roster that includes Kia Motors (a client for 13 years); Turtle Wax (10 years), AstraZeneca and Starbucks (seven years), and Bausch + Lomb (six).

But it's the work that really impresses, from helping Starbucks defend itself against charges that it was part of the “war on Christmas” to supporting Spin Master's launch of toy sensation Hatchimals to a data-driven micro-targeted marketing campaign for Bernzomatic that really drove sales. The thought

leadership isn't bad either, particularly the firm's Human Project, a multi-generational study that helps brands forge deeper connections with consumers. — PH

Finalists

CITIZEN RELATIONS (BLUEFOCUS)

After a couple of quiet years following the acquisition of parent company Vison7 by Chinese marketing services giant BlueFocus, Citizen appeared reinvigorated in 2016, with global revenues up to US\$28m, around \$24m of which comes from its North American operations. Always one of the smarter consumer marketing firms, Citizen's expansion owes much to systematic investment in its integrated capabilities, including digital analytics and planning, influencer research and marketing, and creative — highlighted by new intellectual property products and senior appointments, including ECD Scott Cocchiere.

Citizen continues to develop cutting-edge work for key client P&G, for which it emerged creditably from the FMCG giant's global PR review, retaining duties for Cascade, Dawn, Dreft, Duracell, Febreze, Ivory, Luvs, Mr. Clean, Old Spice, P&G Professional and Swiffer. In 2016, there was plenty of new business from its Canadian and US offices,

including eHarmony, Intuit, Natrol, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Tim Hortons and Wienerschnitzel, joining a client roster that features Aflac, Duracell, Egg Farmers of Canada, MolsonCoors, PepsiCo Foods, Rocky Mountaineer and Travelocity.

And there was some strong campaign work, notably for Duracell (‘Stay Connected’); and making Mr Clean relevant for a new generation of consumers. — AS

M BOOTH (NEXT15)

Last year's North American Agency of the Year, M Booth kept the momentum going in 2016, picking up new business from a host of blue-chip clients—General Motors (for Buick/GMC), Johnson & Johnson (for its sponsorship of Global Citizen), The Coca-Cola Company (Honest Tea), Estee Lauder, Sam Adams, Tinder, Priceline, Etsy—on the way to another year of impressive growth, with fees up 50% over the past two years.

The firm is still best known for its work in the consumer space (food and drink, travel and tourism are particular strengths), including its Made@MBooth design and content creation studio—with animators, videographers and others creating digital product, VR and 360 video—

and its Micro-Tribes research, an important piece of thought leadership. But the corporate practice was the fastest-growing last year, with work for American Express expanding to include employee engagement, a three-year Google relationship growing to include education issues and cloud computing, a repositioning of Tinder (from hook-up app to a brand about forming real-world connections), and the issues-heavy work for Beyond Meat.

Other highlights of the work in 2016 included breast cancer awareness work for Weight Watchers, the launch of noosa yogurt, influencer work for Boston Beer, and a campaign that connected Carnival Cruises with singer Carrie Underwood and military families for a unique event.

The firm has also been adding talent, with FleishmanHillard veteran Nancy Seliger joining as executive VP, and new senior VPs Scott Varland (leading innovation) and Michelle Overall (entertainment and marketing partnerships) joining founder Margi Booth, CEO Dale Bornstein, chief creative officer Adrianna Giuliani Bevilaqua, and insights and planning chief Bonnie Ulman. — PH

MWWPR (INDEPENDENT)

Because buying back its independence from IPG more than five years ago granted MWW a new start, it's easy to forget Michael Kempner's firm has been around for 30 years. But it was during the last five years that MWW regained its footing and emerged as, once again, as a formidable mid-size player with revenues around \$50m.

Kempner has brought together an all-star leadership team that includes Bret Werner (co-founder of Catalyst), Carreen Winters as chief strategy officer as well as EVPs Heather Wilson, former DNC CEO Amy Dacey and Parker Ray.

Despite its heritage in public affairs, some of MWW's most notable work of

late has been digital campaigns in the consumer space. For instance, toymaker Moose Toys brought MWW on to launch Shopkins and ultimately drive sales. Among its tactics, the firm formed strategic partnerships on YouTube to develop video content that now has more than 900 million views — and business results that include Moose being the #4 largest toymaker in the US. The work won an Innovation SABRE Award for the best use of YouTube. For Jack in the Box's newest menu item, MWW tapped VR to video transport users to a simulated gastro-pub environment for a multi-sensory burger experience.

The firm's portfolio of clients spans across sectors to include Nature's Bounty (new), Nikon, Tom Tom (new), Subaru, Air New Zealand, Honeywell International (new), Tyson, Red Lobster and Atkins. Its LGBT practice doubled its client roster with Hilton Worldwide, Focus Features, Universal Home Entertainment, Kellogg's, Anything the Film and LA Tourism & Convention Board.

Industry leadership includes "Hervoice" a practice focused on building the internal and external profiles of female leaders, a millennial marketing research report and "corpsumer" combining consumer marketing and company perception in one unified program. — AaS

TEXT100 (NEXT15)

Throughout Text100's 36-year history, the Next15 firm has been best-known for its technology expertise, with its North American operation establishing itself via long-term relationships with Xerox, IBM and Cisco. In recent years, however, the Text100 has begun the inevitable effort to diversify its offering, around a 'Vision 2020' plan that includes a refresh of our company's vision, purpose and mission. After merging with two marketing-focused firms in London, Text100's capabilities are far removed from a narrow focus on the

technology industry and much of the agency's new business — including a number of assignments in North America — favour the consumer and corporate sectors, including Egon Zehnder and Suntrust Bank. Indeed the firm's embrace of broader content, digital and data capabilities (which includes a 'dynamic newsroom' capability) helped underpin global growth of 5.3% to \$66m, of which around \$29m is derived from North American offices in Boston, Rochester and San Francisco.

Text's reinvigoration has coincided with a reshuffle of its senior ranks, including the hire of former Emanate CEO Kim Sample to lead New York and Steven Astle as SVP of a new practice area focusing on highly-regulated markets. They join a senior team that remains led by long-term global CEO Aedhmar Hynes, who is supported by chief digital officer James Beechinor-Collins; creative director Richard Parkinson; and North American regional director Ken Peters.

Text's best work illustrates the progress it is making towards becoming a credible marketing communications player. For Egon Zehnder, Text helped to elevate the firm's Global Board Diversity Analysis, creating a proprietary data visualizer tool that drove impressive results. And for IBM's Watson, Text developed a series of stories that showcased technology's 'human' side. — AS

North America Small PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

CARMICHAEL LYNCH RELATE (IPG)

2016 was a pivotal year for the agency previously known as Spong, with president/founder Doug Spong stepping down after 26 years, succeeded by agency veteran Julie Batliner. The Minneapolis-based firm rebranded as Carmichael Lynch Relate and reeled off one of the best years in its history, growing 47% to around \$25m, powered by 10 new clients, including Garden of Life, Formica Residential, Frito Lay/Stacy's, Truvia, Marvin & Integrity Windows and Doors, Best Buy and Panasonic.

The new business joins a client roster that features Arla, Bath & Body Works, Jack Link's, Sherwin-Williams, MasterBrand Cabinets, Post Consumer Brands, Rapala, The Schwan Food Company, Genuine Thermos Brand and US Bank. CLR's refreshed mission revolves around a focus on integration, sometimes in tandem with sister ad agency Carmichael Lynch. Although CLR prefers to call this 'interdependence', supported by a new process and training program, and highlighted by an in-house content lab that features social media analysts, community managers and content journalists — developing, for example, media campaigns with audience-targeted display and video via programmatic buying; geo-fencing messaging based on consumers' GPS mobile device signals; retargeting consumers based on their actions on sites, and syndicating content created by media partners/influencers.

That kind of thinking paid off in some impressive campaign work for Stacy's Pita Chips (using influencers to elevate everyday snacking); Arla (building broader awareness vs more established brands); and, Lorissa's Kitchen. — AS

Finalists

HAVAS FORMULA (HAVAS WORLDWIDE)

It's been 25 years since Michael Olguin founded Formula PR in San Diego with deep roots in Hispanic and general consumer outreach. But the firm has taken on a second life since its 2014 Havas Worldwide acquisition that transformed it to Havas Formula, part of the Havas Creative Group.

With 18% growth in 2016, the acquisition seems to be paying off. The \$17m firm employs 115 people across offices in New York (HQ) Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami and San Diego who work on clients like Heineken USA, Dunkin' Donuts/Baskin-Robbins, Schlage, Bugaboo, Wonderful Pistachios, Nestle, Justin's, Shure, TurboTax — along with new wins Jaguar/Land Rover, Panda Express, among others.

Notable work includes launching the East Coast donut giant Dunkin in Los Angeles with a two-pronged campaign appealing to the nostalgia of East Coast transplants while also emotionally connecting Los Angeles locals.

The firm has dealt head-on with perceptions that PR is purely earned media, educating clients that if a brand really wants to connect with consumers, micro-influencers — who tend to come at a cost — are often the most effective option. The result of this effort is now 60%-70% of its clients include a paid line item in their PR budgets. In 2016, Havas Formula also developed crisis credentials that could be marketed to existing clients and prospects and launched a thought-leadership effort for its top leadership. — AaS

KWITTKEN (MDC PARTNERS)

If the first decade of the 21st century marked an age of specialization for the public relations agency business, the second decade has been about convergence, vindication—not that

any was needed—of Aaron Kwittken's approach to building one of the best smaller firms in the business.

Kwittken has eschewed specialization—its business is split almost evenly between consumer and corporate/B2B assignments—and prefers to be known simply as a great creative firm.

That's not to say there aren't things that Kwittken does particularly well. The corporate side of the business, for example, has been developing expertise in financial and professional services, while the consumer business has expanded to include consumer health work (its work for Zicam was a real highlight last year). And the firm's "design thinking" approach incorporates traditional PR, influencer marketing, content creation, social media expertise, and (increasingly) paid advertising to build brands.

A strong new business year brought new assignments from Amway, BMW North America, Cervelo Cycles, Deloitte, Dataminr, Ironman, Rubicon Project, S&P Global, Wyndham Rewards and YOTEL, joining a client roster that includes Amadeus, American Express, APT, CGI, frog, Hisense, One Medical, Pantone, PURE, and Zicam. Fees were up about 10% to around \$11 million, and Kwittken now has 50 people in New York, eight in Toronto, and a team of 15 in its London office. — PH

PAN (INDEPENDENT)

Twenty-two years since its founding, PAN Communications has hit a new stride. Impressive growth (19%) has pushed the firm over the \$15m marker while also producing some of the best work we've seen — not only from PAN— but among its tech peers.

The new era of PAN seems to have started in December 2015 when the firm bought Vantage PR to raise its visibility in the highly-competitive San Francisco PR market. Yet founder Phil Nardone's vision for building a

formidable mid-size independent tech firm didn't stop there. The Allison + Partners' longtime Western region chair Phil Carpenter joined the firm to lead its West Coast expansion last year. The management team oversees 100+ people across offices in Boston (HQ), San Francisco, New York and Orlando.

The firm's work broke through in two of the most competitive Innovation SABRE categories landing a well-deserved place on the shortlist. For GreatCall, a company that produces mobile devices and wearables for seniors, PAN crafted a striking narrative that successfully landed with a parade of top influencers, including at the mega-saturated CES show. The firm's thinking also comes through with its work with CloudBees that includes a targeted podcast series and meme generators.

Other technology clients include: SAP, SDL, Symantec, Hybris, Black

Duck Software, RSA, meanwhile its healthcare roster has grown to include PAREXEL, Quanterix, Trinity Partners and RediClinic. New wins also include Informatica, SS&C Technologies, Forbes 30 Under 30 Summit, InContact/NICE, Liberty Mutual, SAP IoT and SAP Retail. — AaS

SPECTRUM (INDEPENDENT)

Leadership changes have derailed many PR firms, but Spectrum continues to demonstrate how well-executed transitions can make an agency stronger than it has ever been. Spectrum (last year's healthcare agency winner) had another stellar year with 34% growth, reaching \$20m in revenues in its 20th year in business.

New CEO Jonathan Wilson is constantly evolving the firm by building teams that reflect the style and speed of the five main business

areas the agency serves: biopharma, biotech, consumer science, healthtech (new in 2016) and public affairs (new in 2016). Spectrum's Lab — its digital, creative and social capabilities — cuts across all sectors.

Eighty-five employees work across offices in Washington DC (HQ), New York, Atlanta and Chicago (new in 2016). Clients include Astellas, Medtronic/Covidien, Roche, Zafgen, 23andMe (new), AdvaMed (new) and Dermira (new), among others.

The agency's work with Astellas Oncology C3 Prize won an Innovation SABRE Award for pulling together a dynamic multi-channel campaign that engaged influencers and produced strong web analytics. — AaS

North America Boutique PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

LDWW (INDEPENDENT)

Helping Carnival Cruises introduce the first US cruise to Cuba in four decades; coordinating a nationally televised discussion on the issues of sexual assault and campus violence; helping a client manage a crisis situation in Yemen; supporting a national campaign encouraging people to talk openly and honestly about mental health; producing more than 100 pieces of content to promote an athletic scholarship. That would have been a bumper year for many large agencies—for a four-year-old firm with a team of 15, it was remarkable.

Perhaps that's because LDWW is headquartered in Dallas, where the competition from national agencies or local specialists is limited—despite the fact that Texas is home to more Fortune 500 headquarters than any state except New York. Perhaps it's

the ability to deliver creative consumer campaigns and strategic corporate and crisis counsel, as well as content creation capabilities.

Or perhaps it's because founder Ken Luce has decades of experience in senior roles with Weber Shandwick and Hill+Knowlton, and has assembled a senior team—Chris Craddock, Mike Flanagan, Ken Maxwell, Jody Venturoni—with impressive credentials.

In any event, LDWW now has fee income of around \$6.5 million and a client list that includes Bell Helicopter, Carnival Cruises, GameStop, Omni Hotels and is making a name for itself with 19 national awards last year—making it one of the top four firms on our Creative Index weighted for headcount. — PH

Finalists

BULLEIT (INDEPENDENT)

When Fast Company released its most innovative companies of 2017, four of Bulleit's clients were on list — meaning one-third of its client roster was chosen by Fast Company. So it's not surprising that Bulleit is quickly becoming the go-to boutique to create narratives for cutting edge technology like biology and electrical engineering, robotics and material science. Just take a look at its sector specialities: artificial intelligence, computer vision, neuroscience/ neuropriming, future of work and autonomous cars, to name a few.

It is somewhat surprising, however, that a firm that's only been around for four years has such precise subject matter expertise that's clearly filling a market void. Bulleit grew 55% in 2016 to \$3.1m with a client set that includes Google (nine divisions), LinkedIn, Orbital Insight, Halo

Neuroscience, Jumpshot, Bloomberg Beta (new), Flexport (new), Elemental Cognition (new), Paul Hastings (new) and Puppet (new), among others.

Unlike many of its Silicon Valley peers, Bulleit's expertise extends far beyond product launches — the firm deals in high stakes, holistic PR programs for the majority of its clients, including policy, crisis, employee and corporate communications. For Orbital Insight, Bulleit broke news with Bloomberg's Beijing based economy and oil editors that China is stockpiling oil as seen by satellite imagery which moved the oil futures market. Bulleit's tagline "Storytelling for the Digital Age" came through in its work for the LinkedIn Engineering Blog that won an Innovation SABRE Award. (One judge called the work "a category killer.")

Co-founders Kyle Arteaga and Alex Hunter lead with a management team that includes VPs Kelly Mayes, Stephanie Donily and Leslie Green. — AaS

C+C (INDEPENDENT)

There's a simple formula that seems like the winning ticket for PR firms — engaged employees produce standout work that best serves clients, resulting of course, in healthy profits and strong growth for the firm. This seems intuitive but more firms get it wrong than right, but C+C is definitely on the right side of this equation.

The \$8m boutique (up 23% from 2015) employees 45 people across offices in Seattle (HQ), Boston, Portland and Washington DC. This is an impressive run for a firm that started in 2005 by co-founders Julie Colehour and Bryan Cohen. Clients include Energy Star, Waste Management, Department of Energy, WaterSense, Puget Sound Energy with new clients James Beard Foundation, Washington State Department of Health, Osmosis,

Efficiency Vermont and Social Venture Partners, among others.

Over the last two years C+C has rolled out a cross-functional structure designed to help its team play to their specialties without a traditionally siloed structure. For instance, the firm established an in-house creative team that is integrated with project teams to encourage clients to take creative risks. The firm credits its 20%+ growth to its expanded capabilities for creative, video production, multicultural strategy and research.

Notable work includes the Better Buildings SWAP that turned a commercial energy efficiency campaign into a reality-style web series that swapped energy management teams to uncover savings in each other's buildings. Season one featured Hilton and Whole Foods, meanwhile, Season 2 included Air Force vs Navy (the work was shortlisted for an Innovation SABRE). For "This Pill Can Prevent HIV" C+C worked with Public Health Seattle & King County to raise awareness among high risk men about PrEP, a new treatment that can prevent HIV infections. — AaS

PRAYTELL (PROJECT)

When you consider how far Praytell has come in just less than five years since it was founded, it's not surprising that it was snatched up last year. In 2016, Praytell broke new ground by joining the Project agency network as the first PR firm to in the employee-owned group.

The Brooklyn-based shop grew a staggering 74% last year, closing the year at \$9.2m with 56 employees across offices in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Austin. It's still early days since the sale, but founder Andy Pray recognizes what has powered the firm's trajectory: its core values ("do the right thing"), employee engagement (96% retention, he says) and an embrace of

the chaotic pace of change (he calls this the "golden age of PR").

Like many of its nimble peers, Praytell has a single P&L with capabilities across media relations, social, video, design, dev and measurement that services clients, including long-standing customers Logitech, MAC Cosmetics, Anheuser-Busch, Barnes & Noble and Twitter. The boutique welcomed 44 new brands in 2016 including Google Waze, Zappos, Nasdaq, Macy's, Guitar Center, Tile, Evofem Biosciences and UNAIDS, and eight new Anheuser-Busch craft beer brands including Elysian, Breckenridge and Blue Point.

Perhaps the most powerful marker of a flourishing boutique is innovative work. Here, Praytell delivers with producing two documentaries for the MAC AIDS Fund on the lives of young people with the disease and another on transgender rights, respectively (the first debuts on Netflix, the second on Showtime and Refinery 29). Its work with Twitter and SoundCloud also incorporate video in a way that engages and converts, meanwhile its content hub for Macy's was built around optimizing SEO.

In addition to Pray, the firm's leadership includes managing partners Beth Cleveland, Claudio Taratuta, VP Nate Jaffee and creative director Jon Chew. Last year, Pray said "we sensed an acquisition might be in our distant future." It's fitting the event happened sooner rather than later because for Praytell, it seems, the future is now. — AaS

WALKER SANDS (INDEPENDENT)

Last year's "dark horse" tech agency lands in the small category for capping another year of double-digit growth (nearly 19%) to more than \$8m with 79 employees across offices in Chicago and San Francisco. This comes after five years of consecutive growth that comes to 172% revenue expansion.

There seem to be two key growth drivers for the firm: its deep expertise

in B2B and its model that prioritizes collaboration. From its start 16 years ago, Walker Sands built the firm around the full spectrum of earned, owned, and paid media with offerings such as online reputation management, content marketing, data-driven campaigns and digital marketing. This thinking is applied to clients like Accenture Interactive, CompTIA, Grubhub, OneLogin (new), Sprout Social (new) and Worldpay, among others.

Notable client work includes #MakeTechHerStory with CompTIA (a non-profit IT association) to close the IT gender gap. The integrated campaign included a research driven e-book, interactive microsite, documentary-style video, social promotion, media relations and direct mail. Walker Sands also helped Manta, an online resource for small businesses, survey small business

owners on a range of topics, from their top political concerns to ballot picks. The data fueled a Manta blog series, and garnered 230+ placements in outlets such as CNBC and The Associated Press. President even Trump retweeted one of the placements, prompting his campaign to cite it across multiple external communications.

The firm calls its 2016 expansion to San Francisco “inevitable” and ultimately decided on the challenging route of re-locating two veteran employees to the remarkably insular market. In 2016, Walker Sands also began to document best practices for successfully executing projects across its PR, digital and creative practice areas, and establish new roles to oversee cross-functional campaigns. Also its in-house video team launched and grew a portfolio of thought leadership, event

coverage and documentary-style productions to showcase clients’ stories and amplify its own marketing efforts. President Mike Santoro has been at the helm since 2008 (growing Walker Sands from six to more than 75), COO Ellen Hanson leads strategic planning, budgeting and corporate training, alongside the rest of the management team.

The firm has excelled at producing interesting thought-leadership like the State of Marketing Technology 2017 that explores how B2B organizations approach marketing technology; the Free Donut Experiment to understand how employees receive and share information; and the Where They’re Going, They Don’t Want Roadmaps on how US college students perceive careers and employers in the consulting industry. — AaS

North America New PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

VESTED (INDEPENDENT)

Billed as a ‘new communications agency for a new financial industry’, Vested was founded in 2015 by CEO Dan Simon and president Binna Kim, who previously led the US offices of Cognito. During its first year of operation, the duo were joined by other ex-Cognito alumni, including COO Ishviene Arora and chief creative officer Ali Wells. The leadership team is rounded out by Kevin Trowbridge, a software consultant who serves as Vested’s chief technology officer.

Vested’s spectacular growth (up 317% in 2016 to \$3.5m) is underpinned by a commitment to understanding the transformation underway in the financial industry. As technology changes the way people think about financial services, Vested has focused on helping banks, asset managers and other institutions navigate this shift, resulting in significant assignments from Axioma,

Backstop Solutions, Bloomberg, Carbon Trade Exchange, Elevate, Golub Capital, Investopedia, MoneyLion, PeerStreet and Xenomorph, along with new business from Clarity Money, D+H, Diebold Nixdorf, The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation, Misys, Oakam, Quantitative Brokers, Rockefeller & Co., SmartBiz Loans and WorldRemit.

Now numbering 16 staffers, Vested’s approach reflects a willingness to embrace change. Like any new firm, Vested makes much of its model, which involves employee ownership, an unlimited vacation policy and a fresh perspective on an industry that is much-maligned. The agency has established an investment fund, Vested Ventures, that makes direct investments in startups, while Vested’s chief economist sells economic and financial forecasting to clients. The firm also plans to enter the news publishing and events businesses soon. That disruptive mentality is also showcased in

Vested’s client work, notably the ‘Business of Star Wars’ effort for storied hedge fund Citadel. — AS

Finalist

REIS GROUP (INDEPENDENT)

Specializing in health, healthcare, science, and social issues, the Reis Group was founded last year by Sharon Reis and a veteran team of 11, many of whom hail from GYMR Public Relations. Already, the firm has inked a slew of notable client relationships, including The Advisory Board Company/EAB; Alzheimer’s Prevention Initiative; American Gastroenterological Association; Banner Health & Banner Alzheimer’s Institute; Blue Shield California Foundation; Duke University’s Leadership Program in Integrative Healthcare; National Academy of Medicine; Society for Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology; Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of

America; and, Society of Interventional Radiology.

The Reis Group's approach is underpinned by a collaborative

culture that delivers senior counsel, particularly in the critical area of patient engagement. 25-year PR veteran Sharon Reis is supported by Tamara Moore, Lauren Musiol and

Hieu Nguyen, with the firm's best work including efforts to establish Banner Alzheimer's Institute as a national player, and promote Digestive Disease Week. — AS

Canadian PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

VERITAS (MDC PARTNERS)

Originally established in 1993 as a healthcare communications specialist, Veritas has diversified over the years and today focuses on 'influencing the influencers,' drawing on a 'custom convergence' model that brings together cross-functional teams and multichannel solutions to ensure the appropriate solution for a range of complex challenges. Based in Toronto, Veritas has built its reputation by staying ahead of the increasingly complex and changing media universe, an approach that is clearly paying off if the firm's stellar growth and campaign work is any guide.

Now numbering 65 people across offices in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, Veritas grew its fee income by 12% in 2016 to US\$8.3m, powered by new business from Audible, Kijiji, General Mills, Bayer, Kimberly-Clark, Revlon, Collegium Pharmaceuticals, Tangerine, Metro/FoodBasics and Volkswagen. They join a client roster that already includes Microsoft, CBC, Subway, Labatt, Church and Dwight, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, and other brands from Kimberly Clark and Bayer.

The new business haul is impressive enough, but under president/CEO Krista Webster, it is Veritas' development into a credible creative contender that is particularly worthy of recognition. Veritas' 'Bring Back the Bees' work for Honey Nut Cheerios represents an ideal example of this approach, blending word-of-mouth and influencer marketing to deliver real business results and win

numerous awards. The firm's workplace culture, via the ROWE (Results-Oriented Work Environment) concept, also stands out, as does its commitment to influencer research, via its proprietary Influencer Impact methodology. — AS

Finalists

CITIZEN RELATIONS (BLUEFOCUS)

With 60 consultants working across offices in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Quebec City, Citizen Relations has long been one of Canada's leading PR firms, with particular strength in consumer marketing which has been significantly bolstered by investment in digital analytics and planning, influencer research and marketing and integrated creative capabilities -- from strategic planning to deep creative leadership.

After leading Citizen's Canadian operations for several years, North American president Nick Cowling has worked to export the firm's strategic planning and integrated communications functions to its US offices. That speaks to the depth of insight and creativity within Citizen's Canadian base, which has helped it new business from the likes of PepsiCo Foods, Molson Coors Canada, Dyson, Intuit, Tourism Australia, eHarmony and Tim Hortons. They join an existing Canadian client roster that also includes the Egg Farmers of Canada, P&G, Emirates and Disney.

There was eye-catching work for PC Organics, for which Citizen created the PC Babylicious program, raising awareness of the brand among millennial mothers with toddlers.

And the firm continued to develop a strong strategic planning function, which also resulted in the creation of offshoot agency The Colony Project. — AS

ENVIRONICS (INDEPENDENT)

Independent Canadian PR firm Environics has not typically sought out the limelight, but its continued strong performance remains worthy of recognition. Founded by Bruce MacLellan in 1994, Environics has brought pioneering mindset to much of its expansion since, and now operates wholly-owned offices in Toronto, Ottawa, and Washington, DC, along with minority ownership of Capital Image in Montreal.

Environics' sister company, Environics Research, has meant the agency has always used a data-driven approach to its consulting work, helping it retain a client base of uncommonly long tenure, including many for more than 15 years (The Globe & Mail, Panasonic, Queen's University, Edward Jones). In 2016, there was new business from Shopify, Dell/EMC, Electrical Safety Authority, TD Bank, Thomson Reuters, Soda Stream, National Bank, MasterCard Foundation, EQ Bank and Campbell Company of Canada, joining a client roster that also features Netflix, eBay / StubHub, Catelli, Allstate Insurance, Loblaw Companies Limited, and Boehringer Ingelheim.

All of that helped Environics report growth of 14% in 2016 to US\$14m, bolstered by a willingness to diversify its thinking beyond traditional PR activity. Last year, for example, Environics created its first 30-second TV spot for a major CPG brand, and also made major hires in data/

analytics (Rob Clark from Edelman) and paid media (Matthew Naftalin). In addition to MacLellan, the firm's leadership team includes SVPs Mimi Carter, Greg MacEachern, Josh Cobden and Vanessa Eaton, along with digital strategy VP Andrew Kinnear.

Much of Environics' work focuses on health sciences, consumer products, technology, financial services and associations, helping it develop particular strength across in corporate communications, public affairs, experiential (via sister company Free For All Marketing), government relations, social media and video production. That approach helped drive some impressive integrated work last year, for Catelli, Fisher Price, Allstate Canada and Ontario Tire Stewardship. Now in its second year, furthermore, the firm's CanTrust Index has received coast-to-coast news coverage, and serves as an ongoing platform for thought leadership activities aimed at clients, prospects and the industry. — AS

NATIONAL PR (RES PUBLICA)

Founded in 1976, National PR's growth into one of Canada's largest communications firms is no accident. For 40 years, the firm has delivered strong credentials across the healthcare, energy and professional knowledge sectors, along with the country's top financial communications & investor relations

practice. Now part of the Res Publica group, National operates offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, Saint John, Halifax and St. John's, serving a client list that includes Novo Nordisk, Roche, Ford Motor Company, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Vifor International, Sunovion Pharmaceuticals, Shire, Pfizer, McDonald's and Novartis.

In 2016, growth at the firm was powered by new business from Deloitte and Sephora, along with some significant, confidential assignments. The Alberta energy crisis posed a challenge for National's Calgary offices, which it overcame by working closely with the Conference Board of Canada's Emissions Roundtable to increase visibility and by putting in place a transfer program for Calgary consultants.

Founded by Luc Beauregard, National is today led by chairman Andrew Molson and president/CEO Jean-Pierre Vasseur. There were several new hires last year, including new VPs in government relations, marketing communications, corporate communications and public affairs. And the firm's thought leadership remains a strong driver of its business success, thanks to the Bold Thinking Report, an annual study of the predominant value systems guiding Canadians, and the Belief Based Behaviour (B3) digital ethnographic research, which focuses on which values are important to

Canadians today and why. That kind of thinking helped National develop some above-average campaign work, particularly in the healthcare sector, covering idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, metastatic breast cancer, and pediatric vaccination. — AS

WEBER SHANDWICK (IPG)

Six years of double-digit growth in Canada have helped Weber Shandwick establish itself as perhaps the strongest of the US-based multinationals in a market where most of the plaudits continue to go to home-grown agencies.

Moving to a single P&L for the Canadian market six years ago was clearly a major factor in the firm's turnaround, as was the adaption of the global agency's "engagement engine" model, and an emphasis on both professional development and workplace culture under the leadership of Greg Power, who joined as president in 2010 after leadership roles at Edelman and Optimum.

Weber Shandwick now has 75 people across three offices (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) and a client roster that includes the likes of McDonald's (the firm is now agency of record across the country), KPMG (for which WS manages storytelling efforts nationally), Florida Citrus, GM, the Healthy Grains Institute (telling the nutrition story for bread) and RBC (everything from crisis preparedness to corporate citizenship). — PH

North America Consumer Agencies of the Year

Winner

MARINA MAHER COMMUNICATIONS (OMNICOM GROUP)

There are some things Marina Maher's firm has always done well: it always viewed its role in terms of brand-building rather than product publicity and emphasized engagement over coverage. And there are some things that it has learned to do more recently, staying

ahead of the changes roiling the PR industry: MMC has an impressive commitment to data and analytics, and to integrating digital and social tools, content creation, and brand activation in service of its clients' marketing objectives — and, rather than resting on its many laurels, took the opportunity last year to reorganize its offering into four groups: brand and business leadership; strategy and insights;

content, engagement and influence, creative ideation and execution.

From a single office in New York (albeit supplemented these days through partnerships with Omnicom global sister agencies), MMC manages efforts for global giants such as P&G, Johnson & Johnson, Celgene, Eisai, Galderma, Bayer and Merck, as well as for new clients such as Coty,

Glenmark, Happy Family Brands, and Braun Grooming.

The scope of the firm's consumer work remains highly impressive, netting it plenty of metal at awards shows, including the In2 SABRE competition, where its work for Covergirl, Kotex and Head & Shoulders all won acclaim from judges, while its Merck for Mothers work also stands out. That helps to explain how MMC grew more than 20% last year, bolstered by a number of new hires in key strategic growth areas including creative, digital, healthcare, corporate and data analytics.

MMC's understanding of consumer work, underpinned by an industry-leading approach to insight and creativity, also extends to corporate work — in recognition of the ways that brand marketing work now requires a sophisticated understanding of corporate reputation. And there has been considerable innovation in terms of MMC's product offering, covering such areas as social engagement, influencer 'acceleration', 'moments-based marketing' and trend analysis — all pointing to an agency that is at the top of its game, regularly outperforming larger global networks when it comes to coveted marketing assignments, and often producing work that delivers ROI and emotional resonance.

While the new structure means that there are a number of new titles, the senior leadership team remains settled. The firm continues to be led by founder and CEO Marina Maher; supported by chief integration officer Diana Littman, executive director Nancy Lowman LaBadie; chief engagement officer Susan Bean; ECD Ted Sabarese; new chief strategy officer Joydeep Dey; and, David Richeson, chief of digital innovation and influence.

Great work included Covergirl's Star Wars product integration; real-time marketing for Head & Shoulders;

work to help Merck for Mothers address maternal mortality; and a great new digital campaign for Acuvue. — AS/PH

Finalists

CURRENT MARKETING (IPG)

In late 2015, Current founder Virginia Devlin came up with a new positioning for her 10-year-old firm ("Marketing for Real Lives") that appears to have energized the firm's 50 employees and enticed new clients, including Heineken, Mary Kay, Munchkin, Radio Flyer and the Willow Breast Pump to join a roster that already included Chuck E Cheese's, The Clorox Company (eight brands), Club Med, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, Johnsonville, Mars (goodnessknows), Megabus.com, Samsung Home Appliances and Shamrock Farms, growing fees by 14% to around \$12 million.

Last year also saw the launch of a new influencer marketing practice (named Akela, after the wolf pack leader in the Jungle Book) and the recruitment of new talent including head of strategy Seth Goldberg, formerly group planning director at FCB Chicago, and San Francisco EVP Erica McCabe, whose background includes roles with Gap, Levi Strauss and FleishmanHillard, and who oversees work on Clorox brands Hidden Valley, Kingsford and Soy Vay while also leading new business efforts.

The firm also picked up a record haul of awards, for its Hidden Valley Ranch "Taste Not Waste" campaign, a CSR campaign connecting Brita and basketball great Stephen Curry, the Glad brand's #GladtoShare World Food Day campaign and more. The firm is nominated for a SABRE for its work helping Kingsford "Take Back Opening Day," while other highlights included helping the Willow Breast Pump steal headlines at the Consumer Electronics Show and

supporting Samsung's foray into smart digital devices. — PH

DEVRIES GLOBAL (IPG)

Last year, DeVries Global published research into what the firm calls "brandbiguity," suggesting that much of the content created by modern marketers was missing the mark, and suggesting that DeVries could help brands restore their relevance—creating "brand imprints" grounded in values and cultural connections. To a certain extent, the research created precisely that kind of renewed relevance for the agency itself, helping to redefine a firm that had been struggling to differentiate itself in recent years, even as it expanded with a genuinely global footprint (fewer than half of its 200 people are in the New York headquarters these days).

Other important developments includes the launch of DeVries+, a bespoke client proposition drawing on IPG resources; DeCIPHER@ DeVries, a scientific communications offering in partnership with sister firms Element and DNA; and DeLuxe, a network of independent beauty specialists. The addition of Colby Vogt from FleishmanHillard strengthened business intelligence capabilities, and Simona Margarito came from JWT to lead the Pantene business.

So while 2016 presented some significant challenges—another P&G consolidation, the loss of Gallo and Sam Adams—there were some equally critical successes. DeVries picked up new work from Altar'd State, BJ's Wholesale Club, IHOP, Jibo (a "social robot" for the home), Johnson's Baby (global and US), and Staples, adding to a client roster that includes Celebrity Cruises, Coty Professional Beauty, Markwins International, P&G Beauty (Olay, Pantene and Secret), Samsung Mobile (global fashion strategy), Sherwin Williams and Zippo.

The work included Pantene's Dad-Do campaign, built on the insight that

girls who spend quality time with their Dads grow up to be more confident women; “The World’s Longest Yard Sale” for Sherwin Williams’ Krylon brand; and the launch of #staywild for Wet’n’Wild. — PH

FRENCH/WEST/VAUGHAN (INDEPENDENT)

Some of the things cutting edge firms of today are doing—the expansion into paid media, for example—French/West/Vaughan was doing 15 years ago, when the then-Richard French & Associates acquired local creative shop French & Vaughan, a deal followed by acquisitions spanning licensing, multimedia content creation, entertainment and Hispanic marketing and — last year — pet and veterinary-focused PR. The result is that FWV has evolved into a \$23 million public relations agency (fees were up 10% last year) that can provide a full-service integrated marketing capability to national clients such as Wrangler (a client since the day the firm opened its doors), ABB, Bassett Furniture, German coffee purveyor Melitta, and Berkshire Hathaway-owned Justin Boots, while providing highly-specialized services, most notably in the sports and western lifestyle categories, to clients including athletes and sporting bodies.

Last year’s North American Consumer PR Agency of the Year continued its impressive progress in 2016, adding new business from Greater Raleigh CVB; Concord Hospitality Group; Paralyzed Veterans of America; Fleet

Feet; The WHO Cares Foundation/ Teen Cancer America; We Text; State of Louisiana Film & Entertainment Office; Locus Biosciences; Pennington Biomedical at Louisiana State University; and Shipt. Many of the Louisiana-based clients came onboard alongside new AVP Brad Grantham, while other senior appointments included creative director Dean Logan, SVP Kirsten Levine (via the Fetching Communications acquisition) and Liz Lindley as New York head.

But it is French/West/Vaughan’s work that distinguishes it from many of its peers, evidenced by its campaign for Wrangler, which continues to set new standards in branded journalism and content marketing. Another standout effort saw F/W/V Our convince President Obama to visit a client’s manufacturing facility in Jacksonville, FL, providing a good example of how PR can serve at the intersection of advocacy and public policy.— AS

HUNTER PUBLIC RELATIONS (MDC PARTNERS)

Founded 28 years ago, Hunter Public Relations has emerged in recent years as one of the brightest stars in New York’s consumer PR firmament. Under the leadership of Grace Leong (herself Hunter’s first employee under founder Barbara Hunter), the firm has established itself as the nation’s second-largest food and beverage player, with MDC Partners swooping to acquire its operations in 2014. Since then, there has been no slowdown at all, with Hunter growing

15% in 2016 to \$23.5m, driven by all three of its practice areas — food and beverage, home and lifestyle, and health and beauty.

Indeed, last year was something of a banner year for client relationships at Hunter. The firm’s long-term partners include six who have been onboard for a decade or longer, notably McIlhenny Company’s Tabasco brand (28 years), 3M (21 years), and Johnson & Johnson (10 years). There was new business from Plum Organics; Pepperidge Farm (Tim Tam); returning client Idahoan; BIC Consumer Products; Stanley Black & Decker; Johnson & Johnson (Visine, Band-Aid); and, Church & Dwight (Topik).

All of which suggests an agency that is firing on all cylinders, bolstered by a workplace culture that is consistently recognized among the nation’s best. Hunter’s specialist capabilities made particular gains in 2016, accounting for 25% of revenue. Digital grew by 65%, led by work for Post Honey Bunches of Oats (the ‘This is Everything’ video customization campaign); Simmons Beautyrest (a social campaign starring Tom Brady); and new assignments from Tabasco and Pepperidge Farm. Hispanic marketing was up almost 50%, including eye-catching work for Johnnie Walker, and the entertainment/sports practice completed 14 major talent deals for Hunter clients including Johnson & Johnson, PowerBar and Smithfield, eight of whom were athletes, growing fee billings from this service by almost 20%. — AS

North America Corporate/B2B Agencies of the Year

Winner

PROSEK PARTNERS (INDEPENDENT)

Another of the growing cadre of midsize players that are outperforming the overall market, the 25-year-old Prosek Partners benefits from in-depth knowledge of the financial and

professional service sectors, bringing a broad range of services and skills from an entrepreneurial culture that is led by CEO Jennifer Prosek. In 2016, fees grew by an eye-catching 29% to \$31.5m, powered by new business from Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Glenview, Blackstone,

EY, Prudential and Nuveen, and by the acquisition of LA’s Muirfield Partners to extend geographical reach and strengthen M&A and crisis communications capabilities.

That deal resulted in Mickey Mandelbaum joining the agency as

partner, with the hire of partner Andy Merrill also helping to expand Prosek's already strong financial services offering into transactions communications, issues and crisis management services. Indeed, Prosek has always prided itself as functioning as something of an 'outsourced marketing department' for its key clients, illustrated well by work for EY (an 'extreme makeover' of its annual TAS report) and PGIM (successful reputation building for Prudential Financial's \$1tn investment management business). — PH

Finalists

FAHLGREN MORTINE (INDEPENDENT)

Now 55 years old, fiercely independent Ohio firm Fahlgren Mortine shows little sign of slipping into obsolescence, growing revenues by 19% to \$24.4m in 2016 under the leadership of CEO Neil Mortine. The firm's B2B capabilities remain more sophisticated than most, bolstered by investment in marketing automation and data analytics, at a firm that has typically been ahead of the curve when it comes to blending public relations with digital strategy and creative content.

The firm's B2B portfolio benefits from its consumer capabilities, enabling Fahlgren Mortine to tap into more innovative solutions for clients across the technology, education healthcare and tourism sectors. The firm's B2B Peer Summits — shortlisted at the In2 SABRE Awards — also catch the eye, providing in-house networking and learning for B2B prospects and clients, and driving more than \$200,000 in agency income.

Campaign highlights include work for TravelNevada and Wyoming Office of Tourism that blends consumer and corporate to strong effect. — AS

GROUP GORDON (INDEPENDENT)

There's a false perception in our business that firms either excel at

strategy or execution — and those who can do both are unicorns of sorts. Part of Group Gordon's positioning is to dispel that stubborn myth with high-end service that aligns communications plans with business outcomes.

The firm tends to work with organizations doing good — philanthropies, nonprofits and responsible businesses. This niche has paid off with significant growth nearly every year, high client retention and building a non-bureaucratic culture (the firm has consistently has a strong showing on our Best Agencies to Work For). Group Gordon has 24 employees and has grown 25% over the last two years and retained 91% of clients in 2016. Among those: Dunbar, AssetMark, Shake Shack, H2O+ Beauty, DonorsChoose.org and new clients Willis Towers Watson, Global Policy Solutions, Habitat for Humanity NYC and others. CEO Michael Gordon runs the firm with a leadership bench that includes COO Jeremy Robinson-Leon, John Keaten and Lana Gersten.

Notable work includes that for DonorsChoose.org that challenged Americans to support a classroom project and make it the #BestSchoolDay. On #BestSchoolDay, the campaign revealed that 50 celebrities, philanthropists, and business leaders were "flash funding" all classroom projects in their home communities — more than \$14 million. There was also a storytelling-based call-to-action strategy to inspire citizens to fund 20k projects: 30 celebrities created personal videos sharing "best school day" stories and asking others to take part. #BestSchoolDay was the biggest day in DonorsChoose.org's history, raising \$16.8 million from 33k+ individual donors. — AaS

LAMBERT, EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES (INDEPENDENT)

Lambert Edwards & Associates markets itself as "The PR Firm That

Can Read an Income Statement." That might (hopefully) not be quite the differentiator that it was 18 years ago, when LE&A was starting out, but it does capture a business-oriented results-driven mindset that has helped the firm (which has offices in Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids establish itself as the leader in the Michigan market and one of the top corporate and financial PR firms in the Midwest.

With a team of 40 from agency, Wall Street, public policy and journalism backgrounds, the firm's heritage is in investor relations, transaction communications, corporate and B2B PR, crisis and issues management, and public affairs, but the past few years have seen an expansion of the firm's digital and social media capabilities through its Ripple+ Affect unit, which offers web development and online advertising expertise and has been adding social listening and video storytelling offers.

Last year started with the discouraging news that LE&A's largest client, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (8% of the firm's revenue) was moving on, but president and managing partner Jeffrey Lambert committed to a new strategic plan, the implementation of a performance-based culture and greater financial transparency, and the firm picked up work from Peak Resorts, MGP Ingredients, Spectrum Health, Flint Chamber, Flint Community Schools, Detroit Public Schools, Ferris Coffee and Nut, Swift Biosciences, Rainbow Childcare, and Horizon Global, joining a roster that includes Blackford Capital, Continental Automotive, Inventure Foods, Michigan Economic Development Corp., Mercantile Bank, Michigan Department of Education, Spartan Motors and more and growing by 6% (an 18th straight year of growth) to end the year with fees of around \$7.5 million. — PH

TAFT (INDEPENDENT)

More than three decades after its founding, Taft is amid a resurgence of sorts as its focus has shifted to PR, social media branding and leadership comms. The firm likens its ambition to the trajectory of fellow New Jersey locals Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen — “what started out as a hot act locally has turned into a globally respected brand.” The firm has tripled in revenue over the last three years with clients that span across health, education, energy, public policy, and the environmental sector.

Revenues are up 50% to \$3.6m with 17 employees with backgrounds that include a former nonprofit CEO, an

actor, a former head of compliance & ethics for an international corporation, two gubernatorial press secretaries, an art historian, an online magazine editor, and a PhD in English. Clients include ReThink Energy NJ (interestingly, for a campaign to stop unneeded natural gas pipelines and promote renewable energy), MedAvante, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Acadia Pharmaceuticals, DiversityInc, RWJBarnabas Health and Samsung Bioepis. New wins include the Fund for New Jersey, Cubic Transportation Systems,, International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, among others.

Founders Mara Connolly Taft and Pete Taft still lead the organization as creative director and CEO, respectively. The management team includes president Ted Deutsch and VP Jayne O’Conner that oversee a team that hasn’t experienced churn in four years. The firm developed Taft ClearPoint as its leadership communications service designed to “spark change in organizations and individuals” via tailor-made workshops, coaching and video production. Also two of its principals have led diversity & inclusion efforts in-house and the firm was recognized by PR News’ Diversity in PR Awards for its inaugural “New Jersey State of Diversity” Survey in 2016. — AaS

North America Creative Agencies of the Year

Winner

MULLEN LOWE (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

Since 2015, MullenLowe has consistently delivered Best in Show caliber work in both the Gold and Innovation SABRE Awards. Its signature work for American Greetings — “World’s Toughest Job” — clearly wasn’t a flash-in-the-pan, not that there should have been any doubt.

For example, its JetBlue FlyBabies campaign won the Brand Video category at the Innovation SABRE Awards earlier this year while also making the Best in Show shortlist. “This changes my perception of babies crying on flights and I’ll think of this every time I hear one now” is what one of the judges said. That’s exactly what this campaign intended. Also consider MullenLowe’s follow-up work with American Greeting. The campaign disrupted SXSW by going totally analog at a digital festival as a way to combat the notion that greeting cards are dead. The “Give Dad Nothing” work with Century 21 allowed people to literally give their dads “nothing” on Father’s Day with

a parcel of Nothing, Arizona — an uninhabited ghost town about 120 miles from Phoenix.

Over the past year, the firm has bundled more of its services within the larger MullenLowe brand adding new dimensions like CEM/CRM, shopper marketing, SEO and experiential to its PR work. Managing partner Sheila Leyne has overseen the PR group for more than 20 years with a leadership bench that includes SVPs Tony Labriola, Kelly Burke and Jaclyn Ruelle.

Revenues grew by 18% in 2016, making this the sixth consecutive year of double-digit growth (the agency as a whole has grown more than 100% over the past six years). In addition to American Greetings and JetBlue, clients include Capital One, Century 21 Real Estate, Naked Juice and Tropicana Probiotics, Unilever (new), Country Crock (new) and Atrium Innovations (new).

MullenLowe has again and again proven itself reliable for creating buzzworthy pop culture moments that actually break through. — AaS

Finalists

360PR+ (INDEPENDENT)

2016 was certainly a big year for 360PR+ — the firm marked its 15th year, 5+ consecutive years of growth, took on a rebranding and racked up accolades, including ranking in the top 10 on the Holmes Report Creativity Index and taking home three trophies between the Innovation and Gold SABRE Awards.

360PR+ believes in “inspiring a love affair with brands” and while the language might seem flowery, it’s impressive because the firm’s big thinking actually delivers on this. For instance, to grow Ball Canning’s popularity among younger consumers, 360PR+ crafted a multi-layered campaign around limiting food waste that resulted in a tangible sales bump. “Love that this campaign includes smart research, social purpose, brilliant creative and amazing results,” according to the Innovation SABRE judges. For Honeywell, 360PR+ tapped an environmental consulting firm to compile a list of America’s Sweatiest Cities, winning the firm its second

Innovation SABRE Award trophy for 2017.

It was also roster-building year for 360PR+. The agency added a travel practice after winning Virgin Atlantic, Home Away (Expedia), Avis, in addition to winning business with Drizly, Pete & Gerry's Organics, Nintendo and National Geographic. The agency continues to boast one of the strongest portfolios for a consumer shop its size with longstanding clients including Liberty Mutual Insurance, Peapod, WellPet, Stonyfield, Tommee Tippee, Stride Rite, Jelly Belly, Walkers Shortbread, and Meredith Publishing. Revenues topped \$8m — up slightly from 2015 — with 45 people across four US offices in Boston, New York, San Francisco, Washington DC. — AaS

OLSON ENGAGE (ICF OLSON)

Olson Engage—the PR, social media and experiential division of marketing services firm ICF Olson—has enjoyed its greatest creative successes with opportunistic campaign that tapped into the cultural zeitgeist of the moment: helping Belize turn a seemingly dismissive line of dialogue on Breaking Bad into a PR campaign, working with Skittles and football icon Marshawn Lynch, and most recently partnering Blue Bunny with LeBron James to serve free ice-cream to Cleveland sports fans.

It's an approach that has helped the firm attract a blue-chip client roster. Last year, it added PR agency of record assignments for Jim Beam, Kraft Macaroni & Cheese and Velveeta, PepsiCo's Amp Energy; social media agency of record work for Café Press and Pilsner Urquell; PR and experiential work for Chobani; and corporate work for United Health Group (employee engagement) and Servicemaster. They join Behr, Bissell, Disney Consumer Products, Johnson Controls, McDonald's, MillerCoors, Reynolds Consumer Products, Target and Wrigley. The same approach has

also established Olson as one of the industry's top 10 employer brands.

That positioning will likely be strengthened by a 2016 cultural initiative that saw Olson redefining its own purpose—"to create meaningful impact for our clients and meaningful opportunities for our people"—and ensuring that creativity is a "method, not a department," baked into every account and every team member.

Fee income was up 14% in 2016 to \$24 million, and Olson Engage now has close to 130 people in its Chicago office and outposts in Minneapolis, New York. — PH

PADILLA (INDEPENDENT)

In the marketing services sector, creativity is largely associated with consumer campaigns, splashy stunts, and cutting-edge content. But the reality is that it can often be more challenging to come up with big ideas for less glamorous business-to-business brands. And that is one of the areas where Minneapolis-based Padilla—which racked up five SABRE Awards nominations this year—excels.

It has now been almost four years since Padilla Speer Beardsley merged with CRT/Tanaka to create an agency with a significant national footprint but also seemed to slow progress while the acquisition was absorbed. But 2016 was the year when momentum was restored: the acquisition of highly-regarded Chicago agency FoodMinds added strategic capabilities and a new practice; the addition of the Welch's account helped contribute to double-digit growth (the firm ended 2016 just shy of \$40 million), and a rebrand early in 2017 signaled that the firm was moving forward again.

The strongest signal on that front was the quality of the work, however. It ranged from helping to position Cargill as a horse-feed brand; helping healthcare provider Concordia Plan Services with reputation

management; marketing Wilsonart to professional designers; getting consumers excited about blueberries for the US Highbush Blueberry Council; and disrupting the water conservation conversation for Niagara Conservation.

The firm's own creative resources are supplemented by two important resources: brand consultancy Joe Smith and research firm SMS Research Advisors. — PH

PMK*BNC (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

PMK*BNC has truly earned its positioning as the agency that bridges brands with pop culture — and its dominance here becomes increasingly clear as competitors race to catch up. While the category that it helped to create becomes more crowded, PMK*BNC continues to stand out with its portfolio of work that has become even more sophisticated, creative and complex.

Consider, for instance, PMK*BNC worked on some of the most talked about Super Bowl moments this year: Audi's "Daughter" campaign taking on gender equality, T-Mobile's #UnlimitedMoves with Justin Bieber and Budweiser's "Born the Hard Way" about immigration, plus the work for Lady Gaga's Pepsi halftime show. The Audi commercial incurred unexpected backlash, forcing PMK*BNC to quickly quell an onslaught of negativity mostly on social media.

It's not surprising that PMK*BNC worked on so many high-profile moments considering its impressive track record for securing — and maintaining — client trust. Audi is, after all, a longstanding PMK*BNC client that has been with the agency for more than five years and 156% market growth. PMK*BNC has been with T-Mobile through 13 launches, handling its entertainment, talent procurement and project PR work. Longtime client Samsung worked with PMK*BNC on its highly-acclaimed Samsung Suicide Squad

campaign that features exclusive, immersive VR content.

Growth was essentially flat in 2016, but its brands business grew key clients, ranging from 3%-20% on an individual client basis. In 2016 global

revenue was between \$55M – \$65M range with approximately 300 people across offices in New York and London (the firm also has a London office). Other key clients include American Express, Matthew

McConaughey, Sandra Bullock, the Weinstein Company, plus new wins such as Kate Upton and Activision Blizzard Studios. Michael Nyman, Cindi Berger and Chris Robichaud remain at the helm as co-CEOs.— AaS

North America Digital Agencies of the Year

Winner

ALLISON + PARTNERS (MDC PARTNERS)

The calibre of work from Allison + Partners is, frankly speaking, the best that it's ever been. We've long recognized Allison as one of the best rounded firms in its size category, yet Allison didn't quite have the game-changing signature campaign to cap its digital and creative investments.

That's no longer the case — and to explain, let's start with the Pope. In 2016, the firm produced a global event at on behalf of its Stem For Life Foundation client that was attended by Pope Francis and Joe Biden, among a host of other VIPs from around the world. The Innovation SABRE judges called this campaign "perfect" for its flawless execution across media, social and digital. Moving on, Allison teamed up with MDC sister firms 72andSunny & the Media Kitchen for Seventh Generation client in a campaign that features Maya Rudolph riffing a jingle about feminine care. And for its Kampgrounds of America client, Allison delivered a stunning integrated campaign to update and diversify perceptions around camping. Allison was shortlisted was 11 Innovation SABRE Awards in 2017.

This creative outburst coincides with Allison launching its All Told digital storytelling department last year that encompasses a four-part methodology of research-driven insights to inspire strategy that unfolds through innovative

storytelling that's measured by results.

While Allison certainly had a standout year for its work, business performance softened as the firm saw single-digit growth in the US with revenues hitting \$47.2m (\$55m globally). Even so, the agency grew 90% of its existing clients, including expanding relationships with its two of its largest clients Samsung Electronics America and Toyota North America (Allison became the automaker's national AOY in 2016). Other clients include: Dannon, Hulu, PepsiCo, Quaker, Fox Home Entertainment, Progressive Insurance, Auntie Anne's and Dignity Health.

CEO Scott Allison continues to lead the firm with co-founders Andy Hardie-Brown, Jonathan Heit and Scott Pansky. But there were some notable departures last year, notably longstanding Western region president Phil Carpenter and Social Impact lead Henk Campher. — AaS

Finalists

DAY ONE (INDEPENDENT)

It's hard to believe it was only last year that Day One was named the Holmes Report's New Agency of the Year. With a client roster that includes American Express, Comcast, Facebook, Marriott International, YouTube — along with several other world-class brands that we can't list here — it feels like Day One is more established than four years, which is when founders Josh Rosenberg, Brad

Laney and Rob Longert went rogue from M Booth.

Already, Day One is \$6m in revenues, up 36% from the previous year with 33 employees across offices in New York and Los Angeles delivering on its mission: "to stop the world in its scroll." The agency recently restructured under the inspiration of Walt Disney circa 1943 when the corporation was organized around stories. Each team is built around a narrative at its core, rather than any marketing discipline.

Also in 2016, Day One launched its influencer marketing offering Project Neon designed to help brands become 'in' platform vs. just 'on' platform to create authentic connections. "We don't rely on existing influencer databases or robots to generate lists or match brands to influencers," says Rosenberg. "Instead, we use platform data, paired with human intuition to surface relevant and impactful influencers. Anyone can find a 500K follower influencer but when their feed is filled with branded posts, the value of what they're saying diminishes."

Work with American Express and the National Historic Trust for Historic Preservation included a grassroots campaign to decide the future of \$2m in funding for National Parks. Day One created 25 original assets for the campaign and activated a National Geographic media partnership — and resulted in one million audience votes. The In2 SABRE judges also took notice nominating the work in both the Identity Branding and Social Good categories. — AaS

RBB COMMUNICATIONS (INDEPENDENT)

Rbb's presence on this list might have raised a few eyebrows had it taken place a couple of years ago, but the firm's acquisition of Spiderboost Communications has brought website development, paid search and digital media buying capabilities to an offering that already counted as one of the smartest in terms of consumer and creative PR. That deal, along with the purchase Out of the Blue Advertising, gives rbb a considerably integrated offering, helping the Miami-based firm grow 22% to \$9m in 2016, with its 20% margin continuing to rank among the industry's best.

The numbers are not the only proof of rbb's digital expansion. Last year, the firm also scored a uniquely integrated assignment from Jackson Health System, worth upwards of \$4m in billings. It was also named digital AOR for DHL Express, and added digital work from Goodwill Industries and The Education Fund, along with further consumer business from HiltonWorldwide, AMResorts and Virgin Cruises.

Unsurprisingly, the internal reorientation of rbb's offering has not been without its challenges. The firm focused on its tech infrastructure on workplace culture to ensure a seamless integration of the new capabilities, helping it add digital business from more than 40% of the firm's existing clients, under the leadership of Abdul Muhammad II of rbb's Digital Park and Armando Martinez of Spiderboost. Rbb also created a new service called 'Idea Cloud', brainstorming and analyzing data to determine ways to add value to clients — ultimately resulting in major investments in video; data mining and analysis tools that help automate marketing and enhance the customer experience; advanced

influencer tracking, and programmatic media buying.

All of those efforts paid off with such work as a customized online reservation system for a restaurant chain that was unhappy with off-the-shelf products. The firm also reimagined the client's user experience with a newly designed website built for conversion, helping reservation booking hold fees increase from \$13,000 to \$127,000 a month in less than five months. — AS

MSLGROUP (PUBLICIS GROUPE)

Overall, MSLGroup's North American operations are still under-strength compared to its major peers, but its digital capabilities are among the strongest in the region. Over the past few years, it has invested in data and analytics, social listening, content creation, influencer marketing and more. The acquisition of Canada's North Strategic, a finalist for our Global Digital Agency of the Year in 2016, only added to those credentials.

But the highlight of MSL's "influence-to-impact" strategy is its Conversation2Commerce solution, which debuted last year and seeks to reinforce the credibility of earned influence with the amplification power of paid. The process begins by identifying the best, most relevant influencers and crafting the most relevant story and supporting messages. It continues by using paid components to amplify the resulting coverage, and culminates with measurement focused on consideration, purchase intent, and conversion metrics. (A new Conversation2Credibility service focuses more on reputational benefits.)

Beyond the innovation of C2C, however, there's plenty of exciting work: MSL helped P&G's Pampers brand with an influencer-led CSR campaign, designing a new product specifically for premature babies; influencer marketing and content

creation for American Express in Canada; creating a film for Allstate Foundation's PurplePurse campaign combating domestic violence through financial independence;

Finally, Publicis Groupe's "Power of One" philosophy means MSL can supplement its own capabilities by drawing on the expertise of sister agencies like SapientNitro, Digitas and Razorfish.

W2O GROUP (INDEPENDENT)

W2O Group has now outgrown the category it won last year (Midsize Agency of the Year) with several acquisitions that powered its 33% surge to \$123m. And the firm hit another big milestone last year when it sold a stake to Mountaingate Capital. Impressively, these changes have resulted in its long-standing market differentiator — digital analytics — becoming sharper and more disciplined.

Two of its three acquisitions last year deepened its digital expertise that is already great heights above many of its closest competitors. These were Marketing Tech, a social media research and insights that unearths insights for patient and healthcare professionals. In buying in Sentient W2O added digital, paid and owned media analytics to its arsenal. The private equity investment also forced the firm to make operational efficiencies including cutting away the digital services that weren't working — mainly VinTank and NextWorks.

Meanwhile, the firm's longstanding marquee digital offering, M Digital Life, continued to grow in 2016 with more than 700K digital footprints mapped across healthcare influencers around the world. For pharma clients, the W2O Group Value Report mines 2,000 conversation driving tools and maps this against an analytics framework that pulls in data on 30 different variables that impact pricing risk. It's worth noting, 80% of W2O's revenue comes from

the healthcare sector with key clients like Merck, Pfizer, Medtronic, Verizon, PepsiCo, Intel, IBM Watson Health. New wins include Sony, Philips, Comcast, Ingersoll-Rand, United Technologies, Tesco and Prostate Cancer.

W2O's analytics business — which includes social and web analytics,

data analysis, PESO media attribution, conversation aggregation and blueprinting and campaign optimization, among other areas — grew 77% in 2016 and now accounts for 23% of its revenues. Of course, there's still considerable work to do, the acquisitions are often the easy part — the real test comes with

integration. But even amid relative chaos, W2O reputation as the firm that challenges boundaries more aggressively, boldly and successfully than its peers remains untarnished. — AaS

North America Financial Agencies of the Year

Winner

JOELE FRANK (INDEPENDENT)

It was no surprise to see that Joele Frank's firm was number two in the US in terms of the number of financial transactions worked last year (and number one in terms of deal value). After all, Joele Frank Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher has been topping those charts for a while. It was a little more surprising to see the firm come in fourth on mergermarket's global table (second in value), because it's one of only a couple of major players without formal international links. Clearly, that's no disadvantage—in fact, its ability to work with multiple global partners may be an advantage.

The firm represented Monsanto in its \$65.7 billion sale to Bayer; Agrium and PotashCorp in their merger-of-equals; CenturyLink in its \$33.5 billion acquisition of Level 3 Communications; Enbridge in its \$28.0B merger with Spectra Energy; as well as deals for Symantec and Salesforce. But M&A is only part of the story at the firm, which has been a leader in investor activism, bankruptcies and restructurings, and in 2016 developed a new capability dedicated to helping companies deal with the reputation threat posed by cybersecurity breaches.

An expert when it comes to helping companies play defense in activist battles, the firm supported Arconic against Elliott Management; Buffalo Wild Wings against Marcato Capital; Chipotle Mexican Grill against

Pershing Square; iRobot against Red Mountain Capital; and The Williams Companies against Corvex Management. It also counseled Arch Coal on its successful emergence from Chapter 11; Caesars Entertainment on its complex, contested Chapter 11 reorganization; and CHC Group on the successful confirmation of its plan of reorganization.

The firm also continues to add blue-chips clients such as Chinese giant Anbang Group Holdings, Buffalo Wild Wings, Chipotle, FMC Technologies, Gannett and Yahoo! to a client roster that includes the likes of American Airlines, General Electric, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Monsanto, and Procter & Gamble. — PH

Finalists

FINSBURY (WPP)

While many of the firms in its space have been forced to diversify beyond financial transactions to add more retainer corporate reputation work, Finsbury—at least in the US—has been facing the opposite challenge. An established leader in the high-stakes corporate realm since its Robinson Lerer & Montgomery days, the firm has been expanding its financial and M&A capabilities to take advantage of the cross-border potential presented by its UK operation, a perennial leader in the M&A rankings there. And there is certainly evidence that Finsbury's US operations are making progress,

ranking sixth in Mergermarket's US M&A rankings for 2016 by value, and 11th by deal count.

Meanwhile, the firm has continued to handle high-profile work for Toyota, UnitedHealth Group and the Walgreens Boots Alliance, while also adding new business from the NBA Player's Association and Viacom last year. In New York, Paul Holmes was elevated to CEO of North America, with Michael Gross becoming vice-chairman. Ambassador Miriam Sapiro was named head of the Washington office, expanding Finsbury's public affairs capabilities, while Charlie Sipkins joined the LA office to continue building its West Coast offering. — AS

KEKST AND COMPANY (PUBLICIS GROUPE)

In the high-stakes corporate and financial advisory business, generational transition can be tricky, but at Kekst the shift that began with the appointment of 44-year-old president and CEO Jeremy Fielding in 2015 was continued in 2016 without minimal disruption to the business, with the firm continuing to rank in the top three US advisors in the M&A realm, advising on 119 deals including EMC's \$60 billion sale to Dell, the largest ever tech transaction; supporting Linde on its \$65 billion merger of equals with Praxair, Baxalta on its \$32 billion merger with Shire. LifeLock's \$2.3 billion sale to Symantec, andYum!

Brands on the spinoff of its China business.

The firm has also continued to diversify its business in restructurings and bankruptcies, mergers and acquisitions, litigation support, crisis communications, corporate governance, shareholder activism, and representing some 55+ private equity firms and hedge funds.

Highlights included continuing to advise Volkswagen on recovery from its emissions crisis; the closure of Al Jazeera America; restructurings at SunEdison and Peabody Energy; and shareholder activism for PulteGroup, LifeLock, and SeaWorld.

The new leadership team, with senior vice presidents Tom Davies, Todd Fogarty, and Lissa Perlman

supported by experienced hands Jim Fingerroth (now chairman), Jeffrey Taufield and Robert Siegfried (vice chairmen), continued to expand, as the firm recruited veterans from Wall Street and leading law firms. — PH

North America Healthcare PR Agencies of the Year

Winner

GCI HEALTH (WPP)

WPP's GCI Health unit has been the most consistent performer in the healthcare public relations space over the past five years, a fixture on this list of leaders in the category distinguished by a balance of stability—Wendy Lund and her management team providing a steady hand on the tiller—and restless innovation that has seen the integration of social media and content creation and a willingness to “break the rules” (in a good way) of traditionally staid healthcare marketing.

The firm's “Putting Patients at the Center” initiative was launched three years ago and informs almost all of GCI's work these days, from its work launching new products in areas from oncology to spinal cord injury to the opioid crisis—as well as several rare disease categories—to its expansion in biotech and medical technology.

Growth was a very impressive 21% last year, and the firm now has 150 people globally (with new offices in Philadelphia, Boston and Denver added over the past 12 months). Highlights included the launch of Abbott's Absorb, a fully-dissolving stent, with a campaign that introduced the product to consumers, not just physicians; a branded program for Biogen's Tecfidera MS treatment featuring actress Jamie-Lynn Sigler; CSR work

for Pfizer; and the long-running America's Diabetes Challenge campaign for Merck. — PH

Finalists

CHANDLER CHICCO AGENCY (INVENTIV HEALTH)

It's been a rough ride for the pharma since a few high-profile drug price spikes has stained the industry with a serious reputation crisis. But it's during crises like that firms like CCA stand out with its 20 years of expertise in healthcare-related corporate reputation, risk management and employee engagement issues.

In 2016, healthcare clients also more fiercely battled the turf wars over who owns paid and digital platforms. CCA had to re-shape the way its clients thought about media and the role of PR so teams could deliver results that support client business objectives. The agency advocated that PR is uniquely positioned to lead the multi-channel revolution by combining channel experience with audience insight and expertise. As a result, its digital and social work flourished.

All of this ultimately has helped to drive the firm's impressive 32% organic growth fueled by 11 new clients on the West Coast including breaking into new areas like healthcare finance, clinical trial recruitment, dentistry while growing its lupus, oncology and cardiovascular work. In New York, the

firm took on more oncology and corporate assignments.

The focus remains on owning the client relationship, which is especially critical for its work in the rare disease space where trust is paramount. This year, CCA also looked to more digital platforms to do this — using Google Hangouts to connect patients, nurses and create FAQs and using film to educate how drugs are developed. The firm is tapping into neuroscience when creating content to make sure the work maps back to scientifically-proven methods to create compliance and results.

Clients include Amgen, Rigel (new), Otonomy (new), Aurinia (new) and North American Neuromodulation Society (new). The US operations are led by Andrea Dagger, Lisa Waters and Julie Adrian (who is now leading Europe). — AaS

FINN PARTNERS (INDEPENDENT)

Overall, Finn Partners enjoyed another strong year in 2016, with fee income up by 8% to around \$77 million and investment from Stagwell Group promising continued acquisition growth. The technology practice remains the firm's largest and most global practice, but the healthcare group is clearly the most improved. A \$5 million group when Gil Bashe joined from Makovsky in May 2015, healthcare revenues reached \$15 million in 2016 and the practice has expanded beyond the

provider and health tech space to include a quarter of the world's top 20 pharmaceutical companies.

One of the things that has driven that growth is the firm's understanding of the modern healthcare ecosystem, and the way in which providers, payers, patients and policymakers interact to influence each others' decisions as well as those of the pharmaceutical industry. Finn has produced some important thought leadership, challenging much of the conventional wisdom in healthcare communications, and analyzing the likely impact of the Trump administration on the future of healthcare.

After the addition late in 2015 of Kristie Kuhl (who joined from Cohn & Wolf) as head of New York health and the pharma team, the practice has been further strengthened with the addition of Michael Heinley (formerly of WebMD and J&J) as partner and deputy leader of the New York practice; GERALYN LaNeve (from Cooney Waters) as VP; and Mina Volvovitch (formerly Bristol-Myers Squibb, Sanofi), who leads the Paris operation. — PH

REVIVEHEALTH (WEBER SHANDWICK)

The fact that Weber Shandwick made ReviveHealth its first US acquisition in 15 years is a testament to several things: the firm's unique positioning as a leader in health technology, health systems and health services, at a time when healthcare practices are diversifying beyond pharma; the firm's impressive growth, from zero to \$14 million in seven short years; and the firm's strong culture—a multiple winner of this publication's Best Agency to Work For title and a good match for its new parent company's own empowered workplace.

It seems clear, furthermore, that the change in ownership is not exactly hampering ReviveHealth's progress. After winning Boutique Agency of the Year, the firm grew a remarkable 40%

in 2016, and now numbers 65 staffers across offices in Nashville, Santa Barbara, and Minneapolis.

ReviveHealth's client list remains evenly split between providers and technology/services companies, including big names such as Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Tenet Healthcare, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, athenahealth, Hoag Health, Trinity Health, and Arcadia Healthcare. New clients in 2016 include Avantor, Patient Safe, Accumen, Alegeus, MultiCare Health System and LHC, showcasing ReviveHealth's ability to deliver across the full marketing budget, thanks to strong capabilities in digital, social, creative, content, advertising, and PR.

The firm also added its first creative director last year in Sarah Lodholz, along with a slew of senior hires. That growth prompted a smart restructuring of its legacy PR model, moving to a structure that features account management staff, an enterprise resource and project management group, and the rest of the staff organized into departments — strategic planning, creative, content, PR, issues/crisis and digital. ReviveHealth's annual Trust Survey research remains a driver of new business and campaign work, helping to deliver some standout initiatives for Tenet Healthcare and Vanderbilt University, among others. — AS

RX MOSAIC HEALTH (MARINA MAHER COMMUNICATIONS)

Absorbed into Omnicom's Marina Maher Communications in 2014, few expected big things from RX Mosaic, a small healthcare firm that was struggling with senior leadership changes and considerable staff turnover. In the years since, though, MD Michele Schimmel and MMC chief integration officer Diana Littman have steadily steered RX Mosaic into safer waters — doubled in size in 2016, growing headcount to 28 staffers, and diversifying its client

portfolio, adding diagnostic and device companies, a patient advocacy organization and NGO to a roster once dominated by pharma companies.

The firm's distinctive culture ('healthcare geeks') provides a measure of differentiation for RX Mosaic from its much larger parent agency, helping it also focus on the future in a manner that many healthcare agencies still find difficult. In 2016, there was new business from Pfizer (Prevnar), Teva Pharmaceuticals (investigational drugs for migraine and Huntington's disease), Roche Diagnostics (Accu-Chek and Corporate), Quest Diagnostics (HIV and HCV diagnostics) and United States Pharmacopeial Convention (USP dietary supplement support).

New hires in 2016 included Lisa Talbot, who oversees healthcare strategy for both MMC and RX Mosaic and Amy Inzanti, Director, Research, Strategy & Insights. And there was compelling campaigns such as Plan B One-Step; and Roche Diagnostics/Accu-Chek Social Media Takeover. — AS

Winner

APCO (INDEPENDENT)

APCO has been growing its corporate and financial (and even, to a less extent, consumer) capabilities in recent years, so the leadership is sometimes frustrated when publications like this one continue to pigeonhole the firm as a leader in public affairs—but that is more a reflection of the way in which public affairs has expanded than the notion that APCO has been standing still.

Nothing could be further from the truth. APCO's public affairs expertise includes the obvious (with the inauguration of a new president, areas such as trade policy and climate change have come to the fore) but also areas such as purpose and the challenge of corporate leadership that is both responsive and responsible, and nation branding, which has political and economic development implications. And APCO has long been a leader in applying the latest technology—digital and social—to public affairs, with its new Telescope offer applying the techniques of influencer marketing to the policy environment.

Revenues topped \$120 million in 2016 (though growth was once again modest), with new business from the likes of Consumer Reports, Exelon and its Pepco Holdings subsidiary, The Partnership for a Healthier America's Fruit & Veggies campaign, McCormick, the Nuclear Energy Institute, and the Embassy for Switzerland, while the firm continues to work with IKEA, Mars, Microsoft, Office Depot, PepsiCo, Welltower and the Better Medicare Alliance.

And no other firm has as many Washington, DC, veterans on its team, with new additions in 2016 including Dan Scandling (former chief of staff and communications director for two senior members of Congress) and Kelly Stepno (a former senior associate at Booz Allen Hamilton). — PH

Finalists

DAVIES (INDEPENDENT)

Over three decades Davies has impressively perfected a model that reliably builds consensus for controversial, complex projects that face opposition. The approach translates client narratives into stories intended to motivate support and calm opposition by reframing the debate with an eye towards winning approvals and quickly putting out fires.

While revenues dipped slightly in 2016 to \$11m, the caliber of the work was as strong as it has ever been — despite a challenging media environment dominated by the presidential election and ultimately President Trump. Moreover, the firm has been forced to shift its focus amid market volatilities from real-estate to energy. As an example of its energy work, for Texas LNG, Davies worked to ward off public opposition for a new project by emphasizing its minimal impact and the benefits to the community. As a result the project recently secured four major supply deals in Southeast Asia and is close to receiving final approval with vocal majority support. Meanwhile for E.ON Twin Forks, the firm worked against anti-wind opponents and online anti-wind science that was taking a toll on public perception to gain approval to build 139 wind turbines in Macon County.

CEO John Davies has led the firm for 30 years with SVPs Joshua Boisvert, Taylor Canfield and Robb Rice — who have built a culture that is consistently recognized on the Holmes Report's Best Agencies to Work For Survey. Key Clients include: KGHM, Tesoro, Ascot USA, Essroc, Hines, Texas LNG, Gerdau, SoCal Gas, Wespac, Walmart, with new wins E.ON, CalPine, Jordan Cove, Veresen, Toll Brothers, Sun Coast, Heidelberg Cement, Beta Offshore. — AaS

GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP (INDEPENDENT)

Election years tend to be particularly good for New York-based Global Strategy Group, which has a rich heritage in the world of polling and campaign management and continues to supplement its corporate and public policy work with those activities. But underlying growth in the core public affairs and reputation management business was solid in 2016, with new assignments from the likes of Americans for Responsible Solutions (a grassroots gun control group), Bloomberg Philanthropies, CVS Health, the League of Conservation Voters, PhRMA, Skanska and more.

The firm continues to play a leadership role in some of the vital issues of the day. It has been working on gender equity issues (the Rockefeller Foundation's 100x25 campaign for women's leadership); environmental concerns (for NextGen Climate, the Sierra Club, and more); immigration reforms (for FWD.us) and reproductive rights (Planned Parenthood). And GSG client The Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform played a major role in informing Mayor Bill DeBlasio's commitment to closing Rikers Island. The firm also handled crisis and issues work for CVS Health, football association CONCACAF, Pershing Square, General Motors, and commercial drone company JDI Group.

The firm's thought leadership on the role of business in political discourse is also looking more and more relevant in the new political environment, in which companies are either choosing or being forced to join political debates around gay rights, immigration and host of other hot-button issues.— PH

SAXUM (INDEPENDENT)

In January 2016, oil was \$31.68 per barrel compared to just two years earlier when oil was \$94.62 per barrel. This coincided with Saxum's recently opened office in the energy-dependent Houston market. Instead of backing away from energy, Saxum took a risk and doubled down.

The gamble paid off. Revenues are up nearly 9% to \$6.4m with clients that include Anheuser-Busch, American Petroleum Institute, US Cellular, Williams Companies, Enable Midstream, George Kaiser Family Foundation, Hobby Lobby, Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, GE Oil & Gas (new), Laredo Petroleum (new), Plains All American Pipeline (new) and the Oklahoma Lottery Commission (new), among others.

Saxum's work with the two major energy trade associations, the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA) helped to position the energy industry as an environmentally conscious, job creator. The agency's work with API on its Vote4Energy.org's 50 States of Energy showcased the importance of energy from state to state. INGAA's America's Energy Link told the story about safety and reliability of pipelines to move natural gas. Spectrum also worked with Canary, an oilfield services company, to develop, create and implement the "Talk Crude" campaign which (successfully) sought to lift the decades-old crude export ban.

CEO Renzi Stone has also built a culture committed to seeking diversity and giving back to the community. Every year Saxum provides pro bono work to qualifying nonprofits and in 2016 surpassed \$1 million in service grants since 2009. The firm has offices in Oklahoma and Texas. — AaS

SINGER ASSOCIATES (INDEPENDENT)

We'll say it again — when it comes to high-stakes public battles in Northern California, Sam Singer's firm is very likely to be involved on one side of the aisle. This isn't any less true from last year (Singer shows up as a Public Affairs contender with respectable frequency).

The firm's revenues are up 13% to \$5.4m with a client roster that has remained remarkably consistent with big names like Chevron Corporate; Chevron Richmond Refinery; Children's Hospital Oakland; Stanford Health Care; Stanford University; City of San Bruno; Monsanto; Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office; and UBS Wealth Management signing on for multi-year assignments. Meanwhile, new client wins in 2016 include Alaska Airlines, Beverly Hills Hilton, LA County Parks, SF LGBT Pride, Outside Lands Music Festival, SHARP Healthcare, Total Wine and More, Yes on Measure AA, Holy Names University and the City of Pacifica.

Last year, Singer expanded its long-running (and award-winning) corporate-sponsored community-based newspaper/news site, The

Richmond Standard for Chevron. The online publication has garnered significant media coverage nationally and internationally as a groundbreaking community journalism concept and as a corporate news delivery service. According to Singer, resident surveys rate the site as more informative and reliable than sites from traditional news media in the city.

Increasingly, Singer develops websites for clients to temporarily address issues away from their main branded site. The sites are intended to be a central clearing house for media, community members, employees and others, and a way to control and share messages. Singer designed wireframes and built 16 of these websites in 2016, including: www.RevitalizeVallco.com for Sand Hill Property Company for their new development next to the Apple campuses in Silicon Valley; and www.StanfordAnthemFacts.com, for Stanford Health Care's contract negotiations with insurance company Anthem.

Sam Singer continues to head the organization with a growing leadership bench that includes Adam Alberti and Jason Barnett. Last year, Singer also created its own internet news service, SingerMedia, that gives clients daily news bulletins, blog postings, video clips and information vital to their businesses. — AaS

North America Technology Agencies of the Year

Winner

BATEMAN GROUP (INDEPENDENT)

There was a time when the Bateman Group was looked on as a challenger brand in Silicon Valley — a scrappy upstart with a passionate founder. Over the last decade, the Bateman Group has become a steady PR force

that consistently delivers on respectable growth and noteworthy work. This continued into 2016 when the firm hit 21% growth reaching \$10.5m, shedding the "boutique" qualifier.

The creativity of its thinking was demonstrated in its work for security

startup Area 1 that resulted, not only two feature stories in the New York Times, but also a request from a Hollywood production house for the rights to buy the story. When Hollywood notices, you've probably crafted a very good narrative. Other clients include Google, LinkedIn,

L’Oreal, Betterment, Ultimate Software, Virtustream, QuickBase, Tegile, Relay Networks and Atlassian.

Interestingly, in 2016 Bateman split its enterprise practice in two: the Future of Work (products that touch on workplace productivity and collaboration) and the New Stack (products that make data processes and center more efficient) to give clarity and focus to its domain expertise.

The firm also actively advocates for the industry to back away from the antiquated relationship, press release and persistence trifecta to yield media coverage — and in doing so has taken on the challenge of educating executives on the realities of the new media environment. Bateman also added an Innovation Lab practice this year, which includes clients with truly disruptive technologies like Ginkgo Bioworks, a startup that designs custom microbes across multiple markets to develop new organisms that replace technology with biology .

CEO & founder Fred Bateman continues to helm the firm with support from partner/president Bill Bourdon, partner/GM Tyler Perry and EVP Syreeta Mussante. New hires include former IDG News Service journalist James Niccolai as content and media strategy director adding to the 53 full-time employees across offices in San Francisco and New York. — AaS

Finalists

HIGHWIRE (INDEPENDENT)

It was more than a decade ago the principals of Highwire came together to “do things differently” which has come to mean building a hot tech shop with serious staying power. The firm is now up to \$14m (up 28% from 2015) shooting right the boutique range and on track to being a formidable mid-size tech player with

offices in San Francisco, New York, Boston and Chicago.

Its client portfolio speaks to Highwire’s standing within the tech PR market: IBM, AOL, Twilio, Veracode, Wi-Fi Alliance, Trustwave, Norwest Venture Partners, along with new wins Atlassian, GE, AppDynamics, Sprinklr, ForeScout, among others. The firm’s work on Twilio’s IPO last year was shortlisted by SABRE judges for its methodical strategy that resulted in a remarkable day of IPO coverage (exceeding its peers) while cementing its dominant share of voice in a new category. For the Annual Highwire RSA Security Event, the firm partnered with Christian Science Monitor’s Passcode to do live interviews and podcasts with top executives from prominent security companies about the nation’s state of cybersecurity, threat intelligence and AI.

While many tech firms confront challenges when expanding to new markets, Highwire’s New York office — opened in 2015 — doubled its headcount to 20 employees. Similarly in Boston the firm made investments to build a burgeoning team of four and growing.— AaS

THE HOFFMAN AGENCY (INDEPENDENT)

The ultra-competitive Silicon Valley PR market tends to reward two types of firm: the titans that have ruled with their seemingly unbreakable networks and, of course, the hot boutiques of the moment. This is a market that can be unforgiving to the firms that fall in-between — which makes Hoffman’s Agency comeback arc all the more impressive.

In 2016, US revenues grew a respectable 12% but it’s worth taking a wider lens to grasp how immensely founder Lou Hoffman has overhauled the firm since 2012. That year, Hoffman had declined to \$2.3m in the United States with a significantly weakened brand. Hoffman undertook the painful process of restructuring

the firm for sustainability. Since then, Hoffman has grown nearly 100% landing at \$4.5m in 2016.

The caliber of its work has fueled much of this growth. Since 2013, judges for the Innovation SABRE awards have pointed out that Hoffman consistently punches above its weight. Among its standout work is strategically finessing content to optimize search rankings for clients like Sony Music, and in previous years, Endicia. In winning the Business France, Hoffman exploited its single P/L to service the multifaceted account across US, EMEA and Asia-Pacific.

Looking ahead, Hoffman launched a new practice for Internet of Things with an eye towards becoming Silicon Valley's 'go-to' agency in this area. Its current IoT clients include Nokia, Atomiton, NXP and Withings. Hoffman's content offering separates from the pack with a combination of storytelling expertise (led by its clever Periodic Table of Business Storytelling), making sense of complexity, SEO function and visual design capabilities.

In addition to Hoffman, the leadership team includes Steve Burkhart as US president, Kymra Knuth as EVP and Steve Jursa as EVP — the team that has made the 30-year-old firm the best that it's probably ever been. - AaS

METHOD COMMUNICATIONS (INDEPENDENT)

There's an allure—and a danger—of growing too quickly in this business. The more prudent firms tend to take their foot off the gas after a growth spurt to re-calibrate for the future. For Method Communications, 2016 was just that, a building year.

Some of this was self-imposed — the firm shot straight past \$10m in about five years — so a breather was certainly in order. But some of it was the volatility of 2016: global equity markets reacted to slowdowns in China and India, delayed IPO filings and slower VC investments. Of course the rallying markets following Trump's win did open an IPO window where Method executed on listings for two of its clients: Nutanix and Trivago.

Growth was up a modest 4% to \$10.1m across its two offices, 30 people in San Francisco and 30 people in Salt Lake City (the firm opted to close its Los Angeles outpost in 2016 but a handful of staff remain there). The management has remained stable with co-founders David Parkinson and Jacob Moon at

the helm with partners Alex Koritz, Carolyn Guss, Heather England.

While the firm prioritized strategic hiring and long-term initiatives in 2016, its eye hasn't dropped off doing excellent work. Take, for example, Bolt Threads that worked with Method for a splashy launch in 2015, but since then opted to keep a quieter profile. That opened the door for competitors, compelling the company to re-engage Method to launch its first product, a synthetic spider silk tie to coincide with the CEO's talk at SXSW. The coverage featured a blend of consumer, science, tech and business outlets highlighting that Bolt Threads was first to market and the leader in an increasingly competitive space. For its longest-tenured client Vivint, Method secured a print feature in Forbes with the headline "This Utah Company Has Emerged as the Largest Smart Home Player." The profile — the groundwork for which was laid by Method and Vivint over several years by cultivating a relationship with reporter Aaron Tilley — provided the most comprehensive account of Vivint's story to date. — AaS

WE COMMUNICATIONS (INDEPENDENT)

Waggener Edstrom rebranded as WE Communications toward the end of 2015, promising a renewed focus on the core business—including its fast-growing content creation and digital and social efforts—while forming partnerships with specialist firms (research giant YouGov and brand consultancy salt, for example) to ensure it can deliver the breadth of capabilities clients are looking for. The moves appear to have turbo-charged what had been sluggish growth, with fee income up 4.5% in 2016 and new business from the likes of CA (replacing Edelman and Zeno), Comba Telecom, St Michelle Wine Estates, and Stack Overflow.

Technology remains at the core of the firm's business, and its work for Microsoft continues to stand out,

including this year's Windows 10 update campaign and media relations efforts to connect the company with developers and IT professionals. Other highlights include global work for Honeywell, including the company's connected home initiatives; targeting the CIO for business management software Aptio; and brand-building for early-stage satellite technology company Kymeta. But much of the firm's work beyond the tech sector has an innovation focus: telling the technology story for Volvo as it seeks to revive its brand in the US, or working at the convergence of health and tech.

There's a new thought leadership approach too, which includes a "Brands in Motion" study, a "Stories in Motion" analysis of how the media ecosystem helps brand move forward, and a new (appropriately named) "Momentum" methodology that starts with insight, adds context and inspiration, proceeds to action and culminates in Impact.

Finally, there's a host of new talent to fuel all this forward progress: Edelman veteran Alan Vandermolten joined a president of international and the WE+ network; Catherine Allen, formerly of Shift, leads the Boston office and the push into health tech; Scott Friedman, formerly of Text 100 is playing a lead role on the Microsoft account; and Stephanie Marchesi of FleishmanHillard is the new president for the eastern region and the health sector.

Best Agencies To Work For - North America

There's a pattern that we've observed at the Holmes Report that illustrates why being a Best Agency to Work For carries so much significance. There's a direct correlation between the agencies on this list and those that take home our biggest honor — Agency of the Year recognition. That's, in part, because firms that take culture seriously tend to attract

and retain smart and creative talent who, in turn, produce stellar work. It's a simple formula but one that's easily overlooked amid the breathless pace and tremendous pressures that are a seemingly inevitable reality of agency life. But this pace is exactly why agencies shouldn't underestimate the power

its culture has on the work its employees produce.

The firms recognized on the rankings include a some holding companies firms and many independents — some have generous benefits, others prioritize professional development or interesting work that keeps talent engaged.

Top 5 PR Agencies To Work For In North America — Boutique

1. DAVIES (INDEPENDENT)

For the third consecutive year, the Southern California public affairs shop Davies makes a showing on our Best Agencies to Work For (the firm won 2015, shortlisted in 2016). The firm's 32 employees are spread across offices Santa Barbara, Washington D.C., Los Angeles — with each office adopting Davies distinctive culture that's best described as empowered. "All team members are rewarded for the firm's achievements and their individual contribution in a manner usually reserved for senior staff only," says CEO John Davies, who sits in the open in the middle of the office and is fully accessible. "At Davies, there is no hierarchy - there are only common goals."

When it comes to tangible benefits, Davies covers 100% employee premiums for medical, dental and vision insurance — and partially funds employee Health Savings Accounts. The firm also has policy of Real Profit Sharing, which means staff can earn up to a 100% performance bonus (based on profitability, client satisfaction and individual contributions), on top of an already competitive salary. Company financials are also "open book" — this means that every quarter, financials are presented to and reviewed by all staff, including all

expenses, all profits and all challenges and strengths.

Davies also has an open policy of sponsoring staff educational ambitions as long as their focus intersects with work-based tasks. Several senior staff members have risen through the ranks in very short periods of time, and promotions are frequent at Davies.

Autonomy is highly-valued with employees setting their own hours — with performance being measured by results, not time in the office. "All schedules are considered flexible and optimizable to an individual's own needs — as long as there is clear and open communication," Davies said.

Training is individualized for each employee's strengths and interests. Davies invests a great deal of time teaching each person not only "what" they do and "how" they do it uniquely, but also "why" they do the things we do, along with the science and research behind our efforts. The firm makes a concerted effort to recruit diverse management (women represent 50% of the agency leaders) and equal pay is a priority for women and ethnic minorities.

2. GROUP GORDON (INDEPENDENT)

The firm that has built its niche working with organizations doing good — philanthropies, nonprofits and responsible businesses — has also adopted doing good to its own

culture. This is Group Gordon's third consecutive showing on the list (the boutique won in 2015, was shortlisted in 2016) for its open culture designed to emulate Google to attract and retain critical thinking and emotionally intelligent employees.

The 24-person firm ensures that employees feel ownership over their work so they enjoy coming into the office every day. Group Gordon also eschews bureaucracy by cutting out unnecessary meetings, extraneous rules, or organizational hierarchies. In hiring, the firm passes on candidates with egos — even when they otherwise have the right skills. Benefits packages include generous compensation, health and transit benefits, and retirement and profit-sharing contributions — plus parental leave policy that goes far beyond what is required by law.

Each entry-level employee at the firm is paired with a mentor (a senior member of the team), to guide and support them in achieving success at the firm. In addition, account leads gather monthly to share advice, discuss best practices, and brainstorm solutions to challenges. In addition, the whole firm gathers each month for peer-led professional development sessions, in which a pair of employees present on experiences, expertise, and insights gained through their client work. The

firm retains 80-85% of its employees year over year.

3. ZAPWATER (INDEPENDENT)

Like the two firms listed above, this is Zapwater's third showing on Best Agencies to Work For for the culture it has built for its 22 employees (18 in Chicago and 4 in Los Angeles).

Approximately 2.5% of gross revenues are spent on staff training and professional development programs that include professional "lunch and learns," membership in professional organizations and conferences and seminars. Zapwater launched ZapU, an ongoing professional development and team building program. Built around off-site staff retreats, ZapU is an educational experience launched as a forum for employees to interact and form relationships with industry leaders, be immersed in business education, and nurture their strong leadership skills to increase their professional development. In 2017, Zapwater also launched ZapYOU — designed for staff by staff, the program provides bi-monthly professional development seminars on topics ranging from ways to spark creative thinking, effective pitch strategies and how to manage a team.

All employees are given four weeks vacation/PTO per year, plus can build their work week around a flexible schedule. After five years employment, employees earn a fifth week of vacation. Zapwater also encourages employees to be involved in their communities and provides an additional paid week off for anyone using it toward volunteering. The firm also does summer hours (closing at 1 p.m. from mid-May through Labor Day) and allows dogs in the office.

4. GROUND FLOOR MEDIA (INDEPENDENT)

Groundfloor Media took top honors in this category in 2016 for the agency's commitment to community and, frankly, treating its employees

like adults. The Colorado-based firm says its 36 employees (19 full-time, 17 contractors) are treated more "like friends than people on the payroll." That's achieved in a few ways — among them, a purpose-focused business in which 15% of annual revenues are given back to the community.

Perhaps more strongly, the firm's culture of empowerment provides far more benefits and perks than can be named here. Among them, employees can work at anytime, from anywhere, provided they get their work done. This means employees can do anything from attend children's school activities to getting a haircut without having to use personal time. The firm provides a \$50/month wellness stipend, workload and bandwidth is monitored closely, and billability is 69% (far below the industry average of 85%).

In late 2015, GFM instituted a concept known as Zero Entry Mondays in an attempt to keep the weekend free for personal endeavors and ease entry into the work week. Specifically, the GFM office does not physically open until 11 a.m. on Mondays. Instead, team members are encouraged to use that time to get prepared for the week by catching up on personal to-dos or work — or both.

And in 2016, GFM implemented a Trusted Time Off policy to full-time and part-time exempt employees (following one year of continuous service with the agency). This means that employees no longer have a defined number of vacation or personal days to spend during the year. GFM also has a primary charitable giving arm called The Get Grounded Foundation that provides one-year community grants for new or expanded, innovative or entrepreneurial programs or projects within an existing, qualified nonprofit that directly support the healthy development of at-risk or neglected

youth between the ages of 3 and 13 in the Denver Metro area.

Also, in 2016, GFM was named a Certified B Corporation by the global nonprofit B Lab, which recognizes companies meeting the highest global standards for corporate transparency, accountability and social and environmental performance. The agency has also been named a Best Place to Work by Outside magazine the past four years in a row (ranked #1 two of those years).

5. DOUBLE FORTE (INDEPENDENT)

Making its debut on the list is Double Forte, the 31-person shop based in San Francisco with a growing presence in New York. The firm's mantra is that it's a place for "doers not delegators" designed to create a culture of support instead of ego. The team conducts four team building days through the year that includes training and team bonding activities.

Interestingly, employees earn "points" for networking, learning, business development, professional development activities. Points are exchanged for cash (each point is worth \$1) or for specific experiences (dinner for 4, spa day, etc.) Employees are assigned a career manager/mentor who they meet with once per week to discuss achievements from the previous week and objectives for the current week. Employees also get an annual stipend of \$1,000 for professional development courses.

With good performance and demonstrated ability, employees are allowed to work from home a certain number of days (this varies on level, ranging from a few times a month to several times per week). Vacation days range from 15 per year to 30 days based on level and tenure.

1. GCI HEALTH (WPP)

GCI Health was last year's finalist and, now, this year's winner for creating a culture and structure that is entrepreneurial, flexible and nimble. There are a few ways the 120-person shop achieves this — for one, making sure employees are not overworked.

From telecommuting to accommodating flexible work schedules to summer Fridays, there's constant surveillance to make sure employees are engaged and growing, not quietly burning out. New hires are also paired a "buddy" to help them get acclimated. CEO Wendy Lund has monthly lunches with VPs and SVPs to get to know them, ensure career development and hear about their wishes and dreams.

The healthcare-focused agency also has numerous initiatives to designed to encourage engagement within the agency and beyond. "Do Something Different in Our Communities" is an agency-organized volunteer event for several charities throughout the year. In London Exchange, London and US employees have the opportunity to practice their pitch and PowerPoint skills and sell senior management on why they should be chosen for an all-expense paid opportunity to "trade seats" with their colleague across the pond to expand their global mindset. "Take a Break from March Madness" is a month-long competition to foster employee engagement where account teams compete against each other on "flawless execution, superb counsel, organic growth, client recognition and of course creativity and enthusiasm." Summer Lovin' includes surprise breaks, meals, snacks, drinks, raffles, perks and parties throughout the summer.

The firm has also introduced a new business "boot camp" is designed to elevate everyone's comfort with — and love for — new business and

introduce its formal methodology and resources by running mock pitches for all levels of staff. The "Great Coaching Initiative" is part of our mentorship program that teams up mentors ("coaches") and mentees ("players") based on job level, personal and professional interests.

Eight of 10 senior managers at GCI have been with the agency from six to 23 years.

2. PAN COMMUNICATIONS (INDEPENDENT)

A strong culture is built over time — and PAN has proven its commitment to this. The tech-focused agency lands its third consecutive showing on our Best Agencies to Work For by providing its people with interesting and challenging work, comprehensive benefit packages, competitive compensation and an appreciation for work-life balance.

In the past year, the 100-person agency hired 30+ new employees and consistently promotes staff at every level from intern all the way to SVP. In fact, promoting employees when they're ready — rather than waiting for the next review cycle — is part of PAN's culture of recognition. Employees are also assigned a dedicated VP who oversees their growth and development, meets with them one-on-one every month, manages their comprehensive annual review and generally serves as a mentor.

Time-off includes at least 15 paid days (including an agency-wide shutdown between Christmas and New Years), plus 10 paid holidays, one floating holiday, employee's birthday off, 8 hours of volunteer time, and 9 sick days per year. "Our HR department is always on top of the most recent, verified industry benchmarks and surveys to ensure we are offering highly competitive compensation and rewarding

excellence accordingly," says president/CEO Phil Nardone.

The firm's culture is casual — jeans, PAN-branded Patagonia sweaters, Fitbits for all and opportunities for extra cash via new business and employee referral programs. Efforts are made to clear out the office by 6pm, this bumps to 1pm on Summer Fridays and 3:30pm on other Fridays throughout the year.

Ultimately, Nardone looks to create a "culture of celebration, collaboration and recognition" that's amplified with "a monthly leadership award, weekly Hit of the Week and PANtastic awards, and constant kudos and cheers for a job well-done."

3. LAUNCHSQUAD (INDEPENDENT)

For 17 years, LaunchSquad has been servicing the tech sector with a drive towards engagement, creation and influence. The 120-person shop has continued to thrive for nearly two decades by prioritizing the well-being of its employees. In 2016, the firm launched a new employee engagement program that pairs entry-level employees with a senior leader to develop a customized plan surrounding individual career goals and growth. LaunchSquad also rolled out a \$1500/year travel stipend for tenured employees to use on vacation to further encourage them to take time to relax and enjoy time away from the office. In addition, 'Coaching the Coaches' is a series of in-depth training sessions that equips senior employees with effective methods to mentor junior employees. The firm also doubled its wellness stipend that provides employees with an allowance for health, fitness or wellness-related expenses.

Like many firms in the last year, LaunchSquad updated its parental leave policy and now affords birth mothers 14 weeks of 100% pay and partners/adoptive parents are

guaranteed six weeks at 100% pay and job protection. On top of this, LaunchSquad added increased flexibility for employees to work remotely, part-time or at different offices in order to accommodate employee lifestyles and/or personal challenges.

4. RACEPOINT (INDEPENDENT)

It's been several years now since Larry Weber's Racepoint Global and the Digital Influence Group combined into one organization. The combined entity makes its first showing on this list with plenty to support its culture of influence and action. Its Social Good Program is a three-tier initiative that encourages employees to volunteer, donate and utilize their resources to enhance and revive their local communities. The US Offices participate in local coat drives, food pantries, school supplies/backpacks for back to school, and holiday giving drives.

The RPG Wellness program helps employees discover all the aspects that make up wellness (physical, mental, spiritual), hoping to find a balance in individual's lives to be more relaxed and focused in and out of the office. The agency has theme months (nutrition, eating locally, outdoor exercise, meditation) and office events such as yoga and chair massage. An informal mentoring

program is offered to ensure daily coaching, career development and knowledge sharing across the agency. Every employee is encouraged to enroll and choose a mentor from a list of leaders from any of its offices. Every quarter an employee from any of Racepoint's international offices is chosen to spend a week working from a different location.

The Learning & Development program provides employees with the training to become industry leaders, including internal and external seminars, webinars and events to enhance employee's skill sets. Racepoint Global's 2017 Management Development Program is a global, unified approach to developing the firm's managers. This program focuses on five core competencies that are the basis for managers to engage, inspire, develop and lead a team of exceptional professionals.

Racepoint also sponsors a Tuition Reimbursement Program that supports employees in pursuing a part-time course of study towards certain work-related degree or certificate programs.

5. HAVAS FORMULA (HAVAS)

Since being acquired by Havas in 2014, the former Formula PR seems

to have hit a new stride when it comes to its work, growth and culture, as it makes its debut on our Best Agencies to Work For list. The firm has just under 125 employees that benefit from a variety of initiatives designed to engage, attract and retain top talent. For instance, Havas University includes monthly in-office classes with topics that range from writing skills, creativity, brainstorming, business etiquette, speaking/presenting, among others. The firm also offers a Media Bootcamp designed to develop junior practitioners' media relations skills, practice live pitching and pairs them with a senior mentor/media coach.

It's not just junior employees that benefit from extensive training. The biannual training program (occurring in March and October) provides senior members with the tools necessary to lead a division one day. The bicoastal, day-long meetings feature educational sessions and open dialog to empower participants to become better leaders, account managers and problem solvers. There's also quarterly HR training for all new account executives to educate them on various staff management topics, such as interviewing tips, developing employees, conducting performance evaluations.

Top 5 PR Agencies To Work For In North America —Midsize

1. JACKSON SPALDING (INDEPENDENT)

The 141-person agency impressively makes its debut at the top of the list. Jackson Spalding aspires not to be the biggest or flashiest agency — instead, it looks to establish trust and respect both with clients and employees.

The corporate structure reflects this ethos by eschewing titles, bosses or direct reports. Instead, mentors conduct 360-feedback reviews,

provide day-to-day career counsel, help structure career path milestones and generally be their internal advocate. The flat structure is intended to keep egos at bay and allow for teams to move more swiftly. (The agency, however, is owned by seven individuals who make-up the Executive Team and who also serve on the JS Leadership Team, comprised of 30 individuals who meet monthly to review financials, discuss agency initiatives and ensure the culture at JS is strong.) The

agency has offices in Atlanta Athens, and Dallas with an additional seven outposts throughout the US.

The agency was founded 21 years ago by Glen Jackson and Bo Spalding, who each have deep Atlanta roots. "We determined in those early days that we would adhere to a philosophy of 'great work and good works' – great work for our clients and good works in the communities in which we reside." JS employees

are involved in over 90 not-for-profit organizations and civic associations.

The agency also offers sabbaticals at 10 and 20 years, unlimited sick days, provides a learning allowance, funds 401(k)s without the need for employee contribution, top-tier health benefits with company-paid premiums not just for our employees but also the employees' dependents. The annual retreat includes all employees and spouses — “and there are costumes. We love costumes.” The firm's turnover rate in 2016 was 11.9%.

2. M BOOTH (NEXT 15)

The 143-person agency bested all others in our Best Agencies to Work For 2015 (the firm went on to win our overall Agency of the Year award in 2016) — demonstrating how strong culture gives way to smart work and healthy growth. “The M Booth brand is built around a culture that fuels creative energy” — illustrated with the firm's recently rebranded tagline “Be Inspired.”

In 2016, the consumer shop moved into new headquarters in midtown Manhattan that's designed to reflect its culture — open, collaborative, creative, mischievous and fun. Last year, the firm also rebooted Boothcamp, its internal training program, while hiring Nancy Seliger to serve as map the courses based on level. Significant investments also goes into bringing outside experts with a spotlight on improving writing.

The firm's work/life plan revolves around the belief that time away from the office directly improves productivity in the office. Work can be done on flex time, from home, outdoors on a nice day — there's even have one employee who is working from her RV as she travels cross country. Offices close at 1 p.m. on summer Fridays, VPs and above have unlimited time-off and the

office closes between Christmas and New Year's.

This year, M Booth launched a parental policy that provides every new mom and dad with 12 full weeks of paid parental leave upon the birth of their child, including a child placed with them for adoption or foster care. The firm has developed a diversity mission statement and invested in a Diversity Fellow and puts resources to training (e.g. sessions on unconscious bias). The formation of a second employee-inspired group, M Pride, complements Diversity and Inclusion. The firm now offers employees access to legal advice on issues ranging from mortgages, wills, divorce, traffic tickets and beyond.

There are M Ventures mini excursions to places like the Cloisters, the Brooklyn Grange and most recently to the Tenement Museum, the Innovator in Residence program brings in members of the creative community, influencers and mentors join for one month to introduce new ways of thinking. Founder Margi Booth hosts monthly breakfasts to pass along firm “lore.” CEO Dale Bornstein organizes monthly “milk and cookie” conversations to help her keep in touch with what people are thinking and send the message that she is accessible.

3. TEXT 100 (NEXT 15)

The second Next 15 shop to make the ranking, Text 100 returns to the list for the second consecutive year. One way that Text 100 stands out is its more than 40 online and offline training sessions conducted across North America last year to support its “T-shape” approach to people development.

The firm also brings in third parties for training. For example, Text 100 partnered with Insights Discovery to implement a program that uses the neutral language of colors to define core human communication styles. The firm also conducts a “City Swap” program that foots the bill for any

staff member to spend a day spent working in another office when he or she travels abroad for pleasure.

Along with secondments and trainings, brainstorming and idea-sharing are also big parts of Text 100's culture. The firm uses a range of platforms to share creative ideas across our teams, including: its creativity lab BANG! that brings together teams across the globe to shape new ideas for clients and for Text100 and its ideation platform, where teams shape and develop fresh thinking for campaigns, new client initiatives and planning.

This commitment to flexibility is another core component of Text 100's culture and benefits. For example, new parents can fit work around their new family with its maternity and paternity leave policies. Under the “Textgiving” program, each office designs its own community give-back programs.

4. MARINA MAHER COMMUNICATIONS (OMNICOM)

Marina Maher Communications makes its recent debut on the ranking. MMC has garnered many accolades for its work over the years, so it's not surprising this creativity stems from a thriving culture. To start, the firm eschews that there's a “right path” for career advancement and empowers employees to develop their own trajectory that can span across its core functions: client leadership/brand management; insights & analytics; engagement and creative. It's also a promotion and recognition culture with high-performers being formally identified, tracked and rewarded with opportunity, recognition and incentive (many current VPs and SVPs started as interns at MMC).

In the last two years, MMC made organizational changes and brought on talent with different skill sets to meet evolving client needs. As a result, the firm revised its competency model and annual

performance management process. All employees participate in performance reviews that include multiple touch points throughout the year and a self-review and 360° feedback. Formal and informal communication with senior management, including the CEO, is open to everyone.

The firm offers the flexibility to work from home, non-standard hours or on a reduced schedule – subject to team leader’s approval. MMC employees are also encouraged to make “extracurricular” contributions in their areas of interest including: leadership or culture committees, mentoring, volunteering, or representing MMC at recruitment fairs, industry events and internal events.

Employees are also encouraged to participate in causes for which they have a passion outside the agency, which could include professional associations, Omnicom cross-agency initiatives or charity organizations. MMC also offers opportunities for global employee exchanges. The MMC Masters Program is a multi-level internal training program designed to keep people growing professionally and personally that benefit the

individual as well as the agency. MMC also offers staff customized one-on-one and team coaching in the areas of client effectiveness, presentation skills and performance management.

Each year a select number of high potential / high performing employees attend external training courses including social/digital and healthcare conferences, Omnicom Digital Workshops and Omnicom University. MMC for a Cause is the umbrella program under which MMC manages its internal charity efforts. The firm’s big passion project is a partnership with She’s the First, which sponsors girls’ educations in the developing world.

5. FAHLGREN MORTINE (INDEPENDENT)

“I have always believed that great culture attracts the best people, and the best people attract the best clients,” says president/CEO Neil Mortine. This philosophy distills exactly why the Best Agencies to Work For is such a strong indicator of a firm’s overall health. This thinking has enabled the Ohio-based firm to continue to thrive for an impressive

55 years (the firm grew by 19% to \$24.4m in 2016).

The company says it outright in its mission — “we’re not just careful communicators; we care. About your people. About our people, and the people you need to reach to accomplish your business objectives.” Management strives to establish a collegial, collaborative culture while promoting a healthy work-life balance. Competitive salaries are matched with benefits packages that include generous time-off. Employees have unlimited personal time — for doctors appointments, car troubles, etc — and can use up to two hours of personal time per day, whenever needed — no questions asked.

The agency-wide professional development program Fahlgren Mortine University fosters a commitment to truly understanding clients’ businesses and a willingness to propose big, bold ideas. Other perks include philanthropy programs and frequent culture-centric celebrations. The firm works with more than 50 nonprofit organizations, investing more than \$1 million in agency services in the last three years.

Top 5 PR Agencies To Work For In North America —Large

1. PORTER NOVELLI (OMNICOM)

It’s probably time to stop thinking of Porter Novelli as an agency in turnaround mode — and instead, look at the agency that has emerged from its transformation. For starters, Porter Novelli, impressively, debuts on the Best Agency to Work For list in the top spot.

Today’s Porter Novelli rewards its top performers with meaty — often international — assignments through its Discovery and Development program. Its Greater Than University offers an extensive range of courses included self-paced online classrooms to live training sessions.

In 2016, Porter Novelli provided 520 hours of training to employees. To encourage wellness among employees, Porter Novelli reimburses fitness contracts, sporting leagues, fitness equipment and gym memberships. The agency’s “Transformers Team” includes employees from all levels and departments who come together and brainstorm ways to keep the office atmosphere exciting and engaging. Initiatives sparked from transformers meetings include: spontaneous coffee surprises and snacks, off-site

happy hours, office décor, interoffice sports leagues and small gifts.

This past year, Porter Novelli emphasized its diversity efforts with two new talent-centric leadership positions (diversity leader and global learning director) focused on training and development and diversity and inclusion. The driving idea was that diversity leads to innovation, keener insights and real solutions.

2. GOLIN (IPG)

Golin’s strong showing isn’t surprising considering the “Life Time” initiative the firm rolled out last year that gives employees ‘unlimited’

PTO, while also extending parental leave and formalizing work-from-home policies. In some ways, “Life Time” is the next iteration of Golin’s g4 model that restructured the agency from a hierarchy of generalists to communities of specialists. (This is the agency’s first showing on the list in recent years.)

Since rolling out “Life Time,” 60% more employees use health and wellness perks, employees take — on average — an extra two days off per year, and teams are now working remotely once-a-week. “Skeptics outside of Golin questioned our ability to do this and maintain client service, but our relationships and billability are stronger than ever,” said a Golin spokesperson. “We’ve heard tremendous positive feedback from all employees, including new parents who have taken advantage of our paternity leave and ease-out/ease-back approach to maternity leave.”

Golin’s ‘Untership’ is designed for college graduates to take “once-in-lifetime-journeys” and bring back real-world experience to the workforce in its second year. In the US, Golin hired its 2016 Untern and a runner-up from the competition in its Chicago and Los Angeles offices. For employees, the firm offers the Golin Grant – additional time off for selected winners to explore their passions (for which Golin gives winners up to \$2K per year to fund the adventure). Employees have 24-hour access to short, concise video-based trainings and a 3,500+ list of new courses via Golin University. Employees can dedicate at least 24 hours per fiscal year to professional learning.

Late founder Al Golin helped create the Ronald McDonald House Charities, an organization the firm still supports globally. In addition to RMHC, each Golin office dedicates one day per year to Al’s Day, a paid day of service.

3. COHN & WOLFE (WPP)

Last year’s Large Agency of the Year winner is a mainstay on the Best Agencies to Work For rankings (2015 winner, 2016 finalist). The agency’s culture is unified under its “Cohn & Wolfe & You” banner that includes a variety of initiatives and programs.

For instance, with “Personal Brand Plans” employees outline their own positioning statement, elevator speech, gap analysis and goals based off key performance feedback from supervisors and peers. There’s internal work sessions on Emergenetics, a work-style assessment that provide clues into how people think and behave across four distinct brain preferences. The online curriculum at Cohn & Wolfe University includes leadership training.

The agency’s Town Hall: Unplugged is a live check-in between the C-Suite leaders and US offices where employees can ask about everything from business operations to social functions. “In Conversation” is the New York HQ’s latest initiative to promote cultural understanding and inclusion across agency teams. The first event focused on Black Lives Matter. The “Creative Catalyst Network” forms a 24/7 brainstorming resource available to all employees. Through Every Wolfe Has a Heart, employees determine which local non-profits they’d like to support.

The agency’s designated cross-practice peer groups throw surprise theme parties that encourage in-office and offsite socializing. The agency also coordinates staff awards to recognize successes, provide lunch and learns in-office with various themes such as productivity hacks, creativity drills, presentation skills and design training.

4. APCO (INDEPENDENT)

Making the list for the second year in a row, APCO has several employee initiatives in addition to a generous benefits. The Global Employee

Scholarship Program selects 15 employees to spend time working in another APCO office around the world. Individuals selected are expected to contribute to the host office by sharing best practices, reviewing client engagements, experience the local culture and then return to their home office to share their learnings and experiences with colleagues. APCO in Action gives employees a full day of PTO to volunteer at a charity of choice, plus a 50% match on charitable contributions. Employees can work on-site at a client or APCO office internationally for six months or more. The Myriam Ugeux-Gerault Fellowship is a professional development program in which each year one employee can attend an international conference to build his or her expertise. The APCO Talent Network is an internal bureau of global subject matter experts who work closely to develop trainings for staff around the world.

5. KETCHUM (OMNICOM)

The Omnicom’s agency’s goal is “to create a vibrant employee experience” — which includes making it possible for employees to bring their whole self to work. For instance, Ketchum’s “informal flexibility” ensures its people have needed flexibility to work remotely or leave the office in the afternoon for a yoga class, or taking an hour to go to a doctor’s appointment without having to dip into their time off bank.

Ketchum’s gamified employee-training program “Race to Make It Real” become experts on social media and influencers and produce creative ideas for clients. As part of its “Digital Upskilling” initiative, 18 colleagues from five countries earn Google Squared certifications. To cross-pollinate insights and best practices across offices, colleagues are invited to apply to the Global Scholars program. The firm also recently expanded its Global Mentorship Program to include a

reverse mentoring component. “Spark Tank” is modeled after popular TV shows like Shark Tank and Dragons’ Den and gives employees the opportunity to submit a break through pitch for a new offering, program or service. Finalists get an all-expense-paid trip to New York to present their business proposals to a panel of “sharks.”

The agency recently expanded the former Executive Committee into a 19-member Global Leadership Committee (GLC) and established the Break through Advisory Board this year. This 10-member team consists of five women and five men charged with inspiring new ways of doing business, while advising on the latest trends and emerging technology. Forums such as live “ask me anything” sessions and levels meetings are ways leaders engage directly with colleagues. The agency’s Diversity and Inclusion Councils host panels with internal and external experts on diversity topics. Last year, Ketchum partnered with Cook Ross to roll out unconscious bias training across all of US offices this year. Ketchum also created a gamified external online recruitment app called LaunchPad to attract and hire stronger and more diverse candidates for its Summer Fellows Program, its 10-week paid internship initiative in North America.

The employee-led CSR program, KSR is now in its ninth year, with 1,000+ employees across 30+ offices in 15 countries supporting 50+ local projects.



The Agencies of the Year - EMEA

Our 2017 EMEA PR Consultancies of the Year are the result of an exhaustive research process involving more than 200 submissions and face-to-face meetings with the best PR firms across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Winners were unveiled at the EMEA SABRE Awards in London on 23 May.

Pan-EMEA Consultancies of the Year

Winner

WEBER SHANDWICK (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

Globally and in the EMEA region, Weber Shandwick has been outperforming its publicly-traded peers for the past few years, and 2016 was another strong year, with revenues in the region up by close to 7% (on top of 11% growth the previous year). The firm is now doing \$125 million in business across the EMEA region.

New business in 2016 came from Bayer, Boehringer Ingelheim, British Gas, Ericsson, Forever 21, HSBC, MasterCard, Pearson, Philips, Qualcomm, UNICEF, Unilever, and Virgin Atlantic. The flagship UK operation turned in solid growth (falling just short of 10%); the Middle East and Africa both continued their impressive expansion; and six markets reported double-digit growth, including Spain, for the second consecutive year.

The key to that success is that Weber Shandwick has been innovating faster and more aggressively than its competition. Its Creation unit, for

example, has changed the game in terms of multimedia content and its acquisition of Sweden's Prime gave it management consulting credentials as well as leading-edge creativity. The latest investment is the firm's "engagement engine," which brings together analytics, creative, strategy, production and integrated media capabilities to come up with big, insight-led ideas for top-tier clients.

New talent reflects the pace of change: in addition to traditional hires like Joey Jones, the former Sky News deputy political editor who joined to lead UK public affairs, the firm continued to bring in diverse talent like Hugh Baillie, an ad industry veteran who was named head of client service, engagement disciplines; executive VP of analytics Alex Vass, who joined from sister agency Mediabrands; and Indy Selvarajah, a new creative director whose résumé includes creating a comedy show for Channel 4. And the acquisition of mobile specialist Flipside gave Weber Shandwick a leadership position in one of the most promising growth markets of the next few years. — PH

Finalists

BURSON-MARSTELLER (WPP)

Globally, there is a case to be made that Burson-Marsteller has been slower than others to transform its operations and embrace the new digital and social world. But overall, the approach has been one of smart innovation: maintaining the strategic leadership that makes BM a trusted advisor to C-suite clients while building out digital and content-creation capabilities. And in the EMEA region, that approach is beginning to pay dividends. The firm maintains its involvement in some of critical issues of the time—helping the EU address the refugee crisis, providing Brexit counsel to clients in the UK and Europe, working with Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries on counter-terrorism efforts—while strengthening its reputation for creativity: its 15 EMEA region SABRE nominations were more than any other agency.

The sweet spot appears to be the convergence of what used to be distinct corporate and consumer realms. So BM is helping clients deal

with the consumer aspects of corporate reputation management (helping retailer Makro redefine its corporate purpose) and corporate social responsibility (working on global CSR strategy for Sanofi, continuing its responsible drinking campaign for Cerveceros de Espana), and helping companies (Merck, Microsoft, Qualcomm, Spotify) navigate public affairs challenges in the new age of populism. The firm also considers to be a go-to agency for crisis work, helping Kimberly-Clark develop global crisis strategy, and change management, from Scandic's work around women in leadership positions to Unilever's acquisition of Blue Air.

Meanwhile, the firm has now established its StudioB creative hubs in the France, the Middle East, Norway in addition to the UK, where it originated. It handles data and research (often in partnership with sister company Penn Schoen Berland), storytelling, creative content, channel strategy, and engagement activity for clients such as AB Sugar, EA Sports, Homebase, Kitchen Aid, Microsoft, and Tenga. Highlights range from an ad campaign featuring footballers Marouane Fellaini and Anja Mittag showing support for refugees to a Ford's You Tube-based "share the wheel" campaign challenging cultural norms in Nordic markets to a virtual reality campaign to raise the profile of Hydro's renewable aluminium.

With so many 2016 highlights, the departure of EMEA chief executive Jeremy Galbraith early in the new year could have the possibility to disrupt, but BM has done everything it can to guarantee a smooth transition and continuity, appointing Ramiro Prudencio—the highly-regarded leader of the firm's Latin America business—to take the reins. — PH

FLEISHMANHILLARD (OMNICOM GROUP)

FleishmanHillard is by no means the biggest PR network in EMEA, but agility can often count for more than scale in the region's collection of troubled economies. Thus it now boasts depth in many of the markets that matter most — the UK, where the merger of Fleishman and Fishburn has created a £20m powerhouse that employs more than 200 people; the Middle East, where strength in Dubai and Saudi Arabia helped it land coveted assignments for Saudi Aramco and Gulf Marketing Group; Brussels, where it remains one of the leading public affairs players in the market; Germany, where Henning Kampe has transformed a business that is now growing rapidly; and South Africa, where Sharon Piehl oversees one of the continent's biggest PR networks. Elsewhere, the firm has consolidated its operations with Omnicom siblings Ketchum and Porter-Novelli in Netherlands, France and Italy, ensuring it can focus on the markets where its growth prospects are already strong.

Indeed, half of Fleishman's EMEA offices submitted double-digit growth last year, including the UK, Germany, Italy, France, South Africa, the Middle East, Brussels and Netherlands. That is ahead of forecast, suggesting that a 'federal' leadership team with no regional CEO is capable of running the region well. There was significant new business from Western Union, Lidl, AT&T, Amazon, HTC and Saudi Aramco, along with particularly strong returns from the firm's healthcare and creative strategy units. Both benefited from demand for more integrated work across corporate and consumer in multiple markets, bolstered by Fleishman's Specialist content arm and by a dedicated digital content unit in Johannesburg.

All of which meant that Fleishman was also able to elevate its campaign

work, illustrated by such campaigns as the Philips Breathless Choir and the Philips Future Health Index, along with standout initiatives for FFA, Bose, Crocs and Fitbit. — AS

H+K STRATEGIES (WPP)

After demonstrating last year that one of the biggest PR networks in the region could function as more of a benefit than a burden, and winning Pan-EMEA Consultancy of the Year honours in the bargain, H+K Strategies submitted another impressive performance in 2016, with upper-single-digit growth and improved profit margin underscoring the sense of progress that has been ushered in under the auspices of regional CEO Lars-Erik Gronntun.

While any firm with 40 operations across 35 markets (accounting for around \$170m in revenue) will struggle to display uniform returns, H+K's growth engines continued to propel expansion in 2016, entering on the UK (+17%), France (+15%), Germany (+20%), Iberia (+18%), Italy, Russia/CIS (+15%), Dubai (+30%) and South Africa (+20%). Many market leaders have turned over the past couple of years, with positive changes bringing much better performance in markets that, not so long ago, were stagnant.

But Gronntun has not just been focused on growth. There has been considerable innovation, particularly in terms of the horizontality that H+K now brings to its key clients, which are now more likely to be serviced in multiple markets. The UK operation's 3P methodology has been implemented in many of its EMEA markets and a much more substantial focus on learning and training has reaped dividends in H+K's content, digital and creative capabilities across the region — illustrated best, perhaps, by the 12 SABRE nominations that the firm recently landed.

Last year, there was major new business from Coca-Cola and EGA in

the Middle East; Desigual and Aldi in Spain; NCR globally; the European Commission across the region; Embraer from Brazil and retaining Norad in Norway. The firm's critical London operation submitted its own standout new business performance, while there was also expanded business from Nordstream, Statoil, Uber and Arla.

In terms of capabilities, H+K continues to retain one of the strongest energy teams in the business (with 60 people in the region working on blue-chip brands such as Shell and Statoil), and also possesses a broad portfolio of clients across FMCG, technology and healthcare, reflecting its status as perhaps the region's biggest PR network. The Group SJR content unit has been present in EMEA since 2014, and now numbers 30 people in the UK along with growth plans for other European markets, thanks to growth and cutting-edge digital work for such clients as EY and Drax.

The firm's intellectual leadership has also made a visible step up, including such efforts as the ThoughtLeadership Disrupted with the Economist and the Transformation of Influence study

with AIG and SJR. And there is considerably more regional cohesion under Gronntun, including the H+K Feed approach to idea generation and the appointment of regional leaders from across the network, rather than favouring any particular market. And the work continues to showcase H+K's revival, including impressive campaigns for Norad, Qatar and WhatsApp. — AS

MSLGROUP (PUBLICIS GROUPE)

MSL has been talking for years about the transition from a network of European holdings—different brands, acquired over two decades—into a single EMEA-wide business, but 2016 might be the year the agency finally came together, the stubbornly autonomous French headquarters office (with more than 160 people it's also the largest office in the region) finally seeming to speak the same language, live the same values as the rest of the network.

But it was a good year all around for MSL in Europe: growth was in the high single-digits, well ahead of the region as a whole, with London experiencing a strong recovery (up 20%) and Germany coming in at around the same level of growth. The firm maintained its leadership

position in the Nordics (thanks to JKL), in Italy (where Daniela Colangelo was promoted to lead the integrated Publicis Groupe offer), and in Eastern Europe (especially Poland, where growth was around 10%). The Africa network continued to expand after the acquisition of Nigeria's Quadrant.

The organization feels refreshed, thanks to several new appointments: Peter Steere moved into a new role as EMEA chair, while Kinda Jackson was named head of digital for the UK. New additions to the team included Magnus Wistam as CEO of MSL in Sweden; Samantha Presbury as managing director in Johannesburg; and Amber O'Connor as lead on the P&G business across the region.

New business performance was strong, with additional global business from marquee clients like P&G, Nestle, and Netflix; new corporate work from HSBC and Visa; consumer assignments from Coca-Cola, Facebook, Haagen-Dazs and Renault; healthcare work from Abbott, Allergan, Merck and Pfizer; and growth in the sustainability and purpose space (led by MSL SalterBaxter in the UK) from BNY Mellon and BP. — PH

Africa PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

CLOCKWORK MEDIA (INDEPENDENT)

Launched just four years ago, South Africa's Clockwork Media has already reached \$2m in fee income, with 75 staffers working for a consultancy that is focused on three key components — asking the right questions (research and strategy), creating great content (production) and sharing it with the world (PR, digital and influencer marketing). Led by 29-year-old founder and former tech journalist Tom Manners, the firm brings a refreshingly agile approach to its business, investing in such areas as as influencer marketing,

video production and data analytics, helping it to already become one of the largest consultancies in the country.

2016 growth was impressive, clocking in at almost 50%, and is expected to reach around the same level in 2017. There was new business from LG, Microsoft, Dial Direct, Investec, SEACOM, TransUnion, Minor Hotels and Accenture, adding to a client roster that already features NBC Universal, PlayStation Dimension Data, Mimecast and Standard Bank. But it is Clockwork's data-led approach to channel-agnostic content production that really stands

out, including a partnerships with influencer marketing house Webfluent and with Hubspot. That has helped to deliver some eye-catching campaigns for Edge Growth (inbound content marketing that generated 17 high-value leads); Accenture (LinkedIn leadership content); and NBC's The Librarians. — AS

Finalists

BURSON-MARSTELLER (WPP)

Burson-Marsteller acquired a majority stake in Robyn de Villiers' South African market leader Arcay Communications in 2011, and with

that deal instantly became the market leader in the region. That leadership position has only strengthened in the intervening year, and the firm now has a network of agencies that covers 53 of the 55 countries on the continent—36 of them with consultancies bearing the Burson-Marsteller brand. The firm now has about 500 people working throughout the continent.

The past year has seen significant expansion of the network, with longtime Mauritius-based affiliate Blast Communications becoming Blast Burson-Marsteller, with the acquisition of a minority stake in Engage Burson-Marsteller in Kenya, and with the expansion of Cameroon's Icon Burson-Marsteller into Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon. The firm supports CNN and Turner Networks in South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria; Oracle and Avaya in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya; and SES in 15 African markets. New business in 2016 came from Equip Health (corporate brand building across multiple markets), Toshiba (media relations support-South Africa, Uganda and Kenya), tech conference AfricaCom, the Libya Africa Investment Portfolio, Colgate (South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique) and more.

The work included crisis and issues management for Total, Westinghouse, and McDonald's (supporting ownership changes) and Burson-Marsteller agencies (including Blast and Engage) won four trophies in our first African SABRE competition, with highlights including the #ColgateSmilefie campaign, through which the company offered free dental screenings for its first oral health month in Kenya, and an employer branding campaign for PwC Mauritius. In addition to the client work, the firm has also expanded its own thought leadership activity launching an African youth survey that complements the Arab survey

conducted by sister agency Asda'a. — PH

DJEMBE COMMUNICATIONS (INDEPENDENT)

Djembe Communications has organically grown a local network that spans Angola, Morocco, Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, the United States and the United Kingdom. These offices all operate under a single budget, which enables Djembe's Dubai office to be a gateway for clients and acts as the design and media epicenter for all clients. Beyond that, Djembe's Luanda and Maputo offices spearhead the consultancy's Lusophone client engagements; Djembe's Rabat office supports the consultancy's Francophone client and is the digital hub for the network.

In 2016, fluctuating commodity prices on the African continent created continual challenges that Djembe handled by diversifying sectors and client work. Fees are up slightly to \$6.2m across 47 employees — driven by clients like Fundo Soberano de Angola; Fabrica de Sabao; African Innovation Foundation; Porto de Caio; The Global Fund; Quantum Global; NiFund; FACRA; Banco Nacional de Angola; Moroccan Ministry of Communications (new) and Starpharma (new).

Notable work includes expanding African Innovation Foundation's reach across the African continent and abroad. In 2016, Djembe orchestrated the Innovation Prize for Africa event in Botswana. For Fabrica de Sabao, the team supported the mission of creating a unique innovation hub in the heart of Luanda's largest slum by developing social media and online content, stakeholder engagement, and event orchestration. The team also managed the launch of the Porto de Caio critical infrastructure project from branding, positioning, and crisis

to local and international stakeholder engagement.

The leadership team includes MD Mitchell Prather; regional director-EMEA Nicole Suter and International director Kevin Nolan. Thought leadership includes opinion pieces from Prather like "Attracting FDI to Africa Less Challenging than Youth Unemployment," "The New U.S. President and African Trade" and "10 Minutes with a PR Professional." — AaS

MEROPA (INDEPENDENT)

Founded in 1989 by Aubrey Sussens and Peter Mann, Meropa aspires to be South Africa's "non-racial, non-sexist meritocracy" that approaches communications in a highly-creative and highly-systemised way.

For instance, Meropa has worked with Ford for 12 years— six of them as their full-service reputation management agency — with the goal of fostering brand affinity to ultimately grow sales and market share. To do this, Meropa produces regional multi-platform content assets across the continent, engages in media relations for consistent share of voice, and drives strategy within a dedicated Ford partner-agency team. Separately, in November Meropa was involved in the launch of the efficacy study on a promising vaccine against HIV/AIDS. To maximize media interest for the first potential HIV/AIDS vaccination, Meropa was given a limited budget and short turnaround time during which the team created content assets, including video footage, that was used by all major news broadcasters from around the world including Associated Press Television, Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, CBS, Bloomberg News and others.

Fees are up nearly 15.5% to 67m ZAR across offices in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth. This growth comes while the South African economy teeters on recession. Yet the firm maintains a

robust portfolio of more than 60 blue-chip clients (including some that have been with the agency for 20+years). Among these: SA National Roads Agency; British Airways; Ford Motor Company; Black & Veatch; WesBank; Jaguar Land Rover; BP; Castrol; IBM; Vodacom Business; in addition to new clients like Boehringer Ingelheim; Averda South Africa; Mauritius Tourism Authority; SA National Blood Service; Direct Selling Association of South Africa; Tracker; Nickelodeon Africa; Tourism Business Council South Africa; and the Great Moscow Circus.

In the last 12 months, Meropa founder Peter Mann also relinquished his group CEO role to Patrick Gearing and become chairman. Meanwhile, Yolisa Pasipanodya was appointed MD of Meropa and Anusha Jogi was appointed MD of JNPR. — AaS

MSLGROUP (PUBLICIS GROUPE)

MSL's acquisition in 2015 of leading South African independent Epic Communications was followed in early 2016 by Publicis Groupe's investment in Nigerian communications company Troyka Group, which added that country's Quadrant Communications to MSL's operations and expanded its footprint in the region.

Epic was founded in 2009 by current CEO Elian Wiener and initially focused on providing media relations support to companies in the financial and professional services sectors. Over the years, it evolved to offer a full range of strategic communications across paid, earned, owned and shared channels. Last year, the firm developed a proprietary tool that allows it to seamlessly integrated multimedia

content such as videos, infographics, animation, and social media posts, all shareable by recipients at the click of a button.

Epic MSL now employs a staff of 50 and generates fee income of around \$4 million, serving a diverse based of clients including Samsung, Baker McKenzie, DHL, Singapore Airlines, Maersk, Cipla and Neotel. New clients over the past 12 months include Old Mutual South Africa, Distell (including brands such as Nederburg, Pongracz, Zonnebloem, Durbanville Hills), Dunkin Donuts, Baskin Robbins and Radisson Hotels. But the firm also added talent, including Ewoudt Cloete and head of digital from Aqua Agency and Samantha Presbury, a veteran of HWB and Magna Carta, as managing director of the Johannesburg office. — PH

Benelux PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

KETCHUM (OMNICOM GROUP)

While almost all international agencies have built their Brussels operations by focusing on EU public affairs, Ketchum has taken an opposite approach, developing a strong local-market offering that services clients across consumer, corporate and healthcare. Over the past four years, this plan has paid off handsomely, resulting in 112% growth, including double-digit expansion in 2016. The firm now has 33 people working for its Belgian operation, finding a unique positioning that is more global than the local players and more local than the global firms.

Last year, there was significant new business from Bristol-Myers Squibb, Ikea, Philips and P&G, adding to a client roster that already features IGU, International Baccalaureate, Goodyear and GS1. There was also some excellent work too, often in

collaboration with BBDO, including a major disease awareness campaign for GSK and support for the country's biggest corporate deal. — AS

Finalists

AKKANTO (INDEPENDENT)

On March 22 of last year, Brussels Airport was faced with the biggest crisis in its history when it was hit by a terrorist attack. After two explosions destroyed the departure hall, akkanto worked with the airport's corporate communication, working on message strategy, providing media relations support, assisting with social media outreach, and creating a dedicated crisis website. As the recovery effort came together the firm provided internal and external communications support to reassure workers and travelers., ultimately launching the airport's new strategic vision.

That's the kind of high-level strategic counsel akkanto has been providing

to companies in the Belgian market (and often beyond; it has a long history of stakeholder engagement work in Africa) since its was founded. In a market dominated by public affairs specialists, akkanto can certainly help international clients navigate the EU landscape, but its true strength is in the corporate reputation realm, with strong crisis credentials and an expanding array of digital capabilities.

The team is appropriately senior, led by managing partner Thierry Bouckaert, a former journalist (La Libre Belgique) and communications director (Orange, Proximus); and partners Nathalie van Ypersele, (former editor of Trends-Tendances), Carl Buyck, (former spokesperson of Federal Minister of Health); and new senior consultant Emily Hoyos (former president of Ecolo, the Belgian Green party, and former

chairwoman of the Walloon Parliament.

Last year was particularly strong, with fees up by about 10 percent to €4.3 million, thanks to major assignments for clients like Abbvie, Brussels Airport, Proximus, LVMH, Celgene, Infrabel, BAE, and Eurodisney. — PH

LVT GROUP (INDEPENDENT)

Founded in 1994 as a technology public relations specialist, LVT has succeeded in building a well-rounded corporate and consumer public relations business. But its technology credentials—now embodied in specialist subsidiary Progress Communications—continue to shine, with two campaigns for Microsoft (the first showcasing 3D technology by reconstructing a Rembrandt painting, the second harnessing the power of a leading Dutch boy band to fake out younger consumers) wowing the SABRE judges this year.

Meanwhile, LVTPR continues to work across a number of business-to-business categories, with clients in the fintech, aviation, mobility, construction and real estate, and consumer and retail sectors. Last year saw growth in the high single digits, with fee income of around €7.8 million. New business came from Gigaset Pro and Wolf Oil Corporation, who hired LVTPR to serve as their European hub partner; Bosch Power Tools (for social media in the Benelux region); Etihad, which tapped Progress Communications for PR support in Benelux; Air Belgium, Haacht Breweries and Auping. They

join existing LVTPR clients Oracle, Veeam, Castrol, TomTom Telematics, Sonos, Plus Supermarkets, and The Northface and Progress clients Microsoft, AVM, Indeed, and DOMO.

LVT has grown its team to around 70, led by group CEO Charly Lammers van Toorenburg, Belgian country manager Karolien Hessels, Progress managing director Stella Jansen, consumer director Marije Perdon, and B2B director Gijs van Beek. Recent years have seen the addition of content creators and other new digital and social media specialists, but attracting new talent in the Benelux market remains the biggest obstacle to continued growth. Fortunately, LVT has been a consistent performer in our Best Consultancies to Work For research, which has helped the firm position itself as an employer of choice in the market. — PH

WHYTE CORPORATE AFFAIRS (INDEPENDENT)

Less than a decade after it was launched by former Interel exec Emmanuel Goedseels, Whyte Corporate Affairs has positioned itself as leader in corporate affairs in the Belgian market, and in 2016 embarked on an ambitious plan to broaden its capabilities (investments in employee engagement, crisis communications, and data and analytics) and its geographic reach (plans for a new operation in Antwerp to cover the Flanders market, and

partnerships with select Dutch firms to play across the Benelux region).

The firm continues to offer valuable insight into the Belgian media, political, corporate, social and academic landscape, an expertise that allows Whyte to define the right audiences, recommend the most appropriate channels of communication, to formulate the right messages and to anticipate actions and reactions. That expertise has been strengthened by a commitment to analytics and research and a growing emphasis on digital channels and visualization. An already strong senior team expanded with the addition of Martine Maelschalck, former editor in Chief of business newspaper L'Echo and communications director for the Federal Budget Minister; Stany Vaes, public affairs manager for the Belgian retail industry association; and An Teysen, with experience in senior roles at the Port of Antwerp and AB InBev.

Last year saw healthy growth of around 10%, with fee income of close to €3.5 million. New business came from Unibet (public affairs and issues management against a backdrop of greater scrutiny on the gambling business); Burger King (supporting its entry into the Belgian market through the acquisition of local brand Quick); Uber (public affairs and reputation management); and Dutch construction company BAM (change management). They join a roster that includes blue-chip clients such as Ikea, Thalys, AB InBev, Medtronic, AXA and Mondelez. — PH

DACH PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

FAKTOR3 (GERMANY/INDEPENDENT)

Started with three entrepreneurs in 1995 who formed the agency to launch AOL, Faktor3 has grown to 190 employees with 85 clients — and has continued to thrive despite the

faltering of its first client. Not only that, the firm has transformed from a media relations shop to employing editors, analysts, engineers, motion designers on top of communications consultants. The firm's headway towards digitalisation also includes its approach "Content Relations"

which is "a permanent cycle of development and distribution of content, as well as the fostering of genuine, sustainable relations."

The firm partnered with Microsoft to tell its story on the future of work, that told a four-part story through

#worklifeflow and other thought-leadership. The team also launched LogiTech's Jaybird wearables in Germany to many journalists and influencers.

Fees are up more than 22% to €15.3m fueled by clients like Microsoft, Sopra Steria Consulting (new), Samsung Electronics, Logitech, Tourism Australia, Audi, Porsche, Adobe, eBay, GroupM, among others. Founders Sabine Richter and Stefan Schrapf run the agency. — AaS

Finalists

FISCHERAPPELT (GERMANY/INDEPENDENT)

fischerAppelt celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2016 with growth of 16% consolidating its position as the second largest agency in German (according to the authoritative Pfeffers ranking) with 425 people and fee income just shy of €50 million.

The expansion of the past few years has been remarkable: not only has fischerAppelt grown beyond its six offices in Germany (Hamburg, Berlin, Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart) to establish operations first in Doha and in 2016 in New York, it has added creative capabilities in content marketing, digital marketing, and film production—often making acquisitions that were years ahead of their time, and expanding the definition of PR in the process.

Andreas and Bernhard Fischer-Appelt, who were in their early 20s when they started the firm in the living room of their flat, continue to lead the agency today as a “federation of ideas” that works across paid, earned, shared and owned media on behalf of a host of market leaders, including both German companies and multinational brands: Allianz, Beam Suntory, BMW, Coca-Cola, Cosmos-Direkt, Daimler, Deutsche Bahn, Deutsche Bank, Deutsche Post, Deutsche Telekom, easy jet, Hilti, Janssen, Lidl, Merck, Mondelez,

Pfizer, Postbank, toom, Weber-Stephen Deutschland.

Highlights include a global content marketing campaign under the core theme “curiosity” for Merck, following the company's 2015 rebranding: using a new interactive platform users can test how curious they actually are by participating in a “curiosity test” designed by the company's scientists. The firm also supported the launch of the Mercedes-Benz van Sprinter 4x4 with an “Extreme Alpine Soccer” campaign that pitted two teams against each other and a very steep slope. The New York team, meanwhile, focuses on developing and implementing US campaigns for German companies, with a focus on market entry and new product launches, often working with the firm's partners in the PROI network of independent agencies. — PH

MSLGROUP (GERMANY/PUBLICIS GROUPE)

While growth was modest in 2016, it was another record-setting year for MSL in Germany, where the firm has enjoyed a string of successes under the leadership of Wigan Salazar, and is now firmly ensconced in the market's top 20 firms and is clearly among the top half-dozen multinationals, with a team of 75 and fee income of around €9 million.

The success has been driven by a balanced business portfolio that includes strength in public affairs (the Berlin office is arguably the strongest of any of the multinationals), where clients include multinationals like Coca-Cola, Google, Mars, P&G, and Pfizer; corporate communications (last year saw a number of interesting crisis mandates (including product crisis work for Mars); and consumer, for clients like Arla, Netflix and P&G. Underlying all of that is an investment in content marketing,

where there was new business from Bosch, Braun, Pfizer and Zeiss.

The other growth driver has been increasing integration with other Publicis agencies in the German market, driven by the appointment of managing director Birgit Stollner to lead collaborative efforts. So MSL has been exporting clients such as BER (Berlin's new airport) and Pfizer, and bringing in assignments for Elanco, Mercedes-Benz, Scandic, Vaillant and others. — PH

SCHWARTZ PUBLIC RELATIONS (GERMANY/INDEPENDENT)

What started as a one-man-show founded by Christoph Schwartz in his home office in 1994 has become a mainstay on our Agencies of the Year - Dach list. It's safe to say that Schwartz has come a long way with more than 20 employees, 50 clients and €3.3m in fees — up 10% from the previous year. Schwartz's familial culture has been the foundation of the agency since its inception and continues to be at the core even as the firm grows.

Clients include Alibaba (new), Zumtobel Lighting (new), Sharp, Fujitsu, Malwarebytes (new), 1&1 Versatel (new), Denon, Blackline (new), Bullguard (new), Scopevisio (new), Doctolib (new), Exaring (new), Forcepoint (new), Querstback (new), Steelcase, Messe Frankfurt. Notable work includes its work with Exact's Cloud Solutions that included content marketing and media relations to boost awareness of the technology within the core target groups. On the agency's advice, Exact became the founding member of an initiative which, together with partners, that helps organizations from SME to tax advisors with successful digitization.

The firm has also taken on a CSR project that includes PR responsibility of “little Art” — a Munich-based non-profit organization that promotes the intellectual, emotional and artistic

development of children and teenagers.

In addition to Schwartz, the agency's board includes Jörg Stelzer, Julia Kaiser and Sven Kersten-Reichherzer. — AaS

WEBER SHANDWICK (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

It's not the size of Weber Shandwick's German operation that impresses—although after another solid growth year in 2016, the firm ranks among the top 10 in the market and is in the top three multinationals, with fees of €16.5 million and a headcount of 140—so much as the scope. In addition to the core brand, the firm's content studio Creation, its healthcare specialist dna communications, and its research operation KRC are all represented, giving Weber Shandwick unique strategic and creative resources.

The firm has four offices, in Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt, and Munich, and a nice balance of business, with healthcare and tech both representing about a third of the fee income, and a sizeable presence in the consumer electronics and food and beverage sectors too. The firm has grown a number of its top 20 clients (up 25% as group) including Boehringer Ingelheim, Boston Scientific, Carglass, Lilly, Sony Pictures, and Deutsche Telekom, but has also expanded its portfolio of German multimarket brands with the likes of 1&1, Bundesliga, Fujifilm, Jabil, Liebherr, and Yanfeng.

The big story of the past 12 months, however, has involved moving rapidly in order to respond to new competitive challenges in the German market: management consulting firms and even publishing houses joining ad agencies and

digital specialists in the brand-building arena. So Weber Shandwick has added digital expertise (bringing in Bernhard Hofer as director of project management from digital agency UDG) and content creation capabilities, developed its own proprietary influencer marketing tool, focusing on new trends in video storytelling and virtual reality—but also expanding its change management capabilities to compete with consulting firms.

Having won the Platinum SABRE in EMEA for its work with Nestle Purina at the beginning of 2016, the firm continued to produce outstanding work for Boston Scientific (helping Parkinson's sufferer Tony Seidl cross the alps in his wheelchair after a procedure made possible by a new neurological surgery), Beiersdorf, Black & Decker, the Gates Foundation and Merck. — PH

Eastern Europe PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

SEESAME COMMUNICATION EXPERTS(SLOVAKIA/INDEPENDENT)

Originally founded as Interel Public Relations, a Slovakian subsidiary of the highly regarded Brussels-based public affairs consultancy of the same name, Seesame achieved its independence following a management buyout 10 years ago and has gone from strength to strength ever since, building on its public affairs heritage to establish itself as arguably the pre-eminent corporate affairs, issues management, and strategic communications firm in Eastern Europe—with a reputation for ethics and integrity as well as results.

Seesame has also always enjoyed success in the international awards arena, winning SABRE Awards in crisis communications and public affairs categories in 2013 and 2014, but celebrating its 20th year in business in 2017, it is a finalist for

three awards—and the work involved underscores the firm's ability to help clients deal with critical issues. For non-profit SPOSA Bratislava, the firm created the "autism simulator" to provide people with a perspective on the condition, combining its strong healthcare credentials with an innovative use of virtual reality. For the Slovak Insurance Association, it launched an intensive grassroots public affairs campaign that fended off a potentially damaging tax. And for the Myeloma Association, it created an awareness campaign to educate the Slovakian public about an invisible disease.

Under the leadership of founder and managing director Michaela Benedigova, who has more than 20 years of experience, the firm has a depth of experienced professionals unmatched in the local market: head of real estate Adriana Catlosova, public affairs practice leader Anna Michalkova and Juraj Caranek, head of the the FMCG practice) each have a

decade of experience handling major issues. They serve a client list that includes Dell, Dr.Oetker, Electrolux, the European Commission, Henkel, IKEA, Pfizer, Shell, YIT, with new business in 2016 from AbbVie, adidas, and Adient. — PH

Finalists

ALL CHANNELS COMMUNICATION (BULGARIA/INDEPENDENT)

Founded in 2001 as a small and fairly traditional public relations firm, All Channels has grown to become the largest independent communications company in Bulgaria, with close to 100 people and operations expanding into the advertising, digital and experiential. The core public relations business now offers an array of services comparable to any 21st century agency, which means the ability to deliver content across paid, earned, shared and owned channels on behalf of an impressive client roster that includes Raiffeisenbank, Mobiltel (Austria Telecom subsidiary),

AVON, Philips, LG, Discovery Networks, Heineken, Coca Cola, and the European Commission in Bulgaria.

New business in 2016 came from BASF, Fox International, Henkel, DHL, and DM. Highlights of the work included the launch of a new cider on behalf of Heineken, with the award-winning “Apple Thief” campaign helping the brand gain a 35% market share in three months. The firm’s bold creative approach was also evidence in its “hijacking” of the traditionally conservative Mtel Twitter account and its “From Love to Life” campaign supporting Avon’s cause-related breast cancer efforts.

Beyond its continued growth and exceptional client work, All Channels has established itself as an industry leader with innovative employee programs like its LEADERS 2020 initiative, seeking to develop a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders. The firm also unveiled a sustainability strategy at the end of 2015, supporting the efforts of a younger generation of employees. — PH

MSLGROUP (PUBLICIS GROUPE)

MSL’s Eastern European network includes 180 professionals in four branded offices, and a presence via other Publicis agencies in 11 markets—many of which are expected to add the MSL brand over the next 12 months. But the standout operations are in Poland, where MSL acquired market leader Ciszewski Public Relations in 2011, and Romania, where the firm is represented by creative powerhouse and perennial SABRE Award winner MSLGroup The Practice. The firm works across all practice areas and industry sectors, but the growth in recent years has come from the expansion of the analytics and insight function, digital and social media capabilities, and content creation—adopting some MSL tools

and developing some processes of its own.

Under the leadership of CEE chief executive Sebastain Hejnowski, working closely with Publicis One in the region, the firm is increasingly involved in big integrated projects spanning not only multiple markets but also multiple disciplines, fueling healthy 9% growth in the region. The client list is impressive, including global leaders such as AstraZeneca, Bosch, Danone Nutricia, Emirates, Netflix, P&G, Reckitt Benckiser, Siemens, and Tetra Laval.

Another strong year of creative work saw the Polish operation launch the “Nathan Drake’s Treasure” campaign to introduce a new game for Sony Playstation, while The Practice helped McDonald’s in Romania negotiate a tricky ownership change, and supported financial services company KRUK on a personal finance education initiative. — PH

SOLSKI COMMUNICATIONS (POLAND/INDEPENDENT)

Ryszard Solski, a veteran of Polish agency Sigma, started his own firm in 2008 with the backing of Burson-Marsteller, and quickly established the firm among the top 10 in Poland according to research published by the Association of Polish Public Relations Consultancies. In fact, with fee income growth of 56% in 2015 and a further 41% in 2016, it is by some distance the market’s fastest-growing firm, with a team of 30 now generating €2 million.

Solski’s key clients are international companies like Airbus, Amadeus, Colgate-Palmolive, Henkel, Lufthansa, Raytheon, Roca, Sanofi Pasteur, and UPS, and local companies Grycan and SMYK, as well as the industry association of plant protection manufacturers PSOR. New business in 2016 came from Bayer, Britax, CMC Markets, Lavazza, and Mastercard, as well as major project for the DG Environment of the European Commission. The firm

continues to be best known for its work in corporate communications, crisis and issues management, and public affairs, with expertise in multiple sectors: defence and aviation, chemicals, construction, real estate, food and drink, travel and leisure, and pharmaceuticals.

Client work in 2016 included cause-related marketing for MasterCard, raising money for the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity via social media, and a location-based game organised by the agency’s brand marketing practice for the Smyk chain of retail stores to promote its loyalty program. The firm also underwent its own corporate identity change, dropping the Solski BM brand—although it remains an affiliate of the global agency. — PH

UNITED PARTNERS (BULGARIA/INDEPENDENT)

Now in its 20th year—making it one of the pioneers of PR in the Bulgarian market—United Partners has worked with more than 150 clients on almost 1,400 projects—more than half of them international in scope. More recently, it has set itself a “big hairy audacious goal”—to be the “Tesla of the communications industry.” It has also put a lot of thought into the kind of values that will get it there: reliability, innovation, learning, positivity and passion.

So while the firm continues to work with some long term clients—P&G (19 years), IBM (12 years), ING (12 years), Johnson Wax (19 years), VMware, Abbvie, Bayer and H&M—it has been aggressive on the new business front, picking up assignments from Lidl, Netinfo, Tommy Hilfiger, Wella Professional, Beekind, Wishio, Bgmenu, Scania, Innovation Norway and Vivacom in the past 12 months as it grew by about 30% to end the year with a team of 30 and fees of around \$1.5 million.

A full-service firm, United has experience in consumer branding, corporate reputation, public affairs, employer branding and employee engagement, experiential marketing, crisis and CSR, with newer offers including content and influencer

marketing—and a new measurement methodology based on AMEC’s Barcelona Principles. Highlights of the past year include the Bayer Science Lab, designed to reveal the role of science in everyday life to primary school children; the EEMUSIC

Energy Efficient Music Culture, a series of more than 150 events in 30 European countries; and pro-bono work for the Dimitar Berbatov Foundation. — PH

French PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

WELLCOM (INDEPENDENT)

Wellcom’s consistent presence as one of France’s top 3 PR firms owes much to founder Thierry Wellhoff’s restless penchant for innovation. In 2015, for example, the firm joined forces with La Maison Link, expanding its expertise into the lifestyle and consumer arena. Last year, meanwhile, it upped investment in measurement and analytics, via the creation of a new KPI tool. Fee income continued to grow impressively, up 10% to €10m, driven by continuing strength across consumer, corporate, creative, digital, healthcare and technology.

That approach helps to sustain a client portfolio that is stronger than most featuring new clients like Adidas,, Essilor, Biocodex, SOS Medecin and Pierre et Vacances, who join a client roster that includes Logitech, Raja, Total, Hertz, B&B Hotels, Easy Voyage and EA Entertainment. A new partner arrived in Corine Renié Pérétie from La Maison Link, while there was also notable SABRE-nominated work for Adidas (#HeretoCreate) and a major campaign to help industry iXblue build domestic awareness. — AS

Finalists

EDELMAN-ELAN (EDELMAN/DJE)

The September 2014 merger between Edelman and Agence Elan created a French powerhouse, one of the largest western-style public relations firms in a market dominated by locally-based agencies built on a distinctly French model. Marion

Darrieutort, who left Edelman in 2008 to launch Elan, had built a very modern firm that challenged the conventions of the market, blending expertise in corporate and marketing communications, supplemented by research and planning and expertise in influencer outreach and social media.

In the two years since, Darrieutort has worked hard to revamp the combined entity, harnessing growth to digital and creative services and implementing a new ‘Cabinet’ senior advisory offering. That helped spur 17% growth in 2016, a remarkable number amid difficult economic conditions. There was good organic growth from existing clients like Gilead, BMS and Danone, along with new business from Merdiam, Dior, Nissan Women Empowerment and HP. Standout work, meanwhile, included the Evian Fruits and Plants Launch. — AS

HOPSCOTCH GROUPE (INDEPENDENT)

Launched in 2000, Hopscotch has expanded to become France’s largest communications group, with the 2010 merger with Le Public Système helping to create a leader in the industry, now worth €55m with operations across EMEA. The group has further expanded its offering by acquiring 33% of food and beverage specialist Sopexa, part of a plan to create a viable French alternative to the Anglo-Saxon independent PR networks.

Now rebranded as Hopscotch Global PR Group, the firm showcases a fully rounded offering across multiple

sectors and practice areas, with particular strength in digital, events, technology and content production. The client roster is a blue-chip affairs that includes Microsoft, Renault/Nissan, Lancôme, Samsung, Hennessy, Sony, Accor, ExpoFrance 2025, Getty Images and Talentsoft. — AS

KINGCOM (INDEPENDENT)

Over its three decades, Kingcom’s core approach to communications has been to decode its clients DNA. With this insight, the firm looks to craft content that respects each brand’s culture and particular sensitives, not matter the sector — gastronomy, leisure, consumer food, lifestyle, automotive, wine and spirits, retail, fashion, beauty or health.

Not only that, the agency is also looking to shed PR from the stubborn perception that it’s more of a low-cost commodity than a value-add creative partner. It’s doing this in several ways— its work with Cannes Lions, the Young Lions and now with Syntec PR, in addition to its new market offering “PR Strategy: Drive to Business” that involves working directly with business CEOs. Its unique thinking is also seen through initiatives like its “Food is Social” conference, a partnership with startup accelerator Shakeup Factory; its foodtech hackathon; and its creative lab, among others.

Fees are up slightly to €2.7m with 43 employees working on clients like Alliance 7, Collective des Biscuits et Gâteaux, Collective Céréales, Collective Petits déjeuners, Duracell

(new), Beaumes de Venise (new), The City of Orléans (new), Virtuality Congress (new), Coin coin by Doudou&Compagnie (new), Fauchon (new), Ovide (new), Red Loop (new), among others.

Notable work includes creating holiday buzz for Duracell which included a launch of an ephemeral pop-up store in the centre of Paris from November the 26th to December the 3rd around the nostalgia of vintage toys. President/founder Isabelle Wolf remains at the helm, while also spearheading initiatives like co-founding the Food is Social conference and joining the jury of Young Lions PR, among other endeavors. CEO Pascale Azria is also president of the digital commission of Syntec PR. Rounding out the management team are art director Melody Depond, CIO Guillaume Du

Gardier and planner Sophia Ould'ali. — AaS

RUMEUR PUBLIQUE (INDEPENDENT)

Rumeur started in 1988 around a sector that was commonly referred to as high tech in those days — and likely bears little resemblance to today's technology. Then in 2000, the shop diversified its portfolio to include transportation, finance, HR — also areas that have undergone some transformation in the last decade or so.

Today with a workforce of nearly 50, the agency now covers all communication practice areas: brand strategy, media relations, digital strategy, public affairs, corporate communications, creation/production. But the driving force behind all of this is some simple thinking — brands without a clear

position lack influence. With that in mind, Rumeur teams closely analyze each client's environment to create a distinguishing communications plan.

In 2016, fees were up 24% to €6.8m driven by clients like Salesforce, VMware, Deloitte, BNP, Paribas SAS, Blackiline, ADP, Taxis Bleus, Dropbox (new), Stripe Zuora (new), IN Extenso (new), Rockwool (new), Micropole (new), CA Technologies (new), SNCF (new), Café Royal (new).

While the management team has remained fairly consistent, in 2016 the firm hired Olivier Provost, former associate director of Havas Paris and chief editor of La Tribune, to strengthen the leadership team and develop a corporate communication practice. Other hires include crisis and media training expert Josephine Besnard. — AaS

Iberian PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

MARCO DE COMUNICACION (INDEPENDENT)

When fast-growing Spanish agency Marco de Comunicación beat out a number of multinational agencies—as well as independent firms from across Europe—to handle communications for COP22, the UN Climate Change Summit in Marrakech, it was vindication of founder Didier Lagae's aggressive growth strategy over the past couple of years, which has seen the firm double-down on its expertise in Africa and its ability to deliver (often through its affiliation with MSLGroup) international reach. For COP22, MdC engaged more than 200 journalists from all over Africa in a set of unprecedented press trips and generated more than 44,000 news pieces globally, underscoring the event's key messages.

With offices in Madrid, Barcelona, Lisbon, Paris, Casablanca and Miami and a team of close to 100

professionals, MdC offers a full range of services including publicity, events, audiovisual and design, as well as online communications, public affairs (including a new EU affairs offer), social media, and influencer campaigns. It has been growing by about 25% a year over the past three years, with 28% growth in 2016 thanks to new assignments from COP22, the Union for the Mediterranean, Kaiserwetter, World Water Council, SMC, the International Monetary Fund, Ivanhoe, Springfield, Idealo and Herbalife, and continuing assignments for Netflix (which helped drive the firm's expansion into the Portuguese market), Unilever, Etihad Airways, Springfield (Cortefiel Group), Conforama, Mexican Tourism Board, and AFEVI / Friends of Glass.

MdC was a pioneer in digital and social in the Iberian region, and quickly realized that new media knew no geographic boundaries. As a result, the firm has built a team multilingual consultants from 17 different nationalities. It has also

launched a dedicated digital marketing agency, Influencia. And last year it introduced another innovation, an “experience room” located in Madrid's barrio Salamanca that serves as a showcase for consumer clients. — PH

Finalists

ATREVIA (INDEPENDENT)

While Atrevia has (like its Spanish rival Llorente & Cuenca) expanded its operations into Latin America over the past few years, the former Inforpress (unlike L&C) continues to derive the majority of its revenues from the Iberian markets: close to €17 million of its €18 million in fee income last year was derived from its extensive Spanish network (offices Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Bilbao, Santiago de Compostela, Málaga, Sevilla, Valladolid) and its Portuguese operations (Lisbon, Porto). That's enough to make it the clear market leader on the peninsula, as well as

one of the leading independent firms in Europe.

The other thing that continues to set Atrevia apart from its competitors in Spain is the diversity of its operations. While others have carved out niches in corporate and financial communications or consumer PR, Atrevia is genuinely full-service, with genuine strength in consumer, corporate, financial, healthcare, technology, and digital, and with market leading expertise in areas such as employee communications. The firm has a newer public affairs capability that has been expanding internationally (including a small Brussels office) and expanding advertising capabilities. New clients such as Metro de Madrid, Hipódromo de la Zarzuela, C&A, Mahou-San Miguel, Nissan, and Europcar helped to drive growth of close to 9% in 2016, joining a roster that includes California Walnuts, Renova, Enagas, TOUS, Pfizer, Twitter, Lidl and more.

Under the leadership of founder and president Núria Vilanova, the firm continued to innovate in 2016, launching a new brand communications service built around its concept of “spherical brands”; collaborated with a leading business school on research into Generation Z; published a report on “Values and Communication in Family-Owned Businesses,” (having carved out a niche working with such companies); and staged the latest Forum for Good Governance and Shareholders, urging best practices in transparency in investor relations. — PH

H+K STRATEGIES (WPP)

Following the acquisition of Portuguese corporate/PA firm FXT Communications, Hill+Knowlton Strategies now numbers 70 people across Iberia, growing more than 15% last year and by more than 50% over the last three years. The firm’s Spanish operation has long possessed strength across corporate, public affairs and brand marketing, and this has been complemented in

recent years by growing capabilities in healthcare, technology and food and beverage.

New clients include Desigual and Aldi, while there was also significant existing client expansion from such accounts as Danone and Huawei. In particular, H+K has brought a more creative positioning to its efforts in Iberia, integrating the firm’s global ‘creative strategy’ approach to develop its services in content, creative, publishing strategies, and marketing influencer. A major thought leadership initiative — the Orbita creative event — showcases this approach, helping H+K distinguish itself from its rivals in the market. — AS

LIFT WORLD (INDEPENDENT)

The Portuguese-based Lift World is the umbrella group for eight integrated agencies that focus on a wide array of marketing and communications services, from the established to the emerging. It seems fitting that its tagline is “Great Together” — 120 employees work for holding company that is inching towards €10m (revenues were up nearly 14% in 2016 to €9.9m).

In early 2016, Lift World launched Big Fish, a specialist brand activation shop. The agency also expanded its capabilities with a new video division, by presenting webinars through the Gorkana platform and by producing papers around inbound marketing for the MORE Digital Culture marketing brand. Amid this growth, the firm is focusing on scaling sustainably while most of Portugal is still suffering through a financial crisis.

Key clients include Microsoft, L’Oréal, Nestlé, Rock In Rio, Bosch, Mylan, Merck, Nespresso, Fox, SLBenfica, including new wins Vodafone, EDP, Abbott, Avis, GEFCO, Emmys, AON, Klepierre, Easypay and Galp. CEO Salvador da Cunha remains at the helm. — AaS

TORRES Y CARRERRA (INDEPENDENT)

14 years ago Torres y Carrera was founded on two beliefs: organisations must be strongly committed to the environment in which they operate and public relations should be in the constant state of innovation to maintain relevancy.

The boutique firm is about €2m in revenue with 25 employees working on existing clients like Coca-Cola, Cepsa, Iberia Express, Mahou, Lafarge-Holcim, Enterprise, Primark, Astic – Asociación del Transporte Internacional por Carretera, Gilead Science, Fundación Española para la Diabetes and new wins including Turismo de Tenerife, FCC, H&M, FEIQUE – Federación Empresarial de la Industria Química Española, Borgwarner, Serunion and Fundación Española de la Nutrición. The agency has also joined the UN Global Compact and took on a leadership position around CSR.

Notable work includes the “Your bones, your second skin” campaign with Fundación Hispana de Osteoporosis y Enfermedades Óseas to raise awareness of bone health among seniors. The team conducted a roadshow across 10 Spanish cities, in which 6,125 densitometry scans were performed and direct information was given to more than 8,000 people.

The firm has also developed several projects related to the impact of communication on social development. For instance, “Message in the Bottle” is an experiment designed to empirically demonstrate the theory of the “Six degrees of separation.” The firm’s “Writing a Novel” initiative invited Internet followers to contribute to the evolution of a story. Last year, Torres y Carrera launched COMbyCOM — an Iberian Transmedia communication group that includes public relations, advertising, marketing, digital and big data firms and has plans to expand to Latin America in 2017. — AaS

Winner

MSLGROUP ITALIA (PUBLICIS GROUPE)

MSL's Italian operations, under the leadership of Daniela Canegallo for the past decade, have been an outlier both in terms of the respect with which they are held by Publicis Groupe (Canegallo was elevated to country manager for all Groupe operations in Italy) and in terms of their differentiation in the Italian market. MSL Italia has been a constant innovator, developing new tools—using data science to inform and measure campaign success—and pushing the creative envelope. In the past year, for example, MSL has worked with partner agency Zenith, bringing its influencer and content creation expertise to Zenith clients while drawing on the latter's suite of data tools. But it has also continued to develop proprietary tools like NPA, which automates conversation analysis (it can detect sarcasm) and helps with insight generation.

MSL is the strongest of the multinational agencies in Italy, with 85 people in Milan and another 10 in Rome, but it is not just a question of size: in addition to its thought leadership activities, MSL Italia is leading integrated campaigns for clients such as Dacia (the SABRE nominated sponsorship of football team Udinese, which became an opportunity to reach out to families), and serving as a strategic advisor to clients like Pirelli, for which the agency has conducted anthropological research that has helped the tire-maker develop its overall marketing strategy.

MSL Italia enjoyed a strong year in 2016, with new business from the likes of Italian chocolate maker Ferrero and energy company eni, as well as from Japanese automaker Toyota, and expanded work for Netflix, another integrated assignment that ranges from

influencer marketing to paid media. — PH

Finalists

BURSON-MARSTELLER (ITALY/WPP)

The economy of southern Europe has been making life difficult for public relations agencies in recent years, but Burson-Marsteller enjoyed a solid year in Italy in 2016, with new business from Italian food company Amadori, Avon, Autogrill, Italian coffee company Lavazza, Lidl, and Italian industrial company Sapio. They join a roster that includes Ford, Microsoft, Danone, Comau (Fca Group), Chiomenti Legal, Just Eat, and Easyjet and has helped establish BM—with a team of more than 50—a leader among the multinational agencies in Italy.

One key to that success is a veteran leadership team including CEO Fabio Caporizzi, who has 25 years of experience in the market (with Shandwick, Ogilvy, Hill+Knowlton, SEC and others) and seven years in his current role, and general manager Gianfranco Mazzone, a 12-year BM veteran. Other senior execs include Delia Ciccarelli, head of corporate and crisis; Antonella Violante, head of media and digital; and Giuliana Gentile, head of brand marketing—each representing a particular area of strength for BM in the market.

Interesting integrated work included leveraging the 25th anniversary of Samsung in Italy through the “Samsung loves Italy” campaign, with a study from academic institute Bocconi researching the socio-economic impact Samsung has had on the country combining with extensive social media outreach. Working with longtime client Ford, meanwhile, BM developed the Ford Social Home, a virtual showroom targeting automotive and non-automotive audiences through events, traditional and social media engagement. — PH

INC (INDEPENDENT)

It's rare to find a firm that's lasted 40 years while maintaining its independence, but INC has defied odds to do just this. This milestone comes after a long track record of “firsts” — the agency was an early Italian firm to have dedicated digital and content practices; among the first to have a management board that includes not only former journalists but also designers, publishers and other creators; and it was an early adopter to a cross-functional communications approach.

While revenue was flat at €2.2m 2016, INC has grown revenues 22% over the last three years in the relatively sluggish Italian market. Clients include British American Tobacco; MasterCard; Emirates Airlines; UN Refugee Agency; that National Association of Italian Breweries; the Italian Association of Bakery and Pasta Industries; Doctors Without Borders; Barilla Group (new); Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (new); Heineken (new); World Health Organization (new); Campo Frio/ Fiorucci Italy (new); Italian Union for Sustainable Palm Oil (new), among others.

Notable work includes #LetsPutOnyourHead for the United Nations Refugee Agency to educate the public on refugee children's challenges in attending school. INC conducted an immersive launch event to create a media hook and photo opportunities and fundraising activity. For the “Good for you, good for the planet” media event for Barilla Group, INC presented both the financial report and the company's sustainability report together.

This year, the firm has focused on creating a more inclusive working environment, allowing employees more autonomy; integrating more non-traditional skills (like analytics, research, designers) into the firm;

while also continuing to grow in an environment that sometimes favors price over quality. Pasquale De Palma continues to lead as chairman and CEO alongside VP and partner Paolo Mattei. — AaS

SEC (ITALY/INDEPENDENT)

One of Italy's largest PR firms now has increasingly credible international ambitions. SEC, founded in 1989 by Fiorenzo Tagliabue, has acquired consultancies in Belgium (Cambre), Spain and Germany in recent years, adding UK firm Newington in 2016

and buying Poland's Martis Consulting. In addition, SEC listed on the UK AIM market last year, as part of a strategy to diversify and grow beyond Italy's difficult economic conditions. That kind of thinking marks out Tagliabue as something of a unique character in Italy's communications market, but he is supported by a deep leadership team that includes co-founder Paola Ambrosino and new CEO Cesare Valli, who joined in 2015 after a lengthy tenure with H+K Strategies.

SEC now employs more than 150 people in Italy across seven offices,

accounting for around half of the group's overall EMEA revenues of 20m Euros. There is particular strength in corporate and financial, but SEC's scale ensures it has a broader set of capabilities than most of its peers, with a client list that features Accor, Auchan, Coca-Cola, Deutsche Bank, Lidl, Nielsen Research, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Italian Government, Terna, The Walt Disney Company and UniCredit Group. The best of SEC's work, furthermore, demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of modern reputation management. —AS

Middle East PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

FLEISHMANHILLARD (OMNICOM GROUP)

With 35 people across the UAE and Saudi Arabia, FleishmanHillard's Middle East presence may not have the scale of some of its rivals, but has been able to outperform some of them nonetheless. That is partly down to the experience of regional veteran Jim Donaldson, who oversees the firm's operations in London and the Middle East, and partly down to solid local market growth under regional leaders Robert Hanvik, Lucy O'Brien and Cameron Walker.

In particular, Fleishman prevailed over numerous rivals to secure the keenly-contested Saudi Aramco global PR brief, and has also netted significant new business from Gulf Marketing Group. As a global retainer, the Saudi Aramco assignment immediately becomes one of Fleishman's largest in EMEA, with a broad range of services expected to include creative strategy in addition to traditional media relations and content development. There has also been good work for Qatar National Bank, while Hanvik brings a specific level of expertise to the firm's work with government ministries, large

private institutions and healthcare clients in the region. An important new appointment, furthermore, sees global social innovation lead Jared Carneson arrive from South Africa to oversee efforts in the region. — AS

Finalists

ASDA'A BURSON-MARSTELLER (WPP)

Under the leadership of founder and CEO Sunil John, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller has been a pioneering force in the Middle East's public relations industry, establishing one of the largest networks of offices in the region—wholly-owned operations in the UAE (Dubai and Abu Dhabi), Saudi Arabia (Riyadh and Jeddah), Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt—innovating in the corporate, crisis and public affairs practice areas, and launching the annual Arab Youth Survey, a defining piece of through leadership that is now widely quoted in the region and beyond.

Last year was another good one for the firm, which saw fee income rise by 12% and headcount increase to more than 160. The firm has launched its own operations of the BM brands Proof (an integrated design, digital marketing and social media agency) and Penn Schoen

Berland (research), strengthening its credentials in two key areas. New business in 2016 came from the Kuwait Ministry of Finance; Crown Prince Court, Abu Dhabi; the Saudi Arabian Industrial Investments Company; Noon (a new e-commerce company), Visa International, and Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, while the firm continues to work with Ford, Emaar Properties, General Electric, Nestle, HTC, the UAE Prime Minister's Office, the Saudi Royal Court, and the Egyptian Tourism Authority.

Work for major government clients in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt has positioned the agency as the go-to choice for public entities requiring strategic, evidence-based communications programmes, while other highlights included Ford's "Warriors in Pink" breast cancer education campaign, overcoming a stigma associated with the disease in Middle Eastern markets; the "Minds+Machines" campaign to launch GE's transformation into a digital industrial company in the region; and the launch of an iconic new real estate development in Dubai for longtime client Emaar Properties. — PH

COMMUNICATION PARTNER (TURKEY/INDEPENDENT)

Market conditions in Turkey are not exactly favorable for public relations right now, with political turmoil and the erosion of secular and democratic institutions giving overseas companies cause for concern, so the continued growth of local PR firms like Communication Partner, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, is doubly impressive. New business came from National Bank of Saudi Arabia / Türkiye Finans, Abbvie, IFC, Letgo, Garenta, Ikiniciyeni.com, Arvento, and Eurofins, while the firm continues to do good work for Barilla, KFC, Pizza Hut, Fiat Group, Amway, First Quantum Minerals, Enerjisa /Eon Energy, Orhan Holding, Oyak Group, and Otokar.

A strong year in 2016 can be attributed to two things. First, the firm has impressive crisis communications capabilities, and crisis management became especially important to clients last year.

And second, managing partners Kerem Ayırtman and Ufuk Carşıbaşı have been focused on a creative approach to brand communications, challenging the traditional leadership role of advertising agencies in the brand-building arena, creating an innovative partnership with brand strategy firm Siegel&Gale and adding creative talent from ad agencies and digital backgrounds to offer a more integrated creative approach. The launch of a new turkey wrap for KFC, for example, included a social media campaign and a competition through which customers could win a

helicopter trip over the city of Istanbul, while the firm formed a number of strategic partnerships with nutrition and environmental groups to help Barilla introduce its sustainable “Milan Protocols” in Turkey.

HILL+KNOWLTON STRATEGIES (WPP)

At 30 years old, H+K is the oldest international PR firm in the Middle East and remains one of the best, under new leadership in the form of Bashar AlKadhi, who joined from WPP sibling Asda’a Burson-Marsteller to oversee H+K’s 120 consultants across eight Middle Eastern markets. Last year, the firm’s flagship Dubai office (which employs around 70 consultants) grew by an eye-catching 27%, expanding beyond its healthcare and sports leadership roots into such areas as brand marketing, energy/industrials and government work.

All told, the firm grew at a high single-digit rate across the region, bolstered by strong offices in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. There was significant new business from Coca-Cola and EGA, reflecting a much stronger new business pipeline, while the firm has also stepped up its efforts hire and train local talent in the markets in which it operates. In addition to AlKadhi’s appointment, Melissa Quackenbush was promoted to client services director in the UAE, while Sara Jurkowsky took charge of the firm’s energy practice from Dubai. New hires included Elias Markopoulos to oversee content and digital for MENA, along with campaign director James Mitchell in Dubai. — AS

MEMAC OGILVY (INDEPENDENT)

Last year’s Middle Eastern Consultancy of the Year, Memac Ogilvy has been a fixture on this list largely as a reflection of its flair for creativity, demonstrated by a string of SABRE Award winning campaigns— for the likes of Grohe, the King Khalid Foundation, and most recently for Coca-Cola, which picked up one of last year’s Global SABREs for its “Ramadan Dark Iftar” initiative. This year the firm has already picked up an In2 SABRE for its cheeky advertising efforts on behalf of Royal Jordanian Airlines (drumming up traffic and trolling Trump at the same time), and is SABRE nominated for its Volkswagen “Human Crossing” campaign and its Huawei “One Ramadan” program.

At the same time, the firm’s regional footprint and overall business growth probably deserves just as much recognition: it now has 130 people across 14 offices across MENA, generating an estimated \$10m in revenue after another year of solid growth. Indeed growth over the past five years as seen the firm more than double in size.

The firm’s ability to drive cutting-edge integrated work owes much its positioning within the broader Memac family, but PR head Saada Hammad now oversees leadership team that also includes genuine strength in public affairs and technology as well as consumer and corporate. It has struck a good balance between global and local clients, critical across MENA, and now ranks within the top four in all of its markets. — PH

Nordic PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

H&H GROUP (SWEDEN)

The firm formerly known as Hallvarsson & Halvarsson had established itself as the Nordic

region’s most formidable financial communications specialist before it was sold to Sage Holdings in 2009. It spent the next five years in a kind of purgatory before senior executives

Martin Petersson, Anders Halvarsson, Johan Ramsten and Staffan Lindgren bought the business back in 2014— but in the two years since then the businesses now known as H&H Group

have expanded at a very healthy pace, reclaiming their place of prominence in the financial space while diversifying their portfolio—most notably with the February 2016 acquisition of Swedish creative powerhouse Jung Relations.

That deal was the most significant manifestation of a philosophy that aims to see H&H become a home for entrepreneurs, who will be allowed to maintain the spirit that build their firms while benefiting from the support of a larger holding companies. There are six firms in the family right now—including digital specialist Comprend and corporate film company Creo—and H&H leadership believes it can add two or three new firms each year, and expand beyond the Nordic region. Group fees grew by a very impressive 35% in constant currency terms last year, and ended with fees of \$33 million, enough to rank among the top 60 PR firms in the world.

The firm works for a number of Sweden's largest companies, including Ericsson, SEB Bank, Volvo Cars, and Scania, as well as for international brands like Adidas. While H&H tends to keep its client work confidential, Jung scored a couple of SABRE nominations for its work helping state-owned gambling company Svenska Spel integrate immigrants into Swedish society via participation in sports, and launching a new car for Volvo sister company Lynk & Co. — PH

Finalists

DIPLOMAT GROUP (SWEDEN/ INDEPENDENT)

Diplomat Group has a strong heritage in public affairs—a critical part of the Swedish PR business, due to a highly-engaged citizenry—helping clients understand the values, attitudes and politics of Sweden's opinion leaders. But the group has expanded in new directions recently. The core Diplomat Communications maintains its public affairs focus,

with offices in the other Nordic capitals and in Brussels, and has expanded into broader corporate communications, and some financial work.

That core has been supplemented in recent years by two additional units: YouMe Agency is focused on brand-building, with strong visual capabilities; Repeat Studios, launched in 2016, is a digital and social media specialist. The three brands often work in concert to deliver comprehensive communications solutions to clients—although the firm does not disclose client names as a matter of policy.

The firm is distinguished by its strong senior leadership team, including founding partners Gunnar Rune Sonesson, Björn Nyblom, and Anders Oremark; and group CEO Oscar Hyléen, former head of IR at PostNord. Joakim Svensson and Fredrik Malm joined from MassCreation in 2016 to help launch Repeat Studios, and Ingvar Skeberg, former deputy CEO and director of the insurance offer at AMF Pension and group market director at Swedbank, joined the firm as a senior advisor. — PH

GEELMUYDEN KIESE (NORWAY/ INDEPENDENT)

Over the past few years, Geelmuyden Kiese has transformed itself from a well-established but slightly stodgy firm best known for its corporate affairs and issues management work into one of the most creative full-service PR agencies in continental Europe, developing integrated campaigns for a wide range of corporate, public sector and nonprofit clients.

After picking up a couple of SABRE Awards in 2016—for work on behalf of disruptive funeral home business Fonus and veterinary care association Svensk Djursjukvård—the firm has already earned three In2 SABREs this year: a digital advertising

campaign for Norwegian recycling company Infinitum; an online campaign pitting a computer game-playing “Nerd Against Nature” for The Norwegian Trekking Association; and a branding campaign for property company Aker Brygge. Other highlights include an international road safety education campaign for Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority; marketing efforts for Avinor Oslo Airport; outreach to LGBT travelers for Flytoget; and a cause-related campaign focused on refugees for professional services firm Hero Norway—all nominated for awards in this year's competition.

The firm's impressive work has been related with steady growth in recent years. Fee income was up by close to 10% last year, and Geelmuyden Kiese Group ended the year with revenues of around €26 million and 150 people working across offices in Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Brussels. The client list includes Avinor Oslo International Airport, MasterCard, Google, the Norwegian Seafood Council, Infinitum, IKEA, Scandic, Kiwi, Flytoget, Copenhagen Airport, Google Denmark, Rosendahl Design Group, Danish Horticulture, L'Oreal, and Top Toy. — PH

ITEO CONSULTING (NORWAY/ INDEPENDENT)

Within just a short window of six years, Iteo has cultivated an impressive culture of client and talent loyalty. Not only that, the firm transformed from one that specializes in earned media, then owned and has now emerged as full-scale digital player.

In 2016 the agency became certified on Google, Facebook, HubSpot and inbound marketing — and now considers itself “probably the most digital communications provider in our region.” Revenues jumped 40% to \$2.1m in 2016 with 15 people. Clients include Panasonic, Dell, Intel, NTT, Emirates, Philips (lighting), DNV GL, NEC, Icopal, SAP that were joined by

new additions Microsoft, Dell EMC (won repitch), Securitas, Formuesforvaltning, Bosch Siemens, Viacom, Hello (telco), plus some highly recognized local brands.

Country Manager of Emirates Norway, Terje Grue says “I have never before had the pleasure of working with an agency of this caliber. Their constant focus on their targets and tasked duties, completed with advisory and a full-fledged 360 degree angle to each step, leaves me with a very high reassurance of their work.”

Founder Andreas Thue is the former managing director Nordics for Text 100 who manages alongside senior partner Tina Tharaldsen. — AaS

NARVA (SWEDEN/INDEPENDENT)

Narva—named after the Swedish army victory over a Russian force

three times its size—has always embraced its positioning as a challenger brand initially within the financial communications space (from investor relations to IPOs and other transactions to annual and sustainability reporting) and more recently in the broader media relations, public affairs and CSR space (via the 2015 acquisition of consultancy Rewise)—and in the healthcare arena, where the firm bought Mix PR in 2012 and Heart three years later, and in early 2016 hired former social affairs minister Göran Hägglund as a senior advisor.

Under the leadership of managing partners Daniel Bergsten and Johan Molander, Narva remains one of the fastest-growing in the Swedish market, with fee income up 10% in constant currency terms to around \$6.6 million. The growth was generated by new assignments from

Scandinavian Airlines, Fujitsu, Bausch+Lomb, Sandvik, Allianz, and T Rowe Price, joining an existing roster that includes Telia Company, Air France, KLM, and Deutsche Asset Management.

Maintaining its tradition of innovation, the firm published a white paper on social media in the healthcare sector, and handled high-profile campaigns for the Swedish Childhood Cancer Foundation (#SwabForLife) and produced an award-winning annual report for The Swedish Red Cross. It also added talent, including Olle Axelsson, former communications director at Coop, as senior advisor, and Jimmy Larsson, former digital specialist for SSU, the Swedish Social Democratic Youth League, to strengthen its digital capabilities.

— PH

Russia/CIS PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

FLEISHMANHILLARD VANGUARD (OMNICOM GROUP)

Launched as a joint venture between FleishmanHillard and leading local PR firm Vanguard in 2007, FleishmanHillard Vanguard (in which the Omnicom firm now owns a majority) remains one of the best PR firms in Russia, with 120 people now working across Moscow and Kiev under the leadership of general director Elena Fadeeva. Last year, furthermore, the firm undertook a strategic review operations to help identify where and how it would grow amid tough market conditions. The results of that process have been impressive, with FleishmanHillard Vanguard demonstrating its ability as one of the firms that can successfully handle MNC and domestic clients, and also launching the FHV Sport unit in cooperation with Omnicom sibling GMR to capitalise on Russia's

preparations to host its first-ever World Cup.

Key areas of growth included Russian-based MNCs such as Atomenergoprom, Megafon, Ingosstrakh and Baltic Breweries, with the firm also hiring international veteran Pavel Andreev to oversee the practice. There was also significant new work with the Russian Government, including efforts to build closer links with NGOs, and being selected agency of record for the FIFA local organising committee for the 2017 Confederations Cup and 2018 World Cup. And there was the usual strong haul in terms of MNCs, such as winning Avon, Samsung, P&G, Singapore Tourism Board, Marriott and Viber.

All of that added up to strong double-digit revenue growth, and FleishmanHillard Vanguard now operate as the largest international agency in Russia, the only one to crack the country's Top 10 according

to the NRKK local agency ranking. Much of its new work, furthermore, features an integrated PESO capability that includes marketing and advertising work, showcased by strong work for InterRAO, MegaFon and — most notably — Avon's breast cancer crusade program.

Fadeeva's own industry leadership, as head of AKOS (The Russian Communications Consultancies Association) has also helped position FleishmanHillard Vanguard as visible, progressive presence in the market, particularly through her efforts to establish a new ethics code for country's PR firms and in-house communications operations in recent months. — AS

Finalists

BE-IT AGENCY (UKRAINE/ INDEPENDENT)

When its founders realized that business as usual isn't going to cut it anymore, they broke ties with their

legacy partner firms (including Russia's PRP) to start the Be-It Agency with a vision to create a new reality of sorts. That vision is attracting attention, in 2016 Be-it Agency was joined by Republic, Changers and Zeitgeist and transformed into Be-it Group that expanded its services and talent pool.

Also in 2016, the firm grew by 107% to 60 employees because of existing clients like Coca-Cola, MasterCard, Sanofi, Microsoft, Avon, Philips, Sony, Mondelez, BASF, Continental — in addition to new clients like McDonald's, Western NIS Enterprise Fund, UNICEF, MSD, Renaissance Foundation founded by George Soros, Danone, Danish Demining Group/Danish Refugee Council, Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Already this year, the agency has spun off Be-it Health & Social Impact. The biggest challenge facing the agency is now aligning its growth with its strategic goals. For instance, the firm recently reorganized digital and creative services into a content creation lab powered by a chief content creation officer. The team also formalized its robust business processes, from client development to talent acquisition to quality assurance.

Notable work includes #CokeBottleStory campaign to create awareness about the 100th anniversary of the Coca-Cola bottle with an integrated communications campaign with a bent towards social legacy. President Natalya Popovych leads with a team that includes Kristina Nikolayeva, Natalya Olbert-Sinko, Myroslava Gribova and Oksana Sorzhulenko. — AaS

KETCHUM (OMNICOM GROUP)

You could argue that difficult market conditions have affected international firms disproportionately in Russia, given their reliance on MNC business. Yet Ketchum retains its position as one of

the market's best firms under the leadership of senior partner and director Michael Maslov. In particular the firm increased its new business win rate by 14%, securing clients such as Samsung, Whirlpool and Hyatt, which add to a roster that includes Skoda, Rolls-Royce, BMW and P&G.

Ketchum's status as a hub for a 10-strong CIS affiliate network also gives it an edge over many firms, helping it deliver a range of strong campaign, particularly in the consumer sphere. Eye-catching work included Russia Is Škoda Country for Škoda Russia and "Feetnis" Is Feminine for Adidas Russia, both of which have been nominated for EMEA SABRE Awards — AS

PBN H+K STRATEGIES (WPP)

San Francisco-based PBN was invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to open an office in Moscow, which it did in 1991. Over the next decade, the firm established offices in the capitals of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Latvia, focusing on the strategic end of the business, with particular expertise in public affairs and government relations, crisis and issues management, and corporate and financial communications.

Now more than 25-years-old in Russia, and owned by WPP under H+K Strategies, PBN continues to flourish in a difficult market under CEO Myron Wasylyk. There are 60 people working across wholly-owned offices in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, driving impressive growth of 12% in 2016. While 40% of the fee income derives from the firm's corporate, public affairs and crisis practices, where it is a market leader, recent years have brought diversified growth into marketing and consumer PR, with clients such as P&G (Braun, Gillette and Venus), Bacardi and Duracell now accounting for 25% of revenue. There was also new business last year from Alcatel, AirBnB, Dr. Reddy's, Gilead, Janssen, NCR, Qatar Airways and Uber, joining

a blue-chip client roster that features Castorama, Chrysler/Fiat, Facebook, Google, IHG, Megafon, Tetra-Pak, Visa, WizzAir and Westinghouse.

And while PBN has built its reputation on handling crises for BP and Arcelor-Mittal, much of its recent growth comes from the consumer and technology spheres, evidenced by good work for Alcatel, Duracell and WhatsApp. The firm's corporate capabilities, meanwhile, retain a market-leading dimension, not least because of a strong thought leadership approach that spans white papers and events. — AS

MIKHAILOV & PARTNERS (INDEPENDENT)

Founded in 1993, Mikhailov & Partners was one of the first public relations agencies in Russia and has been a pioneer for more than two decades, initially in corporate communications and reputation management, later in international communications (working as an affiliate of Burson-Marsteller), and more recently in developing a more integrated approach, blending offline and online strategies. The firm is headquartered in Moscow, has an office in St Petersburg, and a Kiev operation working with Ukrainian, Russian and global companies in Ukraine and other key CIS markets.

Last year was a challenging one in Russia, with public sector spending cuts and private companies reducing their budgets, so fee income was flat (around \$18 million). But there was new business from FIFA 2018, Huawei, Moesk, Lavazza, Bonduelle, X5 Retail Group, MTS, and Transoil, which joined a client list that includes Tele 2, Inter RAO, Astana EXPO-2017, Aeroflot, Rosatom, Kaspresky Lab., Swatch Group, Rostelecom, Merrill Lynch. The firm has gained recognition for its communications campaign for the launch of mobile operator Tele2 in Moscow and has been nominated for SABRE Awards for its work for the Central Bank of the Russian Federation on its All-

Russian vote to choose the images for new banknotes.

One key to the firm's continued strength is the depth of its leadership

team, which includes president Alexey Yudin; CEO Svetlana Gorevaya, a veteran of branding and research agencies and former marketing

director at Xerox Russia; and deputy CEO Ellen Pinchuk, a former producer and reporter for CTV Canada. — PH

UK PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

H+K STRATEGIES (WPP)

Sometimes an agency's surroundings can serve as a metaphor for its performance, so it might be no coincidence that H+K Strategies has undergone a visible renaissance since moving in 2014 from a ramshackle affair in Soho Square to handsome new offices in fashionable Clerkenwell. Last year's Pan-EMEA Consultancy of the Year has much to thank its London operation for, notably the shift to a more creative, content-led approach, led by a global creative hub that blends the generalist and specialist skills that are required of the modern PR firm. Much of this is exemplified by the overhaul of the UK firm's leadership in recent years under CEO Richard Millar, who is now supported by such figures as global creative head Simon Shaw, publishing/content lead Vikki Chowney and behavioural lead Matt Battersby. A clear focus on such areas as creativity (including a partnership with Hyper Island), behavioural insights (a dedicated practice under Battersby) and purpose-led marketing has paid off to rare effect, driving growth of 17% at a 300-person agency that must now be bringing in fee income in excess of £25m.

Always noted as one of the strongest consumer operation in the massive H+K universe, much of the firm's growth has been driven by a considerably more rounded offering than many of its rivals, often involving an ability to drive creative work for B2B clients. The firm's largest sectors are financial/professional services, technology and energy/industrials, while healthcare

also grew rapidly in 2016. There was new business last year from the British Olympic Association, Campari, Danone, Envision, GoDaddy, ICMM, NCR, Nespresso, Rio Tinto, Rockwool and Westfield, along with expanded assignments for Adidas, Hitachi, Shell, HSBC, Huawei and Intel. Much of the new business, meanwhile, reflects an ability to build purpose into a client's creative positioning along with a insight-led approach that has driven behavioural change work for Duracell and Skipton among others, and often utilises the Sherlock+ digital platform to address influencer marketing.

The firm's Huawei Honor work deserves special mention, securing a big-budget global influencer assignment ahead of the company's advertising agencies, and moving up the value chain towards a clearer brand-building role. There have also been standout campaigns for Team GB, HSBC, Westfield, and Hitachi, reflecting a creative approach that has built a considerable level of training and process around the 3P methodology, a simple formula that suggests that performance allied to purpose generates preference. Indeed, that equation could serve as shorthand for H+K London's own progress over the past few years. — AS

Finalists

BRANDS2LIFE (INDEPENDENT)

After three consecutive years as EMEA Technology Consultancy of the Year, Brands2Life secured its status as one of the decade's defining UK agencies by being named UK Consultancy of the Year in 2016, recognition of how the 130-person agency has

demonstrated a singular ability to evolve with the times. As comfortable handing B2B tech PR as it is with straight consumer or C-suite corporate counsel, Brands2Life is today bolstered by an impressive digital capability and a staff culture that remains one of the best in the country, with founders Giles Fraser and Sarah Scales bringing the kind of restless, slightly paranoid leadership that often characterises the better PR consultancies.

Launched in 2000 and still fiercely independent, Brands2Life's momentum showed few signs of slowing down in 2016, even if growth tapered off after four record-breaking years to 1.2%, reaching £11.7m thanks to work that is increasingly integrated, supported by sustained investment in digital/social, paid media and content development, along with the firm's first international office launch in San Francisco.

Two-thirds of Brands2Life's business still comes from the technology sector, reflecting a mindset that has helped the agency diversify and grow as technology becomes a critical component of every industry. In addition to a decent consumer practice that features such clients as Gatwick Airport, Appletiser, Virgin Media and Match, there has also been expansion into property & construction, destinations & travel, industrials and professional services, and recent wins have been as diverse as Carpetright, Rydon Homes & Tottenham Hotspur. Meanwhile, the group's technology remains in fine fettle, evidenced by new business from Dell, Experis and Emarsys, along with existing clients like VMware,

LinkedIn, Nikon, Gemalto, Intuit and USwitch.

The firm's ability to back its vision with investment continues to give it an edge over rivals, illustrated best by a string of senior hires in the digital and content space, notably head of digital Alan Parker from MullenLowe. That also pays off in the work Brands2Life does, which has always demonstrated a creative verve in a market that sets the bar high. Last year, that included the #AccountsDone campaign for Intuit QuickBooks, which stretched beyond the bounds of traditional PR by including Brands2Life's first ever mainstream TV ad, generating the client's best sales week ever. There are also EMEA SABRE nominations for Bouncingham Castle for King; Better Family Life Index for uSwitch; along with an In2SABRE Awards for Arup (Best Use of LinkedIn). — AS

COHN & WOLFE (WPP)

When Scott Wilson took charge of Cohn & Wolfe in 2010, the agency was not exactly in the prime of its life, having shrunk to 43 people after losing a number of key clients. Since then, though, Wilson has overseen an increasingly high-profile revival, with double-digit growth for six consecutive years leading up to an 18% revenue increase in 2016. All told, the firm has doubled in size over the past five years, and now numbers more than 150 people in the UK, possessing both breadth (across consumer, healthcare and corporate/PA) and depth, via its vastly improved digital, content and creative marketing capabilities.

The consumer practice (up another 12% last year under the leadership of MD Rebecca Grant and new consumer MD appointment Tom Malcolm) continues to catch the eye, winning impressive new business from a number of clients including Air New Zealand, HMD (Nokia), Hotels.com, Sky, Campari, Kia, Maserati and the National Nuclear Lab — bolstered by a digital content capability that

now regularly develops high-quality creative films. The firm's healthcare practice, meanwhile, has grown by over 30% in each of the past two years and now numbers more than 50 people, driving strong client growth from such companies as Pfizer, Bayer, Gilead Almirall and Intuitive into multiple European markets. And Cohn & Wolfe's corporate capabilities see it handle lead strategic duties for such clients as Barclays and other brands.

There has also been a sustained effort to bring a more strategic focus to Cohn & Wolfe's efforts, resulting in a new planning methodology that is being rolled out to other global markets. That approach, along with a digital operation this has grown impressively under Kate Joynes-Burgess, helped deliver some standout campaigns over the past 12 months. These included the Nokia 3310 relaunch; the Barclaycard Pay at Pump solution; and Bayer's 'Manversation' about prostate cancer. — AS

GOLIN (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

Firmly established as one of this era's iconic UK PR firms — after consecutive UK Consultancy of the Year honours in 2013 and 2014 — Golin's London office now resembles a high-performance Formula One car, with momentum assured after a seamless leadership transition that put Bibi Hilton in charge two years ago. 2016 brought another year of double-digit growth, with Golin's 150-strong team combining serious consumer and corporate heft with some excellent digital and social media capabilities.

Not only Hilton continued to drive stellar business performance, but she has also ushered in a new brand of leadership to Golin UK, focusing in particular on such areas as gender equality, shared parental leave and flexible working — to the extent that the firm's progressive internal culture now provides a distinct competitive edge, something that remains a rarity

in the publicly-owned agency world. There is an unlimited holiday policy, for example, and a smart effort to boost social mobility by supporting new interns with London's soaring housing costs. Unsurprisingly, those measures have helped to boost retention and diversity, while providing a measurable uplift to Golin's employer brand, a critical asset among today's millennial market.

All of that hard work continues to pay off via the business performance, where Golin secured major new business from Adobe, Pepsico, Danone, Premier Inn and XPO Logistics, along with double-digit revenue growth from its top five clients, including Unilever, Oracle, Cadbury and Npower. There is far more pure digital work too, such as handling user-experience, front-end development and social/content for a range of Unilever brands, best demonstrated by the firm's work on Persil's 'Messy Adventures' campaign, and bolstered by a number of senior hires across creative, planning and digital.

It may be too early for the impact of the 2016 acquisition of creative shop Brooklyn Brothers to be seen in Golin's output, but there were still plenty of campaign highlights. The firm's Milk Tray Man campaign for Cadbury has put PR in the lead role and notched a SABRE nomination, as has its 'Thinking Outside the Lunchbox' effort for Flora. And there was also notable work for Sainsbury's ('Vegetable Butcher'); Worldpay; and Danone Yogurts. — AS

MHP COMMUNICATIONS (ENGINE GROUP)

Formed in 2010, MHP has carved its niche creating and implementing large scale, integrated communications programmes for organisations operating in complex and regulated environments — mirrored in its specialist practices

consumer, financial, health and corporate PR and public affairs.

The work ranges from launching new products for Unilever to helping TalkTalk celebrate the Oscars, amplifying L'Oréal's CSR programme across national press, providing PR support in the build up to Luceco's IPO, or lobbying on behalf of Roche. But the firm's common denominator is focusing on the business outcomes of its work. And, of course, its Missing Type campaign for the NHS swept the board at numerous awards shows, including the SABRE Awards.

The team has advised on over 10 IPOs in the past two years (main market

and AIM). The firm's health team is involved in tackling the UK's biggest killers and long term conditions: cancer stroke, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, MS, ophthalmology and mental health, while the corporate team boasts six ex-journalists and five councillors and party activists. The firm lobbied on behalf of EDF Energy, which saw Hinkley Point approved after 10 years; and separately, gained the support of the public and governments to aim to achieve 25% five-year survival rates for lung cancer by 2025.

Fee income is up 17% to £19.3m fueled by new wins L'Oréal, Talk Talk,

Adobe, Saga, Cobham plc, British Business Bank, Bupa, Forestry Commission, MQ mental health, Luceco that join existing clients American Express, EDF Energy, NHS Blood and Transplant, Bayer, Zurich, Kimberly-Clark, Huawei and Arla, among others. The firm has offices across the United Kingdom with a presence also in Sydney, Frankfurt, Hong Kong and Singapore. CEO Alex Bigg joined the firm in 2016 and, before that, was GM of Edelman UK & Ireland. — AaS

Consumer PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

W (UK/INDEPENDENT)

In a market that often appears to prize creativity above all else, former Freuds executive Warren Johnson has stolen a march on many of his consumer rivals by demonstrating the kind of hard-nosed business acumen that has led his firm to £5.8m in eight years, expanding by an eye-catching 44% in 2016 alone. Increasingly acquisitive after buying two small UK shops, it is tempting to think that W is just about the money — which would be unfair, given the firm's ability to deliver creative work that is as good as anything on the market, including some strong digital and influencer marketing activity and a nascent ability to blend consumer marketing with corporate positioning.

For example, an ice-cream-powered direct-action campaign for Ben & Jerry's persuaded more than 5,000 voters join the electoral roll in time for the London Mayoral election, while a Lynx effort took suicide from taboo to national talking point. There were also comedy brand films for tech brand Relish, and the Millennials First campaign for Marmite. Not that

the commercial performance should be overlooked, of course. In 2016, the firm continued its stellar new business record, adding major assignments from Major League Baseball, Carabao, Laurent Perrier, WeWork, Shortlist Media, AB Foods, Argos, Camden Town Brewery, Cancer Research UK and MoneySuperMarket to a client roster that already features Unilever (Lynx, PG Tips, Ben & Jerry's and Marmite), Levi's, Evening Standard, Princess Yachts, V Festival and Koppaberg.

Johnson has styled himself as one of the more outspoken figures in London's agency scene, but the show features a cast of talented actors at W, including MD Richard Tompkins; deputy MD Sophie Raine; strategy head Adam Leigh; head of media and corporate Becky Charles. And W continues to showcase a contrarian approach to much of its activity, particularly when it comes to investing in its own ventures — there is a BrandLab that asks staff to think like stakeholders, along with the development of products and ventures in spirits and retail. All of which has helped fuel a progressive staff culture that includes a strong

learning and cultural component. — AS

Finalists

ACHTUNG! (GERMANY/INDEPENDENT)

Last year's DACH Consultancy of the Year, achtung! enjoyed another strong year in 2016, with fee income up 6% to around €15 million, and a team of 180 across offices in Hamburg and Munich. That's enough to cement the firm's place in Germany's top 10 according to the definitive Pfeffers PR Ranking, and enough to find itself just outside the 100 largest PR firms in the world based on our own Global 250.

In Germany, as in other markets, the disruptive potential of social media and the newfound interest in engaging consumers rather than bombarding them with advertising has created an opportunity for public relations firms to expand their role. But in Germany, as in other markets, many marketing executives don't believe PR agencies are fully equipped to take advantage of that opportunity. Over the past three years, achtung! has been actively working to persuade them that it can,

undergoing a transformation of its own that include the establishment of an offer it calls The Lab, bringing together art directors, copywriters, editors, community managers, video specialists, SEO managers, content marketers, and others to supplement more traditional PR resources.

Founder Mirko Kaminski has been bringing in new creative talent, and the firm has been producing some exceptional creative work. For computer company Acer, the firm created an unprecedented experience for journalists and influencers, who were summoned to Berlin and Munich for launch events and found themselves instead in a bunker, presented with a scenario involving a hacker and the challenge of cracking a code using Acer devices in order to “escape.” For eBay, the firm recreated the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree experience in the small Thuringian village of Crawinkel. And for German television stations RTL II and FOX, *achtung!* created an interactive Facebook live game to generate excitement for the new season of *The Walking Dead*. — PH

CIRKLE (UK/INDEPENDENT)

For nearly two decades, Cirkle has built a reputation as an award-winning consumer shop that also takes culture seriously while also refining its approach to communications. The firm’s current positioning — ‘Influence in the Round’ — touts its unique 50/50 trade/consumer service offering.

Growth was solid in 2016 — 8% to £4m fee income. But the year also included several milestones like winning the Morrisons account; being crowned the Drum’s ‘PR Consultancy of the Year’; achieving 28 awards/nominations and being named one of the ‘best places to work’ by *The Sun*. The firm also recently invested in ‘Discovery Insight’ personality profiling for clients to optimise self awareness and team dynamics. Perhaps uniquely, Cirkle also created an internal working group for trade

teams to immerse themselves in retail environments, like working the shop floor to understand clients’ challenges.

The 45-person firm continues to produce solid work for clients including PepsiCo, Premier Foods, Ferrero, Oxo, Absolut, Hovis, Mattessons, Mr Kipling, Walkers, Happy Eggs and GSK.

30% of its clients have been with the firm for nine+ years, and four for 14+ years. Notable work includes that for Morrisons ‘Daddy of All Steaks’ in which PR was the only driver for its Father’s Day “Tomahawk Steak” campaign (so called because of the steak’s axe shape and 6 times heavier weight than normal steaks), which led to the meat being sold-out on day one of the campaign. To launch new Kinder Joy chocolate eggs for Easter, the team brought its ‘Joy’ proposition to life through in-store ‘Easter Egg Hunts’ for retailers’ customers.

Management includes MD Ruth Allchurch, board director Rikki Weir, alongside several directors, including a newly created position of HR director. — AaS

HOPE & GLORY (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Now five years old, Hope & Glory has established itself as the dominant player in London’s fiercely competitive consumer PR market, churning out award-winning campaigns like a mainstream pop band that cannot help but reach number one with each of its new releases. Leadership duo Jo Carr and James Gordon-Macintosh combine substance and style to notable effect, with the firm’s remarkable growth rate showing little sign of slowing down — up another 37% in 2016 to £4.6m. Hope & Glory now employs 58 staffers, working across an eye-catching roster that continues to feature Ikea, O2, Sony, Barclays,

Virgin Active, Airbnb, Adidas, HTC, American Express and Accor Hotels. Last year, the group’s new business haul reflected a successful effort to diversify into such areas as food & beverage and travel & tourism, including brands like Accor Hotels, Center Parcs, Beefeater, Mr Black, MEATliquor, Deliveroo, Whole Earth, MOMA Foods, the IMG sports portfolio, Merlin Group, Everyman Cinemas, Universal Home Entertainment, HTC Vive, Sega, Square Enix and Anyvan.

Both Carr and Gordon-Macintosh continue to manage the growth well, alongside Adrian Chitty (client service director) and creative head Gavin Lewis, focusing on ‘fame, fortune and fun’ in a bid to keep staff and clients happy. Unsurprisingly, there has been continued expansion in the senior ranks, with new director-level hires in Seb Dilleyston and Anna Terrell.

What really sets Hope & Glory apart, though, is the mentality that the firm is only as good as its last campaign. And its work continues to wow award juries, with an improved influencer capability driving digital work for adidas, Virgin Active and STRIPPD Nutrition. There were 25 campaign awards in 2016, with another rich crop of campaigns, including standout work for Adidas Women (‘Workout Series’ and the PureBoostX launch), Virgin Active (‘We’ve Got A Workout For That’), Barclays (‘Visualising The Voice’ and ‘Creating a Springboard onto the Mortgage Ladder’), Meantime Brewing (‘Make Time for it’), Ikea (‘The Dining Club’), alongside some delirious stunts that included a DNA-ale, a campaign to pimp people’s beards and — obviously, I guess — a Beyonce sculpture made of Brie. — AS

MISCHIEF (UK/ENGINE GROUP)

Once best-known for founder Mitchell Kaye who departed the firm in 2013, Mischief today cuts a very different figure from the firm that launched a decade ago. That it has succeeded to

such an extent is as much down to Kaye's legacy as it is to the CEO he recruited to succeed him, Frankie Cory. Supported by planning director Gemma Moroney and creative head Damon Statt, Cory's Mischief has achieved that rare feat, surviving the loss of an iconic founder to re-emerge as an agency capable of winning the biggest briefs in town. That much was amply demonstrated in 2016, when Mischief won a string of big assignments, including Asda, Cunard, Duddle, Sport England's This Girl Can, and the Home Office, adding to an existing client roster that features

Vodafone, The FA, Dulux, Cuprinol, Odeon, Alton Towers, BAE Systems and Ella's Kitchen.

Fee income reached £5.2m in 2016, and the firm now employs 70 staffers in London. The creative work remains in fine fettle, illustrated by SABRE nominations for 'Joy of Sticks' with the National Trust; 'Veg For Victory' with Ella's Kitchen; 'Socks Trust' for Dogs Trust; 'Every Gamer's Adventure' for The FA; 'Kids' Bedrooms: A Room With Their Point of View' for Dulux; and 'The Oscar Goes To...LEODEON' for Odeon

Cinemas. Much of that work reflects the development of a new 'SOUL' planning methodology, which blends shared, owned and unpaid media, and has since been adopted across the Engine Group.

Meanwhile, the agency's cultural focus also deserves special mention— there is considerable effort to build a strong, inclusive workplace, including a new coaching tool that focuses on life goals as well as work goals, and encourages staffers to develop their 'side hustles'. — AS

EMEA Corporate PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

INSTINCTIF PARTNERS (VITRUVIAN)

Three years after rebranding and repositioning as a international business communications consultancy, Instinctif Partners is effectively unrecognisable from the firm once known as College Hill. That is probably for the best, because Instinctif today is a multi-specialist consultancy with significant depth in capital markets, corporate and public policy, bolstered by considerable breadth across content, creative, research and insights. And much of the firm's work involves multiple practice areas, reflecting an interconnected approach that now accounts for 29% of its revenue, up from 19% in 2015.

Aiding that approach are internal initiatives which celebrate collaboration, part of a substantial cultural effort which saw the firm's 386 employees co-create a new set of values. Staff retention and client retention have both improved considerably, and these days Instinctif looks like an agency that takes its internal outcomes as seriously as its external results.

Those results remain in very good shape, with revenues up slightly to £34m, with the UK driving much of

the firm's global growth, which included an 18% uptick in Continental Europe. Unsurprisingly, given its own positioning, Instinctif has carved out a credible niche working for challenger brands, including Purple Bricks, World First, Secret Sales, graze.com and Made.com. There was also new business last year from Majestic Wines, Biffa, UK Power Networks, Redrow, University of Portsmouth, Shepherd Neame and Eve Mattresses, joining an existing roster that already features eBay, Jupiter Asset Management, AGCO, Thomson Reuters, Aviva and Cushman and Wakefield.

Meanwhile, the best of the firm's work demonstrates its approach to disrupting the traditional corporate PR template. For its largest client eBay, that involves re-engaging the company's global community around a new global mission. For Aviva, that means work to establish its brand with multiple customer demographics And for graze, made.com, Purple Bricks and Eve Mattresses, that featured a range of communications strategies that improved the bottomline. — AS

Finalists

FARNER (DACH/INDEPENDENT)

Farner, celebrating its 65th year in 2016, has been the Swiss market leader in corporate and public affairs for as long as anyone can remember, offering clients expertise in campaign management for business and politics, crisis and issues management, and financial communications, working with clients across the financial services, pharmaceutical, energy, technology and public health sectors. But in recent years its dramatic growth has been fueled by diversification: Farner can now offer fully integrated campaigns including content creation, community management, real-time marketing and video storytelling.

The firm's integrated capabilities were further strengthened in 2016 with the acquisition of brand marketing specialist YJOO, Switzerland's third largest PR firm, which brought with it clients such as Coop, McDonald's, Nespresso, SBB, IWC, the Federal Office for Public Health, and OpenAir St Gallen as well as senior executives Martin Zahner (YJOOs' founder, who serves as vice chairman) and Nina Krucker, who now serves as head of brand

communication. That deal contributed to another year of spectacular growth: fee income was up by more than 30% to around \$24 million, and headcount has increased from 60 to 140 in the past four years.

The firm has expanded its international client portfolio with Roche, Johnsen & Johnsen, Philipp Morris, Trafigura, Swisscom, McDonald's, Nespresso, IWC and Coop, while the firm continues to work with Swiss clients including Schweizerische Mobiliar, swisselectric, Swissport, as well as numerous regional and governmental agencies. New clients in 2016 included TGV Lyria, TCS, Janssen-Cilag, KSB, Coca-Cola Beverages and Johnson & Johnson. Interesting work included creating an online community for diabetes patients on behalf of Roche, developing an integrated road safety campaign for Touring Club de Suisse, supporting high-profile neuroscience conference The Brain Forum, launching a CSR initiative for insurance provider Schweizerische Mobiliar, and launching its own IssueManager, a web-based application for automated issue monitoring.— PH

PORTLAND COMMUNICATIONS (UK/OMNICOM)

Typically viewed as one of the UK's defining public affairs firms, Portland has broadened its capabilities considerably to cover the full range of corporate communications in recent years, with the moves paying off to such an extent that it has grown remarkably over the past three years, to around £29m in global fee income after another healthy double-digit upturn in 2016.

These days, furthermore, Portland's growth comes from a variety of sources rather than just its lobbying skills, including C-suite corporate advice to such companies as Barclays, Nestle, Pfizer, Apple, McDonald's, Diageo, Uber, AkzoNobel, O2 and Motorola. The

firm is also increasingly international, with offices in the Middle East, Africa, the US and, most recently, Singapore, adding up to 210 staffers across the globe. Around 180 of those are based at Portland's London office (the only Omnicom operation to defiantly maintain its own premises) and much of last year's growth came from existing clients such as Pfizer, Barclays and Heathrow — with Portland making particular inroads beyond its corporate base into such areas as content and digital.

Much of the firm's work, meanwhile, has genuinely moved the needle for its clients, reflecting its view that reputation management requires an integration of public affairs and corporate comms, in recognition of how regulatory debate and scrutiny has moved beyond Westminster onto the High Street. Founder Tim Allan oversees a deep leadership team that includes former Sun political editor George Pascoe-Watson; ex-Downing Street advisor Steve Morris; and Tony Blair's former communications director Alastair Campbell. Allan likes to say that public relations is a "British success story". His own firm continues to provide plenty of evidence of that.— AS

SALT (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Salt is among the few PR firms to identify as a B Corporation — an accreditation for companies committed to transforming society for good through business. Salt does this, in part, through its 'social missions' concept focused on how companies can drive business growth through social impact.

Salt also works on brand storytelling through digital influencers; creating thought leadership platforms; and engaging employees and building employer brands. It deploys this thinking for clients like Unilever, ManpowerGroup, Givaudan, Lifebuoy, Andrex, William Grant & Sons, Lipton, Kleenex (new), Axe/Lynx (new), Roche (new), Maersk (new), Ferrero (new) and Monkey Shoulder (new).

Standout work includes the mobile-led #BeAMaker work for Lipton's Unilever to showcase that 100% of its tea bags are Rainforest Alliance certified and to drive preference among Millennials. The work delivered 91% viewability (against an industry standard of 66%) and an engagement rate of 28%.

Growth remained steady at £4.2m with 45 employees. The management team includes Nicky Young, group MD; Marianne Blamire, MD of Singapore; Caroline Taylor, consumer division director; alongside co-founders Richard Cox and Andy Last who started the firm in 2000.— AaS

SEVEN HILLS (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Michael Hayman and Nick Giles have always cut a slightly different figure to their market peers since they launched Seven Hills in 2009, along the way becoming a perennial presence on this list and winning Global Agency of the Year honours in 2014. The duo have been avid creators of content, developing an events and campaign mentality that has seen them develop their intellectual property in a bid to showcase their thought leadership and connectivity credentials to clients. It is an approach that has paid off handsomely, with Seven Hills growing 7% in 2016 to £4.2m. Best known for its focus on the entrepreneurial economy, Seven Hills has honed its positioning to focus on 'change makers and future industries', effectively representing a bet on whether traditional business will be disrupted by companies that are on a mission.

Clearly, Hayman and Giles believe it will be, hence last year's publication of its own book "Mission: How the best in business break through", along with founding organisations such as StartUp Britain, the MADE Festival and Pitch at the Palace. A clear focus on the London's emerging tech scene has served Seven Hills well, including such names as Level 39, Tech Advocates, RocketSpace,

Leapfrog and numerous unicorns. There is also weighty CEO counsel for the likes of Ella's Kitchen, Brewdog and Cobra, along with more traditional work for such events as Adweek Europe and One Young World — but all of it demonstrates a clear

strategy to bring key disruptive players together in order to build communities around strong ideas.

And Seven Hills brings a similarly disruptive mindset to its own service model, often focusing on sprint goals over 30, 60 and 90 days, and projects

rather than retainers. There has been some standout work for Grant Thornton and Mischon de Reya, further solidifying the notion that Seven Hills has identified something unique in its corporate positioning. — AS

EMEA Creative PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

COHN & WOLFE (WPP)

The past couple of years have seen Cohn & Wolfe bring its “Dig Deeper Imagine More” mantra to life in ways that emphasize just how different the firm is today compared to five years ago, and compared to most of its peers. The most interesting development is an effort to go beyond “integration” to use the full range of paid, earned, shared and owned channels in order to create an “immersive brand experience.” That means using new tools like virtual reality to add a new element to experiential marketing. The digital team in EMEA has expanded from 23 to 56 over the past two years, with capabilities in social analytics, community management, influencer marketing, film production, paid media, and mobile.

Highlights include the firm's work for Barclaycard, using contactless technology to create self-serve beer pumps in a pub during the Christmas party season, generating a global reach of 1.7 billion; the UK-based “manversation” campaign to encourage conversations about prostate cancer for Bayer; a German campaign for ellaOne to destigmatize the “morning after pill”; work for the Swedish Tourist Association promoting a phone line that would be answered by random citizens, an idea that earned a shout-out from President Obama; and creating social and digital media content to support the launch of a new Maserati SUV.

As a result, the growth story is impressive: across EMEA, the firm has

grown by 35% over the past five years (12% last year), with the UK doubling in size over the past five years. — PH

Finalists

NUCLEUS (NORWAY/INDEPENDENT)

It seems like every year a new Nordic agency shows up on the international awards circuit, producing eye-catching work that expands the boundaries of public relations. This year's most exciting newcomer is Norway's Nucleus, which promises on its website to balance “thorough communication strategies and crazy ideas,” and delivers on that with its work.

Fee income for 2016 was a little more than €3 million, up by 27 percent over last year, and Nucleus now employs a team of 26. It was a bumper year for new business, with assignments from Sony Electronics, Berry Alloc, Kavlifondet, MatPrat, Mintra Group, Friday Networks, Match.com, Kantar TNS, Fredrikstad Næringsforening, Kunnskapsforlaget, Svinesundkomiteen, Godt Vann Drammensregionen, and Brynild Gruppen, while the firm continues to work for Byggmakker, City of Oslo, Electrolux, Hennig-Olsen Is (ice-cream), and Statnett SF.

The firm earned four nominations in this year's EMEA SABRE competition, showing the full range of its creative capabilities, from its work for building supply chain Byggmaker, introducing a new business strategy and brand positioning to key internal stakeholders, to a stakeholder and issues management campaign for the City of Oslo's Agency for Urban

Environment; from a marketing initiative for fastener supplier ESSVE that resulted in a sales increase of 800 percent during the campaign period, to youth outreach on behalf of the Norwegian national drug helpline, RUStelefonen that resulted in 25,000 app downloads. — PH

PRIME (SWEDEN/WEBER SHANDWICK)

Two years have now passed since Weber Shandwick acquired Swedish powerhouse Prime (last year's Nordic Consultancy of the Year), and it is becoming increasingly clear that the deal has been a win-win. The global agency has benefited from Prime talent (particularly with the appointment of Tom Beckman as chair of the firm's global creative collective), its expertise in analytics and evaluation (the Swedish firm's United Minds unit offers digital audits, influencer and opportunity mapping, and innovation consulting services), while Prime has seen its growth boosted by collaboration with other Weber Shandwick offices and services—the firm was one of several Weber Shandwick operations to achieve double-digit growth last year.

Most important, Prime has been able to see its big creative ideas play out on a more global stage. Among the highlights are assignments for FEVE, the European glass packaging industry association, driving by online video and social media; for McDonald's, introducing a new gourmet burger by offering table reservations at the chain for the first time; and for hygiene and forest products company SCA, generating

awareness for the brand among restaurant owners by showing how different color schemes could affect the guest experience.

Prime also added talent, brining on board David Orlic, who has served as a senior advisor to companies like IKEA and Electrolux, as deputy CEO and head of innovation, and Petter Lublin, who has worked extensively with Unilever, as creative director. Prime was named to the 2016 and 2017 list of Contagious Pioneers and continued to rack up recognition for its work, from Cannes Lions to Global SABRE Awards. — PH

TIN MAN (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Launched in 2013 with backing from another creative hotshop in Unity, Mandy Sharp's Tin Man differs from other boutique firms by bringing a considerably stronger focus on planning and creativity, along with a level of business savvy that has seen it achieve profitability since year one. As the name suggests, the firm's positioning revolves around creating 'campaigns with heart', and the volume and variety of its award nominations and wins over the past couple of years suggests that it has been able to bring a level of emotional resonance that many PR firms would struggle to match. That may also be because Tin Man has always been just as comfortable

declining clients as it is winning bigger briefs such as Monarch Airlines, Justgiving, William Grant, Cartoon Network, ITV and Trainline.

The work benefits from Sharp's own strategic and creative savvy, supported by planning lead Elly Kestenbaum. Standout campaigns included Trainline's 'Magic of Mobile Tickets', a content-led campaign that drove a remarkable sales uplift; along with typically strong entertainment work such as launching season two of Thunderbirds via 'Thundercabs' in London; and 'The (Rust) Bucket List for Ben 10'. The firm has also developed a unique 'launchpad' offering that has delivered more than £200k from startups and has won a slew of campaign awards in the UK. — AS

UNITY (UK/INDEPENDENT)

The sheer volume awards is almost certainly what strikes more Unity observers as most remarkable. The UK firm ranked number one in our Global Creative Index weighted by headcount, making it pound-for-pound the world's most creative PR firm for the second year in a row. Last year's haul included one Global SABRE, four EMEA region SABREs, and six In2 SABREs, which recognize excellence in insight and innovation.

The latter wins point to something that's even more impressive than the

numbers: Unity specializes in creativity with a purpose and a process. Its mission is "to increase human happiness," which might sound like a lofty (even pretentious) goal for a PR firm, if founders Gerry Hopkinson and Nik Govier did not clearly believe it so strongly and bring it to life in both the agency culture and the work. And all of the big ideas are driven by a suite of strategic tools such as Brandcestry, a brand planning process that draws on clients' heritage, and CommUnity, an approach for planning and launching CSR strategy.

With a team of 30, Unity remains a boutique firm, but its client list is impressive (despite the departure of Marks & Spencer in 2016). New additions included Coca Cola, Epson, Facebook's Oculus, Sky, Zumba, ADT, and Petcurean, which join a roster that includes Direct Line, Butlins, Disney, Lego, and Universal. Impressive work in 2016 included a series of initiatives for Direct Line's #directfix brand positioning (turning around one of England's worst soccer teams, reaching out to the thousands of Brits who hate Christmas), and helping to raise Christmas funds for charity Action Aid, which works with the poorest women and girls in the world to change their lives for good. — PH

EMEA Digital PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

EDELMAN (DJE HOLDINGS)

Edelman's digital capabilities have always been a notch above most of their rivals, the consequence of a pioneering approach that saw it invest heavily in social media and community building well ahead of the curve. In the decade since, much of that work has migrated in-house, so Edelman's digital capabilities — which account for around 20% of global revenue — are reorienting

themselves towards such areas as influencer engagement, search, video content and paid media. That makes sense, as does a focus on integrating digital across the agency's European operations, rather than operating it as a separate silo.

Much of the firm's best digital work, meanwhile, reflects both the integrated mindset and the blend of capabilities, often brought to life by its Swedish Deportivo unit. Notable campaigns included the 'Give a Beep'

cycling safety effort; Tele2's 'Settle For More' in Sweden; 'Jacks150 Barrel Hunt' for Jack Daniel's in Spain; the Grohe 'Senses' content series in Germany; and a string of UK campaigns including Xbox's Halo Wars 2, Janssen's 'Make Blood Cancer Visible' and global engagement for what3words.

And while Edelman's growth dipped across Europe, digital proved to be a bright spot, driving expansion in the UK, Germany (+20%), France, Italy

(+20%) and Spain. There were three senior digital hires in the UK — Toby Gunton arriving from OMD as GM, Tristan Sanders named head of performance overseeing paid media across search, social and partnerships, and Matt Cannington transferring from New York to become head of social. In addition, the firm's Edelman Intelligence unit grew 24% across the region, giving clients plenty of realtime social intelligence. — AS

Finalists

KETCHUM (OMNICOM GROUP)

Despite possessing one of the largest agency networks in EMEA, Ketchum's digital capabilities have not always punched at the same weight as its overall operations. That charge is unlikely to hold weight for much longer, given the expansion in both the breadth and depth of the Omnicom PR network's digital efforts in recent years. The firm's Storyworks unit in London delivers realtime content marketing as sophisticated as anything in the market and, under digital director Kate Matlock. The firm's sports and entertainment practice has also emerged since launching in London in 2014, developing a strong influencer marketing capability that sensibly considers the full spectrum of opinion leaders, rather than focusing purely on YouTubers. Ketchum has also developed partnerships with specific influencer tools after reviewing the market, helping it to develop some impressive work for Nikon (moving buyers from awareness to consideration) and Booking.com (a 20-market, tool-agnostic campaign rollout).

In the healthcare space, meanwhile, Ketchum's digital capabilities have also shone, training Pfizer in social media and creating the Miles for Haemophilia and F2 Freestylers campaigns. In eSports, meanwhile, the firm has established a strong influencer positioning on behalf of

Gillette. Underpinning this is a methodology that combines resonance and relevance (along with paid amplification) to drive reach, helping Ketchum prevail in the ongoing battle with media agencies for digital media budgets. — AS

MATRIOCHKA INFLUENCES (FRANCE/ INDEPENDENT)

Formed in mid-2014, Matriochka Influences has rapidly marked itself out as one of the brightest public relations firms in France, almost doubling fee income last year to €2.7m. The firm is led by two founding partners Elodie Monchicourt and Charlie Trouillebout, both of whom hail from market leader Elan. Indeed, Monchicourt co-founded Elan and brings 15 years of experience, while Trouillebout is a digital specialist. Together, the duo aims to integrate traditional communications with more modern influencer techniques, resulting in an approach that counts as relatively disruptive not just in France, but in the broader region too, particularly when you consider that much of its digital work is focused on the lifestyle and luxury sectors.

Now numbering 20 staff, Matriochka's services span influencer relations, brand content, social media management, digital marketing and branding, for a blue-chip client list that includes Instagram, Guerlain, Chanel, Johnson&Johnson Beauty, Lancôme, Just Eat, Orangina Suntory, Voyages SNCF, Transavia and Volvo. A new realtime newsjacking strategy has helped many of these brands deliver eye-catching work, including a campaign to recreate brand love among millennials for SNCF's TGV; video content to promote Carte Noire's coffee capsule collection; and a secret Facebook group for Philip Morris' latest cigarette launch. — AS

TVC GROUP (UK/ECONOMIST GROUP)

TVC Group has a relatively unique ownership status since being acquired by the Economist Group in 2012. This move has certainly reinforced the 19-year-old agency as a group of 51 media relations experts, broadcast specialists, experienced producers and editors, from an eclectic mix of backgrounds. The team works across offices in Camden and New York.

TVC Group grounds itself in five values — curious, smart, vibrant, ambitious, collaborative — that are demonstrated through things like the Curious Fund that gives employees a chance to get funding to chase their aspirations and other rewards for things like collaboration. These values underpin work for clients like Jaguar Land Rover; Peninsula Hotels; easyJet; Eurostar; King.com; Bacardi Group; Red Bull; Royal Voluntary Service; Virgin; Ralph Lauren; and OTIS (new); Cartier (new); IWC (new); Conrad (new); Crohn's & Colitis (new) and Swarovski (new). For instance, its integrated work for MIB focuses on changing the behaviour of 18-to-35-year-old males, as well as boosting engagement with the police. Making the conversation about safety and protection, the team encouraged people to think beyond car insurance and understand the consequences of driving without insurance with a bold film, "Gone in Seconds" that has 860,000+ views on YouTube and another 160,000 on a dedicated microsite.

While fee income dipped slightly to £8.2m, the team expanded under the leadership of group MD James Myers. The firm also deserves some recognition for DNA, its content hosting and distribution solution which was upgraded in 2016 to include more than 36,000 broadcasters, journalists, web editors and bloggers from around the world. — AaS

WEBER SHANDWICK (INTERPUBLIC GROUP)

Weber Shandwick has been innovating faster and more aggressively than its competition, adding new capabilities from data and analytics to content creation. Its Creation unit has changed the game in terms of multimedia content and its acquisition of Sweden's Prime gave it management consulting credentials as well as leading-edge creativity. The latest investment is the firm's "engagement engine," which brings together analytics, creative, strategy, production and integrated media capabilities to

come up with big, insight-led ideas for top-tier clients.

The firm continued to bring in diverse talent like Hugh Baillie, an ad industry veteran who was named head of client service, engagement disciplines; executive VP of analytics Alex Vass, who joined from sister agency Mediabrand; Indy Selvarajah, a new creative director whose résumé includes creating a comedy show for Channel 4; and David Orlic, who has served as a senior advisor to companies like IKEA and Electrolux, as deputy CEO and head of innovation at Prime. And the acquisition of mobile specialist Flipside gave Weber Shandwick a leadership position in one of the

most promising growth markets of the next few years.

Among the highlights are In2 SABRE winning campaigns such as the #BrutalCut campaign against female genital mutilation for ActionAid UK; #ParallelBarking, a viral online video featuring dog parking the new Vauxhall Crosta; and the agency's own activity during Social Media Week London. The firm also hit the mark with creative assignments for FEVE, the European glass packaging industry association, driven by online video and social media; and Sonos, which conducted a social experiment to demonstrate how listening to music at home could change the way families interact. — PH

EMEA Financial Consultancies of the Year

Winner

CNC (MSLGROUP)

It was a record-setting year for CNC—the European corporate and financial consultancy that is part of MSLGroup. In terms of the value of deals worked, CNC was number two in Germany (according to M&A bible mergermarket), number five in the UK, number four in Europe as a whole, number five in the US (where it actually worked on higher value deals than New York-based sister company Kekst) and number six globally. In the UK alone, the firm grew 25% in 2016, where it now employs 45 people. And the recent merger with Nordic firm JKL takes its overall staff strength to 200 across 13 countries.

Highlights included Shire's acquisition of Baxlata; Bayer's acquisition of Monsanto; the London Stock Exchange's proposed merger of equals with Deutsche Borse; and Macquarie's acquisition of a majority stake in National Grid.

One of the things that sets CNC apart is that so many of its senior people—including founding partners Christoph Walther (former head of

communications for Daimler-Benz/DaimlerChrysler) and Roland Klein (Ericsson)—have experience on the client side of the business. That has helped the firm rise up the M&A rankings, but also diversify into a range of critical issues: crisis and issues management, CEO transitions, employee communications, and several ongoing corporate reputation assignments, including work for BP and Bayer.

The firm has also expanded its expertise in digital (and digital intelligence in particular), and with the addition of former H+K and Instinctif exec Ben Curzon, in the cybersecurity space. — PH

Finalists

BARABINO (ITALY/INDEPENDENT)

Barabino & Partners is not only the dominant force in Italy, but it is becoming an increasingly credible player beyond the country's borders, a difficult feat that has enabled it to distinguish itself from its homegrown rivals. The agency now has offices in London, New York, Berlin and Brussels, and continues to serve a range of leading 'brand Italia'

companies overseas. Now worth around €16m after growing 6% in 2016 despite tough economic conditions, the firm employs more than 100 consultants, serving such clients as Intel, Blackrock, Allianz Global Investors, ABI - Italian Banking Association, Fineco, Unipol, and Massimo Zanetti Beverage Group. Last year, furthermore, there was new business from Apollo Global Management, Withers, Dell EMC, Suning Commerce Group, WeChat Europe, ENAV, Arla Foods, ICBPI, RCS Media Group and FC Internazionale.

The return to growth has come after CEO Luca Barabino oversaw a thorough strategic review of the business, resulting in the development of a range of new services to complement its corporate and financial strength. And that mindset is evident in the best of its work, including advising advised ENAV, the company providing air traffic services in Italy, on its successful €834m privatisation, and supporting Cairo Communication's fiercely contested takeover bid for RCS MediaGroup. And, in a nod to Barabino's own roots, the firm

devised a campaign to unveil Genoa FC's new shirt sponsor, EVIVA. — AS

EM (RUSSIA/INDEPENDENT)

Since its inception in 2010, EM has certainly made an impact on the financial PR and IR landscape — in particular in Russia (its HQ is Moscow and the firm has offices in London, New York and Hong Kong).

For its backstory, EM started as the Russian unit of M:Communications before completing a successful management buy-out in 2013. This deal, in fact, took place just months before the Russian market fell off a cliff with sanctions, tumbling oil prices and a sharp currency devaluation. Yet, the firm survived and thrived. Today the agency has dedicated teams serving Russian clients in the international markets — for instance, the 15-person shop has advised on a significant number of Russian IPOs and ECM transactions, as well as M&As. In 2016, EM's consolidated global fee income amounted to nearly \$3.5 million and grew 25% year-on-year.

Clients include Aeroflot, Moscow Exchange, PhosAgro, Etalon, MD Medical Group, Sistema, VTB, MMK, X5, Detsky Mir (new), Morton (new), PIK (new), Proxima Capital (new), among others. Notable work includes the Detsky Mir IPO — the first globally marketed IPO since Western sanctions against Russia and required thorough briefing with international media to deliver the company's story and overcome negative media coverage on Russia.

As the result, the \$355m IPO received extensive positive media coverage around the world. EM also helped Detsky Mir's IR department to adapt to life as a public company. Tom Blackwell, founder and CEO of EM, has worked in Russia communications for more than 15 years. The leadership team includes Sam Vanderlip and Tom Kiehn, Peter Morley and Anna Yarmarkova. — AaS

HERING SCHUPPENER (GERMANY/WPP)

While corporate communicators in English-speaking markets are increasingly insecure about their role in relation to marketing, German CCOs are frequently adding corporate strategy to their portfolio and enjoying greater influence in their organizations. And in the German market, there's no better corporate and financial specialist than Hering Schuppener, which led mergermarket's ranking of PR advisors to financial transactions in Germany by volume and value (34 deals worth \$113 billion) again last year and continues to be the go-to firm for high-stakes corporate reputation and crisis work in the market.

Last year, the firm worked for Bayer on its merger with Monsanto; Deutsche Börse on its proposed merger with the London Stock Exchange; Praxair on its merger with Linde; RWE on the spinoff of Innogy, and Innogy's subsequent IPO (the largest in Germany since 2000); and Volkswagen on the dieselgate crisis, litigation support, and global repositioning of the VW brand. The firm also provided capital markets and issues management support to a who's who of German and international business: ABB, Adidas, Airbus, Deutsche Bank, Deutsche Post DHL, Deutsche Lufthansa, Henkel, Honeywell, KKR, Lanxess, and ThyssenKrupp.

The firm's leadership team has unmatched depth and longevity: in addition to chief executive Ralf Hering, partners Alexander Geiser, Tina Mentner, Brigitte von Haacke, Phoebe Kebbel, Georg Jakobs, Martin Bury, Henriette Peucker, Felix Schönauer and Simon Steiner (who rejoined in 2016 after four years with Commerzbank) are minority shareholders in the firm and veterans of corporate and financial PR, public affairs, and employee communications, with an average

tenure at HS of more than 10 years. New in 2016 was Nikolaus Tacke, former European head of public affairs The Coca-Cola Company, who joined as managing director of the firm's Brussels operation. — PH

MAITLAND (HAVAS)

After a period in which it's profile was a little bit lower than it might have liked, Maitland's growth certainly caught the eye in 2016, up 14% to around £11m. The 22-year-old UK firm has always been best known for the financial counsel it has provided to major British companies, but a smart diversification has helped it navigate the inevitable commoditisation of investor relations. Practice strength in corporate, digital, litigation PR and public affairs now sit alongside the capital markets practice, which remains a leader, advising on 74 transactions worth a total of \$44,441m to rank third in Europe.

Much of that strategy has been in place for several years now, but 2016 was the year when it came to concrete fruition, resulting in the firm tackling some demanding assignments, such as supporting Sir Philip Green and Arcadia through the settlement of the BHS pensions, and Vauxhall in its efforts to address the fire risk in its Zafira cars. There was also new business from Bovis Homes Deutsche Boerse, TUI Group AG, Barclays Bank, Seat and Age UK, adding to an existing client roster that features Ashtead Group, Aberdeen Asset Management, Amundi, Dominos, National Express, Serco Group, Standard Chartered, United Technologies Corporation and Vodafone Group.

Chief executive Neil Bennett oversees a 50-person firm that now also includes serious corporate heft in Steve Marinker and Pete Bowyer, along with the creation of sister firm Chandos to handle Continental European corporate communications. — AS

Winner

HANOVER (UK/INDEPENDENT)

At first glance, one of Europe's best public affairs firms might seem like an odd choice for the healthcare list. But much of Hanover's stellar growth in recent years has been powered by a healthcare policy practice that blends policy, advocacy and government affairs to impressive effect under MD Andrew Harrison, who has been with the firm since 2002. And the healthcare unit grew by an impressive 43% last year, moving increasingly beyond policy and public affairs into communications work, with new business from Mundipharma and Boehringer Ingelheim joining existing clients such as Lilly and Shire.

Indeed Hanover's approach to healthcare is consistently grown-up, illustrated by its ability to secure a major healthcare technology assessment reform assignment ahead of McKinsey and Deloitte. The launch of a market access practice involved work for Lilly's Alzheimer's drug, and reflected an ability to navigate an increasingly complex European healthcare landscape. And much of Hanover's healthcare work is led by Brussels office, as demonstrated a big-budget campaign to persuade EU and national policymakers of the possibility to eliminate Hepatitis C in Europe, leading to the European Commission's decision to invest €1m in a new project to improve early diagnosis rates of viral hepatitis. — AS

Finalists

KETCHUM (OMNICOM GROUP)

Now accounting for around 20% of Ketchum's regional revenue in EMEA, the practice grew substantially in 2016 thanks to a renewed focus on wellness, in acknowledgement of declining pharma budgets. The firm made the smart decision to merge its

healthcare practice with its Inspired Science medical education practice, helping clients develop a more 360-degree approach to their communications challenges. That is reflected in the diversity of services Ketchum provides to its healthcare clients, including corporate reputation (BMS and Janssen); pharma (Takeda, Pfizer and Sanofi Pasteur); change management (Astellas); advocacy (Eular and World Economic Forum); health and wellness (Centrum, Danone and Clorox); medical education (Bayer and Otsuka); and health tech and devices (Toshiba, Philips, Stryker).

There was also significant digital growth in the healthcare arena too, training Pfizer on social media and developing the excellent Miles for Haemophilia and F2 Freestylers campaigns. — AS

KYNE (IRELAND/INDEPENDENT)

Kyne has created a mighty workforce of professionals whose backgrounds include non-profit organizations, top communications firms, foundations and biopharmaceutical companies. The firm's 26-person team has propelled Kyne to nearly \$6m in fee income — 28% growth from the previous year.

The Dublin-based firm has additional offices in New York and Los Angeles along with consultants based around the world (including UK, Brussels, Uganda, Mali and Chad) enabling a deep understanding of local dynamics, insights, needs and regulations. The consultancy also taps into a creative, collaborative and integrated approach that uses communication as a powerful health intervention across four key areas: disease state and market development initiatives; reputation and responsibility programming; advocacy relations; and behavior change communications.

Key clients include Boehringer Ingelheim; Bioverativ; CDC

Foundation; GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance; Johns Hopkins University; National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID); The Rockefeller Foundation (new); Seqirus; the Carter Center; AstraZeneca (new) and the Touch Foundation (new).

To keep the quality of work consistent across geographies, Kyne hosts an immersive two-day meeting with an agenda structured around outputs from its yearly employee satisfaction survey. Notable work includes partnering with Africa United to develop an internationally broadcasted video called "I'm No Hero" with the simple message of trusting healthcare workers, along with campaign radio spots and a series of billboards, posters, SMS images, soccer cards and notebooks that were disseminated across the region.

Founder David Kyne remains at the helm as CEO with a leadership bench that includes Maureen Byrne, EVP, General Manager, NY; Wendy Woods-Williams, EVP and GM of LA; and Lisa Mehigan, director and head of Dublin Office. — AaS

PEGASUS (UK/ASHFIELD HEALTHCARE GROUP)

After 20 years as an independent agency, 2016 was pivotal for Pegasus with its sale to Ashfield Healthcare Communications and with a new managing director taking over. Even amid the significant change, fee income is up 9% to nearly £10m with 108 employees, mostly in the UK.

Key clients include Bayer, Biogen, GSK, Holland & Barrett, Novo Nordisk, Thornton & Ross — plus new wins AstaReal, Beauty Kitchen, Grafton International, Leo Pharma, Mars Petcare, Nature's Dream, Spectrum Brands and Vitabiotics. In 2016, Pegasus also added planners, videographers, digital analysts, developers, community managers and behaviour change creatives, as well as individuals from non-agency

life such as veterinarians, nutritionists and journalists to its mix to broadens its scope and depth.

Notable work includes that for client Biogen. Knowing one in five multiple sclerosis patients hadn't seen a specialist in the last year, the team created '1MSg' (one message) to inspire so-called 'lost patients' to reconnect with these services. The message was simple: "Take control, know your choices" - positive, easily-grasped and placed the onus on patients to act by driving them to a microsite. The integrated channel strategy targeted mass media, online, social, HCPs, surgeries and community centres. As a result, 69% of visitors said they would seek advice from specialist services.

This year, Pegasus invested in a formal online engagement tool called 'HIVE' to strengthen its staff insights and introduce a way of providing feedback. HIVE sends bi-weekly microsurveys to all staff providing real-time data and acting as a barometer for the overall engagement of its people on a range of workplace matters. It also acts as an electronic suggestion box, with a direct mail function that enables staff to reach out, anonymously, with any

issues that might be troubling them. Since its introduction, the firm has made many improvements, including hiring more people in finance, evolving its appraisal process, reviewing flexible working, and streamlining expenses.

Founder and chairman Lisa Bradley left the firm in April, leaving the reins to MD Simon Hackett, creative director Stuart Hehir and directors Jo Spadaccino and Helen Yardsley. — AaS

VIRGO HEALTH (IPG/GOLIN)

Now in its 13th year, and fourth since it was acquired by Interpublic Group agency Golin, Virgo Health has successfully managed the transition to new ownership and management with aplomb, retaining its spot as one of Europe's top healthcare agencies. The firm grew around 4% to \$11m in 2016, despite a challenging marketplace that involved fewer blockbuster drugs and a reduction in big-budget retainers. Organic growth of 26% pointed to Virgo's continued ability to diversify its services for such clients as Novartis, Roche and

Abbvie, supplemented by new business from Ipsen and Santen.

That has involved considerable investment in digital and content, with Virgo's in-house Pharmacy creative hub particularly busy, bolstered by the appointment of Paul Andrews as head of design and Nicole Burns as senior social strategist. A new innovation hub called Egg includes two proprietary white-label products, one focused on collaboration, workspace & ideation technology, and the other a platform for clinical trial efficiencies, reflecting Virgo's continued ability to change with the times. And Sue Neilsen arrived as head of communications to help refocus Virgo's corporate unit.

All of that helped drive some impressive campaign work, including a major employee engagement effort for Roche; getting men aged 60+ to talk to their GP about atrial fibrillation for Bayer; and getting RB onto the Lions Health 2016 agenda via an innovation challenge to solve the devastating effects of air pollution in India. In line with its 'Being Human' positioning, furthermore, Virgo's workplace culture remains a notch above most of its rivals. — AS

EMEA Public Affairs Consultancies of the Year

Winner

FTI CONSULTING (FTI)

Ranked as the fastest-growing midsize company in Brussels by Trends/Tendances, the leading Belgian business and financial magazine, FTI Consulting has a team of 70 public affairs experts from 22 different countries and has consolidated its leadership position in the Brussels public affairs market in recent years, growing by 30% a year, benefiting perhaps more than any other unit of the FTI communications business from synergies with other practices within the broader management consulting

business: corporate finance, economic consulting, forensic and litigation expertise. Those capabilities mean a unique cross-disciplinary approach to problem-solving for clients. And in addition to the powerhouse Brussels office, the public affairs team has a presence in wholly-owned offices in Berlin, Cape Town, Copenhagen, Dubai, Dublin, Johannesburg, London, Moscow, Paris and Madrid.

Major clients in 2016 included MasterCard, Google, Facebook, Epson, Bayer, the TransAdriatic Pipeline, Exxon Mobil, Johnson & Johnson, Walk Free Foundation,

Zalando, BNY Mellon, Netflix, Apex-Brasil, Booking.com, and Amazon, and high-profile assignments included generating support for the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (a proposed natural gas pipeline through Greece, Albania and the Adriatic Sea landing in Italy) across the EU; helping to launch the Hydrogen Council, a newly formed group of global energy, transport and industry companies.

The firm has expanded its presence in financial services, building out expertise in asset management, insurance and exchanges; technology and media, focusing on the disruptive platforms and technology

changing sectors such as automotive; energy and agri-chemicals; and healthcare. And it has specialist groups focused on competition, cyber, trade, tax categories, and of course Brexit, where a London-Brussels Brexit taskforce led by chair Louise Harvey has drawn on tailored research from an in-house polling group to develop a “war-gaming,” scenario-planning approach to the issue. — PH

Finalists

APCO (INDEPENDENT)

Senior APCO executives often bristle when the firm is described as a public affairs player, and with some justification — the expansion of APCO’s work not just into corporate, but also consumer, healthcare and digital, has been underway for several years now. Yet, in truth, that expansion also reflects the way that public affairs itself has evolved beyond a narrow focus on lobbying to broader understanding of the intersection of policy, media and all stakeholder groups. The firm’s 300-strong EMEA presence includes 123 people in the Middle East, with Continental Europe contributing around €15.5m in revenue last year. There are strong operations in the UK (where James Acheson-Gray up 16% since 2014 to around £6m); Germany (up 16% last year to around €3.5m, it’s third year of double-digit growth); Brussels (now around €5.3m following a turnaround in recent years); Italy (which has grown to 15 people in six years, and will reach €1.5m this year); and France (where the firm has doubled in size in five years), Brussels (where 35 people generated revenue of €5.35m) and the Middle East, (which is worth around \$14m, after a tough year in Turkey.)

The numbers are good but, as ever, it is the sheer quality of APCO’s work that stands out, much of it driven by a consistently strong research and insights capability. In Italy, the firm

handled change management for Whirlpool after the Indesit acquisition, helped Apple through its tax problems in the country, and supported eBay’s efforts to revitalise SMEs in Aquila after the earthquake. In the UK, new healthcare chair James Tyrrell oversaw £1.4m in new business from the likes of GSK, Wrigley, Boehringer Ingelheim, GE Healthcare, J&J and Thrombosis UK, much of it work that included a policy/regulatory dimension alongside market access and communications. The UK also featured expanded business for Reckitt Benckiser, WorldVentures, Microsoft, Deloitte and Lockheed Martin, along with strong campaign work such as #BetterThanThat and Mars’ proactive effort to disclose health warnings on its sauces. In Germany, there was a global project for WhatsApp and new business from TUI (global crisis response preparation), Disneyland Paris and Equinix. And in Brussels there were a string of new hires to build out a more rounded offering that features classic lobbying (Microsoft), litigation communications (GML), public affairs infrastructure (Danone) and a burgeoning competition practice (featuring Finland’s TVO), that is forecast to bring in €2m in revenue this year. — AS

BURSON-MARSTELLER (WPP)

Burson-Marsteller’s EMEA operations have long been anchored by the strength of its public affairs capabilities in London and Brussels and so it’s no surprise that the firm was biggest beneficiaries of the “Brexit bounce,” which saw a host of organizations seeking clarity about the policy situation in the EU and the UK in the wake of the British public’s shocking vote to withdraw from the Union.

Burson has some of the most impressive public affairs talent in the region. Kevin Bell, who joined BM in 2014 as global public affairs chair (and was promoted to global

president in 2016) has been an adviser to several senior Conservative Party politicians in the UK and led public affairs for FleishmanHillard and Maitland. Andrew Cecil joined in 2016 to lead EMEA public affairs after leading the European public policy function for Amazon. Brussels chief executive Karen Massin has been with the firm for 16 years. And head of UK public affairs Stephen Day (who was promoted to COO in 2016) has held senior roles with Portcullis and in the Conservative Party.

The firm’s work included launching a policy audit on fertility in the European Parliament for Merck; visualizing the problem of air pollution for Air View; creating an ad campaign featuring footballers Marouane Fellaini and Anja Mittag showing support for refugees for the European Commission; promoting safe alcohol consumption for Cerveceros de Espana; and helping to launch the Counter Terrorism Coalition for Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. Other high-profile public affairs clients include Microsoft, Merck, Qualcomm and Spotify. The firm’s thought leadership activity in the arena includes its Twiplomacy research—the definitive study of social media use by world leaders—and “What Influences the Influencers,” a survey into the preferred news sources and social media channels used by MEPs, EU officials and opinion-formers in Brussels. — PH

HANOVER COMMUNICATIONS (UK/ INDEPENDENT)

Since its inception 19 years ago Hanover has evolved beyond its UK roots to become one of the world’s top public affairs consultancies, winning EMEA Consultancy of the Year honours in 2016 and taking home the Global Public Affairs trophy one year earlier. But even by those standards, 2016 counted as a remarkable year for Charles Lewington’s firm, which grew 22% to more than £11m in fee income, its

third consecutive year of 20%+ growth. Much of that was led by the firm's healthcare practice, but its flagship public affairs and corporate advocacy offerings continued to evolve too, bolstered by the deep insight into financial services, technology and healthcare sectors that has characterised its growth since it launched.

Unsurprisingly for a firm with this much momentum there were no shortage of high-profile account wins and senior hires. There were several confidential corporate wins while, in healthcare, the firm beat McKinsey and Deloitte to a brief on Healthcare Technology Assessment reform. And, in Brussels, Apple and Liberty Global were among the many wins for the growing EU policy team. All of those join a blue-chip client roster that features Goldman Sachs, Sky, Lucozade Ribena, Suntory, Tata Steel, Cuadrilla, Lilly, Airbus, Shire, De Beers, and Microsoft.

In terms of personnel, the biggest catch was undoubtedly former BT corporate affairs chief Michael Prescott, who came onboard as group MD of corporate and political strategy. Also arriving were industry veterans Alastair Gornall as Hanover's first non-executive Chairman, and Hanover Health chair Anna Korving. Threepipe co-founder Eddie May joined the firm as MD of its new Playbook creative comms

consultancy, and there were also senior hires to lead the new Dublin and London operations. They join a well-established leadership team that features former Downing Street press secretary Lewington, supported by Andrew Harrison, director and global head of the healthcare practice; Laura Swire, director and head of Hanover's advocacy team; and director and head of Hanover's corporate and consumer practice, Gavin Megaw. Brussels is led by MD Christian Hierholzer.

And, like many of its better rivals, Hanover's work reflects the shifting public affairs landscape, enabling it to position Tata Steel as a responsible owner amid intense media scrutiny; establishing a Brexit consulting partnership with German firm Johanssen + Kretschmer; successfully launching flood reinsurance scheme Flood Re; and, helping the Hepatitis B & C Association to raise awareness among EU and national policymakers. — AS

NEWINGTON (UK/SEC SPA)

Newington celebrated 10 years in 2016 by rebranding from Bellenden to Newington with a fresh look and a new website, while also moving to a bigger London HQ with architectural features, designed by staff — and opening satellite offices in Birmingham, Manchester and

Chelmsford. The firm also bolstered its culture with enhanced maternity cover, higher starting salaries, introduced a matched pension scheme and a new bonus program. All of this investment appears to already be showing some payoff — 20 new clients were won in 2016 (among these, Just Eat, Abbvie, Octopus Investments, Peel Group and Berkeley Homes) resulting in the 44-person firm securing fees £3 million with almost £600k from new business.

Fee income was relatively flat compared to 2015, in part because of the collapse of the onshore wind energy market in the UK. The firm now has a more diverse client portfolio reducing its exposure to any single individual market. Notable work includes that for Horticultural Trades Association to raise its profile in Scotland and to put building blocks in place to start influencing the Scottish Parliament and government. The team's counsel and activity has made the HTA the lead in establishing a Horticulture Framework for the Future Panel and Framework which will be used to present specific industry asks of the Scottish Government.

Mark Glover is CEO with a management team that includes Phil Briscoe, Naomi Harris, Chris White and Muniya Barau. — AaS

EMEA Technology PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

HARVARD (UK/CHIME)

Last year's Technology Consultancy of the Year submitted another standout year in 2016, ensuring that memories of its 2011 nadir (when the UK's oldest specialist tech consultancy was down to 14 people and £1.6m in revenue) are firmly in the rearview mirror. Indeed, Louie St Claire and his leadership team (Ellie Bennett, Pete Marcus, Phil Szomszor

and Gareth Clark) have revolutionised the firm to the extent that 29% growth to £4m is now seen as business as usual. Of course, Harvard's business today certainly cannot count as commonplace among its tech rivals, having chosen to restructure its offering last year from a position of strength, creating three core division (PR/AR, digital engagement and marketing) that underscore its diversification across the full spectrum of technology

marketing budgets, supplemented by a credible planning capability, along with demand generation, account based marketing and sales enablement capabilities, with the marketing services practice growing from 4 to 18 people.

New business remained in fine fettle, with the firm adding such clients as Propel/Disney, Lloyd's of London, Linn, Dun & Bradstreet, Azimo, Hired, Stuart, Mimecast, Habito to join an

existing client roster that features Fujitsu, Ricoh, Vodafone Cisco, Arbor Networks, Sennheiser, Digital Catapult, Lycamobile, Salmon and Zappar.

The firm's work reflects an impressive focus on integration, via a full-service offering that extends beyond PR and digital into such areas as advertising and direct marketing, all centred on the idea of being audience engagement experts for the technology sector. There was impressive campaign work Fujitsu ('A New Pace of Change'); Salmon ('Black Friday'); Azimo (#BetterThanThat); Lloyds and Propel. The firm's workplace initiatives also merit a mention, including roles-specific forums and new training programmes. — AS

Finalists

CCGROUP (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Sometimes an agency has to get worse to get better. In the second half of 2014, CCgroup lost around 30% of its income in six weeks, representing a tough initiation for the leadership duo of Richard Fogg and Paul Nolan, who had only completed their MBO of the venerable tech agency 12 months earlier. Yet, since dropping to £1.95m in fee income that year, CCgroup has since recovered to the tune of 32% growth last year, lifting fee income to £3m (at 20% margin), bolstered by another 40% growth forecast in 2017. Those numbers underline the revival that has taken place under the leadership duo of Richard Fogg and Paul Nolan, with all of CCgroup's key 'micro-practice areas' (telecoms, fintech, enterprise tech, and entertainment tech) delivering substantial growth, bolstered by the new Aperture unit which delivers B2B insights and analytics to data-hungry marketers.

Eschewing a fascination with market leaders, CCgroup has smartly focused on delivering content marketing, lead generation, digital engagement and for its B2B tech clients, many of

which are the type of challenger brands that are ready to trust a young-ish management duo with solving their business problems. There has been new business from SafeCharge, Mitek, Juvo, LoopUp, KCOM, CDNetworks, MFSA and Icon Solutions, joining existing clients such as Synchronoss, Syniverse, SolarWinds MSP, Huddle, Wireless Broadband Alliance, Openet, InterDigital, Signicat, Encap and Accedian.

Always a leader in terms of B2B mobile, CCgroup's fintech, enterprise tech and entertainment marketing work now showcases a similar flair for intelligent communications work, supplemented by Aperture's capabilities and by a new range of analyst relations and B2B social media services. Standout work include helping Azzurri Communications navigate its acquisition by Maintel; driving 780 marketing qualified leads via an integrated PESO campaign for InterDigital; and creating the InstaPay content portal and community for Icon's entry into the instant payments space, resulting in a significant number of qualified prospects. — AS

CHAMELEON (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Chameleon has seen its fortunes improve markedly since the 2013 arrival of Tom Berry as CEO, followed one year later by MD Tom Buttle. So it came as little surprise that the duo completed a successful MBO last month, buying out founder Helen Holland, after spending the past three years ushering in a fairly radical revamp of the firm's positioning and capabilities, broadening its approach to encompass the full range of digital services, sales lead generation and C-suite counsel.

Topline fee income increased by 8% in 2016 to £1.88m, but Chameleon under the two Toms has never been a firm that chases growth for the sake of it. Instead it prefers to focus on metrics that it believes will

demonstrate its vision of high-value consultancy and integrated communications. Accordingly, profits were up 33%, leading to a 24% margin; average fees are now £10k per month from £4k in 2014; non-traditional communications services (influencer relations, insights and strategy, growth marketing, sales support, content marketing etc) make up 26% of revenue; Chameleon's client net promoter score is a remarkable +63; and its' employee net promoter score is +78.

Much of that is down to a unique staff culture that has been implemented since Berry and Buttle turned over the entire 17-person firm when they arrived. The firm is considerably more discriminating about the work it takes on, focusing on winning business in two areas in particular: fast-growth companies trying to disrupt the industry (Unity, Github, UiPath, Digital Catapult), and larger players that increasingly come from beyond Chameleon's technology heartland (Danone, Affinity, Adyen). They join an existing client roster that features key clients such as DocuSign, Code42, Vertiv, Forbidden Technologies and Kronos.

Not only is Chameleon's staff culture considerably more vibrant than most of its rivals, but its work represents that its strategy and mindset is paying off. For Danone and Affinity, for example, there was visual design and content messaging; for a number of other clients, including Receipt Bank, there were a string of successful efforts deliver Series A-C funding, rather than just media relations; and for Code 42 (Datastrophe) and Cashfac, there were campaigns that drove genuine sales leads. Meanwhile, Chameleon also take its status as part of the UK tech industry seriously, working with Digital Catapult, Techfugees and ClubCISO and supporting events for CoreCapital, IndexVentures, NatWest, KPMG, and the Bank of Ireland. — AS

OCTOPUS GROUP (UK/ INDEPENDENT)

Octopus has long prided itself on being one of the technology sector's more restless agencies, as comfortable designing sales programmes as it is calling up journalists. While that mentality has sometimes seen it forge too far ahead of the market, its 2016 performance demonstrated that its 'brand to sales' model is resulting in concrete returns — fuelling growth of 17% to £5.6m. A total overhaul of the firm's structure, accompanied by a new brand and positioning, has ushered in a firm that delivers specialist skills and products rather than time-based services. In addition to the development of a bespoke 'brand to sales calculator' that tracks effectiveness and spending, the firm has invested in a specific methodology, supported by training and task forces, in a bid to standardise pricing and prioritise outcomes.

Accordingly, a significant proportion of Octopus' work now involves engaging directly with marketing heads that want to link content to commerce in a credible fashion. Not that was necessarily easy — the firm has turned over talent as it seeks 'progressive communications professionals' who can deliver paid, creative and planning services to its client engagement campaigns. But the leadership team — featuring CEO Jon Lonsdale and directors Sandy Purewal, Laura Slade, Tom Holland

appear closer than ever to realising their vision of a truly differentiated offering, bolstered last year by the addition of John Farrell as chairman, Angela Richmond as research MD and Toby Brown, Bill McIntyre and Katie Potts as client directors.

New business included Vodafone, Bomgar, Nuix, Fortinet, Credit Peers, Callcredit, Bizagi, Fellowes and Klarna, joining a client roster that features Avana, Blackberry, Computacenter, Gamma, WP Engine, Okta, Pindrop, SAP, Unisys, Veeam and Bluejeans. And the work showcases Octopus' ability deliver content marketing along clear B2B marketing lines. The firm is an accredited Gold Hubspot partner and proficient in supporting other marketing automation platforms like Marketo and Eloqua, increasingly important qualities for the 21st century technology agency. — AS

TEXT 100 (NEXT 15)

After a relatively difficult period in the region, one of the world's largest (and oldest, at 35 years) tech specialist consultancies is an increasingly vibrant presence in EMEA, thanks in large part to the merger with two sibling firms in the UK — Republic Publishing and IncrediBull — bringing expertise in content and brand marketing, and helping fuel a restructuring of its broader regional offering around five

distinct service groups — strategy, content, influence, social and digital.

EMEA revenues reached £9m, with 145 staff working across offices in the UK, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. And the firm's momentum is particularly evident from its new business performance, where it added Brightstar, Canary, Xerox, Tata Communications, Bupa, Surf Air, Avios, Stripe and Nintendo to such key clients as Suntrust, Brightstar, Vodafone, IBM, Lenovo, HARMAN, Red Bull, Microsoft, Facebook and NCR.

Not only did the UK mergers bring a welcome change to Text100's capabilities, though, but they have also served as a beacon for the firm's global approach to the convergence of technology and consumer communications. It is not a stretch to say that Text100 now has a credible point of view that distinguishes it from its rivals, focusing on a new agency structure that dispenses with traditional PR roles in favour of specialist skills such as brand strategy, content, film, digital design/build and activation. Global creative director Richard Parkinson has been a key player in this shift, which is also showcased by impressive work for Suntrust (the 'Purpose Ambassadors' employee engagement programme); Skype ('Walk Together' brand partnership activation with Liverpool FC); Vodafone ('Flexible Friend or Foe' global thought leadership); Surf Air (UK launch of the membership flying service); and, IBM Chef Watson. — AS

EMEA New PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

BYDESIGN COMMUNICATIONS (SOUTH AFRICA/INDEPENDENT)

Kevin Welman's 20-year career at FleishmanHillard helped establish the firm as one of the top consultancies in Africa. So his departure last year was keenly-watched, particularly when he

re-emerged soon afterwards with a new consultancy called ByDesign Communications. Welman and co-founder Vanessa Baard might have thought that an easier life beckoned but they can probably throw those plans out of the window. Not only has ByDesign already landed a staggering 10 major clients since it launched, but the 8-month-

old consultancy has also showcased the kind of boutique positioning that is the lifeblood of PR agency renewal in more mature markets.

New business has included blue-chip companies such as Mercedes-Benz, SAP, Anglo American, Adidas and Coronation Fund Managers. The firm also showcases a progressive blend

of content, public relations, digital strategy and crisis communication — signifying a relatively disruptive approach in a market that still thrives on media relations. Standout work includes supporting Anglo American's education-focused projects, helping News24's native digital project, working on SAP's Africa Code Week and on Mercedes-Benz's #EveryTerrain campaign. — AS

Finalists

LONG RUN WORKS (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Long Run Works launched in 2015 when two former colleagues sought an answer to this question — how can PR do more to tackle society's biggest challenges. And they agreed on an answer — “by helping good ideas grow faster by making stronger stories, from the ground up.”

Partners Guy Pattison (who is also CEO) and Will Hill took things a step farther and created six cultural goals, inspired by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These are: celebrating clean innovation; discovering opportunities through diversity; opening access to education; breaking taboos in the way of wellbeing; making responsible consumption desirable; and appreciating the value of the natural world.

Long Run Works makes it a point only work with clients, partners and suppliers that align with these goals. “We also write our own briefs as well as answering clients'. By doing this we create action where a client doesn't exist but great ideas do.” The agency also reminds the team that stories are never over, always pay things forward and don't be, essentially, a jerk.

Fee income for 2016 was £177,020 which is 112% growth on its first 10 months. This growth was fueled by key clients like Innovate UK, Digitalme, City & Guilds Group, Women's Equality Party, Kings College London, ITO World, Heritage

Wind, Sheila McKetchnie Foundation and Blockbuilders. The agency also invested £25k profit from its first year of trading to co-fund and cofound a campaign called What Women Want 2.0 that launched at the UN's Committee on the Status of Women in New York. The firm also hosted six workshops for people looking to become better storytellers.

Notable work includes helping Innovate UK grow cleantech SMEs faster by launching a UK-based training and PR programme. “We work with Long Run Works because they understand what it takes to bring innovative and sustainable ideas to market but more importantly explain them to audiences of potential customers, investors and partners,” says Dr. Mike Pitts, head of urban systems at Innovate UK. — AaS

WELL HELLO (UK/INDEPENDENT)

Nick Woods & Lisa Taylor see Well Hello as a new breed of agency “born with a clear purpose and named not after ‘an old/dead/white guy,’ but after their belief and vision.” In the case of Well Hello, ‘well’ is its sector and ‘hello’ is the belief that brands should be conversational.

Beyond this, its positioning is “making the world a better place by by choosing to only work with goodness brands” (which it defines as brands that help people look good, feel good or do good.) In practical terms, this includes pharma; consumer health (sex health, colds & flu, vitamins & supplements, foot health, intimate health, mental health, smoking cessation etc); health technology; nutrition & diet; fitness & sport; and fashion & beauty.

Fee income is £175K with clients that include For Goodness Shakes protein/recovery drinks, ONE condoms, Neurovalens, HECK Sausages, Enertor and The Soil Association. Notably, Well Hello bested 11 other agencies to win the Superdrug's health & wellbeing

portfolio — even more impressive when you consider this was won solely by the two principals and a freelancer and work started even earlier than the RFP called for.

For Valentine's Day this year, Well Hello researched the most popular days to have sex and then persuaded Superdrug to create an entirely new range of lubes, dubbed the Sex O'Clock range, in which each product was named, for example 9am Sunday, 10pm Saturday, 7am Tuesday - eight in all, named after the least and most popular times for sex. These were and are available on the Superdrug website alongside all other lubes own-label and otherwise.

The four-person shop defines its culture as Benni Wooha, which stands for ‘be nice, work hard’ and is demonstrated through tailored training and rewards packages. — AaS

There's a pattern that we've observed at the Holmes Report that illustrates why being a Best Agency to Work For carries so much significance. There's a direct correlation between the agencies on this list and those that take home our biggest honor — Agency of the Year recognition. That's, in part, because firms that take culture seriously tend to attract and retain smart and creative talent who, in turn, produce stellar work. It's a simple formula but one that's easily overlooked amid the breathless pace and tremendous pressures that are a seemingly inevitable reality of agency life. But this pace is exactly why agencies shouldn't underestimate the power its culture has on the work its employees produce.

This year, we changed the format to include a Top 5 ranking of the firms in each category. The firms recognized on the rankings include a some holding companies firms and many independents — some have generous benefits, others prioritize professional development or interesting work that keeps talent engaged.

Top 5 PR Agencies To Work For In EMEA — Best Continental/Middle East/Africa Consultancy

1. SCHWARTZ PR (GERMANY/INDEPENDENT)

For the last 23 years, Christoph Schwartz has fostered a familial culture at his eponymous tech firm — an approach that has paid off with Schwartz taking the top spot in this category for two years in a row. This culture is fostered with three priorities, starting with total transparency.

Everyone at the firm, from the most junior team members upwards, has full insight into all ongoing agency business, pitches, revenues and fees. Not only that, everyone has access to client contracts and have input into the scope calculations. Monday mornings start with in-depth meetings where all staff discuss agency news. The firm also values respect, trust and personal responsibility. Pulling this off can be tricky within an organization with hierarchies and clearly delineated responsibilities, but Schwartz does this by allowing team members to determine time and level of service for clients (helped by the accessibility of the contracts). Agency management provides only guidance. The third value is professional development that is delivered through bi-weekly internal training sessions and two-day external

sessions developed especially for Schwartz employees. This also includes day-to-day mentoring with junior staff with extensive feedback.

Other benefits include extra holiday; flexible start times; a generous model for working parents and part-time employees; and pro-bono work for CSR clients, as well as plenty of work outings like climbing, hiking and other culture events.

2. HERING SCHUPPENER (GERMANY/WPP)

Germany's go-to high stakes reputation and crisis firm, Hering Schuppener, also helps its people become all-stars in the industry's most the heavy duty work. The firm offers training courses once a month that are led by both internal and experts; and a knowledge-sharing wiki system. And this work paves the way for promotions. To become a partner at the firm, Harvard Business School's executive education is mandatory.

But it's not just professional development that landed Hering Schuppener in the number two slot. Every employees is allotted a three-month sabbatical every three years and working from home is always an option. The parental leave policy is accordance with German

law. Junior staff and middle-management attend one off-site per year at the event of their choosing and senior directors have two per year.

3. LVTPR (NETHERLANDS/INDEPENDENT)

The idea at LVTPR is that its 43 employees consider the agency as more than just a job. It starts on day one with an in-depth orientation. There's also a personal development and education plan developed for each employee, on top of the various internal trainings and workshops. The firm holds the LTVPR Academy every two weeks where senior management focuses on job-related themes, like managing expectations, presentation, sales, media relations, among other areas, plus media are often invited to present their insights. Eighty percent of LVTPR consultants are Google Analytics certified.

“From the first day on, juniors are involved in the complete client strategy and management process in order to learn from their colleagues,” says CEO Charly Lammers van Toorenborg. “Seniors have peer-to-peer meetings to improve their

general skills and collaboration capabilities.”

The company’s culture reflects the Dutch and Belgian mentalities — an open and non-political policy, directness, honesty, liveliness, spontaneity and efficiency, and in addition to a flat organization. When employees leave, the firm hosts a farewell party or dinner. Each year, the firm hosts a three-day offsite for employees to get to know each other better. Management maintains enough staff so that working overtime doesn’t become a habit.

This is the second year in a row LVTPR has made the top five.

4. TRIBECA (SOUTH AFRICA/ INDEPENDENT)

The philosophy at Tribeca — even amid rapid growth — is ‘people first.’ This means, eschewing the grind of 12-hour days worked by over-stressed and over-stretched consultants overservicing to meet overextended revenue targets. As part of this, the agency skips the ping pong tables and Xbox Playstations and instead focuses on running a business that directly improves the lives of its employees.

For instance, capacity is always considered when taking on new

business. And team members can opt out of working on a new or existing client if they feel there’s a cultural mismatch (the agency has declined new business and parted ways with clients whose work style and culture wasn’t a fit). The agency has hired a part-time life coach to help employees work through any professional — or personal — issues. (All consultations are confidential between the life coach and the employee, with Tribeca management having no access to information about those meetings.)

The firm provides extensive training and experience for employees to grow professionally, while also providing direct access to management. The firm is divided into seven five-person teams that each take turns organizing ‘Yay days’ - or fun afternoons away from work with generous budgets. Employees have various scheduling options to make room for their personal life. If employees have to work more than 7.5 hours, they can claim time back in half-day blocks, in addition to the 25 days leave per year. The firm also offers four months paternity leave (the government mandates four months for mothers) and no permission is required to tend to ill

children. This is the second year in a row Tribeca has made the top 5.

5. ALLISON + PARTNERS (MDC PARTNERS)

With more than 15 employees across EMEA and the UK, Allison + Partners — already known for having a strong culture in the US — is growing its influence in the region. When it comes to career development, Allison University provides workshops, outings and dinners that facilitate professional development and team collaboration. The Global Employee Exchange Pilot Programme offers two employees the opportunity to work in another Allison office around the world (the agency pays for airfare, visa fees, lodging — plus relocation support), among several other initiatives like MBA reimbursement and Annual Open Door programs.

Other interesting benefits include the holiday donation programme where team members can donate their paid time off for employees who required additional time (to care for a sick relative, bereavement, etc). On top of annual leave, employees can take several days off to for personal milestones, can take summer Fridays, among other morale boosters.

Top 5 PR Agencies To Work For In EMEA — Best UK Consultancy

1. HOPE & GLORY (INDEPENDENT)

In just five years, Hope & Glory has solidified its reputation in London’s fiercely competitive consumer market with a consistent outpouring of impressive, award-winning work. The 61-person shop is run by founders Jo Carr and James Gordon-Macintosh with a focus on ‘fame, fortune and fun’ as a way to keep staff — and ultimately clients — happy.

The firm does two 360-degree appraisals per year, plus employees are assigned a personal manager who takes a proactive role in their

training and development. The “Rise & Shine” training programme includes monthly learn and lunches; external training courses; and field trips to spur creativity and insights. Already, 18 people have completed the firm’s graduate training programme (15 are still there). The agency recently launched a programme to help non-graduates enter the PR workforce directly from school as an apprentice with the potential to become a full-time employee.

On top of generous time-off, the firm’s sabbatical program allows

anyone who has been with firm for 2+ years to take three months unpaid, as they wish, with a job guarantee. As an LLP, employees can buy into the partnership over time. New mothers are encouraged to take one year off (with a portion of this paid) and new fathers are allotted two weeks paid. Hope & Glory debuted on the list last year as a finalist.

2. MANIFEST LONDON (INDEPENDENT)

The firms that get culture right skip the gimmicks and focus on building an environment that fosters engagement, creativity and

collaboration. The seven-year-old Manifest London does this by empowering its 26 employees to build their own future at the firm, take responsibility for their actions and be proud of their successes.

Manifest has also reinvented the traditional benefits package with a system designed directly to reduce employee stress, incentivize healthy living and reward contribution. The staff work with the agency's 'Happiness Officer' to curate the benefits that are most meaningful to them. Among these are unlimited holiday, interest-free holiday loans, communal breakfasts on Monday mornings, help with moving, monthly massages, house cleaners, and others. The parental leave policy is structured around an employee's tenure and includes up to three months at nearly full pay before the statutory benefits apply. Parents can also take leave at any point during the first three years of the child being born — something it calls "real parental leave."

Every quarter an anonymous survey measures overall emotional well-being, processes that are working and colleagues that are making the biggest impact. All new employees are given "a buddy" to help them settle into the culture, offering guidance and advice. Budget is also allocated for employees to work on passion projects. The annual Manifestival brings together employees across offices for collaboration and team-building. This year marks Manifest's debut on this list.

3. JOHN DOE (INDEPENDENT)

The 20-person shop offers a variety of perks under its "gift of" umbrella to keep employee engagement and morale higher than average. Among these, the firm gives "the gift of time" (as it calls it) to employees, including extra holiday per year of service, paid sabbaticals, late starts on birthdays and early close on summer Fridays. The "gift of spreading payments"

includes a cycle-to-work and as season ticket loan scheme. The "gift of health & safety" includes health insurance for when employees leave the country, flexible working hours for parents and a return-to-work bonus for new mothers after six months. Other perks include National Art passes for employees, cultural courses, technology devices, contribution allowances for gym memberships and professional development at every level. This is John Doe's first showing on the list.

4. RACEPOINT UK (INDEPENDENT)

The global firm Racepoint has 25 people in its London office, where it serves clients across Europe. The office takes career progression especially seriously with two formal reviews per year with promotions aligning with those. This process pays off for staff looking to be recognized — in the three review cycles from December 2015 to December 2016, nine team members were promoted with another seven slated for 2017. The agency also conducts a steady stream of professional development and opportunities for staff to continue their industry education.

Cultural development is fostered with talent exchange between offices, travel opportunities for events and conferences and through its quarterly Global Exchange Programme in which staff with one year's service can apply to work in another office for a week, all expenses paid. Balance is achieved with methodical processes that keep tabs on over-service. For instance, at the start of each month clients hours are forecasted, then management conducts a check-in two weeks later and adjusts workload accordingly. Holiday entitlement starts at 28 days, plus service days, personal days and summer Fridays. New mothers are compensated beyond the standard statutory pay during their maternity leave.

Racepoint UK organizes several social events throughout the year and

offers additional benefits like wellness payments, sabbaticals, bonuses among others.

5. UNITY (INDEPENDENT)

For the third year in a row, Unity makes our Best Agencies to Work For in the UK list, so it's not surprising the firm was also ranked number one in our Global Creative Index (weighted by headcount) for the second year in row. There's no doubt its strong culture contributes to the spectacular work produced by its 30 employees. The firm describes its purpose as "Increasing Human Happiness" — with the caveat that this mission begins "at home." "We know what each and everyone of our teams' top five personal needs are, and this has influenced what we have focused our time and money on, as far as fostering a healthy culture," says managing director Davnett Doran.

Among these, the agency gives team members access to exclusive memberships (including a Soho House membership last year), pro-bono work driven by team passions, an "antidote" to Trump and Brexit by tasking employees to find joyful news to share, encouraging team members to publish their own work, and having dogs around the office. The standard perks include half-day Fridays, unlimited fruit, flexible working, spot treats, 28 days holiday, among others.

1. APCO WORLDWIDE (INDEPENDENT)

For the third year in a row, APCO Worldwide makes a showing on the Best Agencies to Work For (winner in 2015, finalist in 2016). More impressive is the caliber of the work the firm continues to churn out after more than three decades, and now, with 300-people across EMEA. Nearly all of these employees are part of an international team, working alongside colleagues in other countries. And even within each EMEA office, its global scope is apparent — there are 16 nationalities in its Brussel office, 14 in London.

The APCO Global Exchange Scholarship rewards rewards 15-20 employees each year with an all-expenses paid trip to work in another APCO office abroad to share best practices and cultural learnings. The European team also connects at the annual pan-European Christmas Party. Flexible working arrangements has resulted in most of its employees who take parental leave returning to the firm. Benefits also include robust security offerings from life insurance to disability coverage, in addition to private medical insurance and pensions. European offices close between Christmas and New Year and individual offices have their own perks, on top of generous leave allowances.

2. TEXT 100 (NEXT 15)

After undergoing some changes in the region (including two mergers), Text 100 has emerged with a stronger presence than ever across the region. The 35-year-old agency also recently restructured its regional offering into five groups — strategy, content, influence, social and digital. Its culture centers around three pillars: collaboration, creativity and passion. There are a few ways the firm lives up to this employer brand promise, but mostly it comes down to treating employees like adults with generous

time-off, flexible hours, the ability to work from wherever and tracking time in a more efficient way than the clocking in and out grind. There's the Text 100 week-long office exchange programme where team members are selected to work from another office.

Returning new parents may have reduced hours at full pay, extra child care allowances and a flexible benefits that include a pot of money for things like spa days. Everyone has an annual allowance which can be used in any way they decide. All of the European offices have benefits that reflect the local culture.

3. GOLIN (IPG)

Golin rolled out “Lifetime” last year as part of its ambition “on being the most progressive and flexible employer in our industry” by doing away with the antiquated 9 to 5 work day. “Lifetime” includes unlimited paid holiday, more flexibility to work remotely or from home, and a £50 per month health and wellbeing allowance. Golin also has a 50/50 gender balanced team of MDs globally and is committed to encouraging more women to take on senior leadership roles.

The firm also provides enhanced paternity and maternity leave, including education sessions on sharing the parental load, newsletters to help new parents feel connected to the firm, and mentoring for new parents. The ‘Golin Returnship’ is a back-to-work training and paid placement programme for 30 women returning to the industry after a break of three or more years – is now in its second year. In London 2016, the firm hired Laura Weston, on a three month paid returnship and she's now a permanent Golin marketing director. There are plans to roll-out of this programme across multiple markets. Other unconventional options include the ‘internship’ in which an intern gets

paid not to come to work for two months and go on an adventure of their choice (then come back to work at Golin); subsidized MBA programmes; the Golin B&B helps with housing for interns in London; and the Taylor Bennett Foundation for mentoring opportunities for people of color.

4. COHN & WOLFE (WPP)

The cultural focus at Cohn & Wolfe is an “entrepreneurial culture that emphasizes creativity and imagination, and rejects mediocrity.” To deliver on this, the firm has moved away from traditional hierarchy and borders to foster a collaborative culture where ideas can come from all levels of the organization. The agency's calls this approach “Cohn & Wolfe and You” with a focus on 1) investing in people's individual development; 2) ensuring that everyone has a voice; 3) enabling employees to support each other and their local communities; and 4) fostering a culture of spontaneity and fun.



Asia-Pacific PR Consultancies of the Year

The 2017 Asia-Pacific PR Consultancies of the Year are the result of an exhaustive research process involving more than 100 submissions and meetings with the best PR firms across the region.

Consultancy of the Year winners were announced and honored at the 2017 Asia-Pacific SABRE Awards, which took place on 14 September in Hong Kong.

Asia-Pacific Regional Consultancies of the Year (Large)

Winner

WEBER SHANDWICK (IPG)

It is easy to forget that, just a decade ago, Weber Shandwick's Asia-Pacific presence often registered as less than the sum of its parts. Since then a cohesive regional strategy has added considerable geographic breadth and specialist depth across the region, with the agency tripling in size over the past seven years, to around \$110m in fee income after another double-digit return in 2016. Much of that is the by-product of a stable leadership team that is overseen by chairman Tim Sutton and CEO Baxter Jolly, supported by operations chair Tyler Kim in Korea; creativity and innovation chair Darren Burns in China; client experience chair Vanessa Ho in Singapore; technology EVP Lydia Lee; and strategy/marketing chair Ian Rumsby in Australia.

The firm's local market leadership, overseeing some 900 people across the region, is similarly stable and also reflects Weber's preference for homegrown leaders, including Ava Lawler in Australia, David Liu in

China, Albert Shu in Hong Kong, Valerie Pinto in India, Hitoshi Shioya in Japan and Johnny Sales in Indonesia. Indeed, Weber Shandwick can claim to have the most complete capabilities in the key markets of Australia, China, India, North Asia and South East Asia. Other metrics are similarly eye-catching: the firm now has 179 multimarket clients, and around 30% of its revenues (30%) comes from Asia-based clients. And growth has been led by India (+23%), Australia (+23%), Korea (+15%), Japan (+14%), Hong Kong (+12%) and Singapore (+12%).

Much of that is driven by an existing client base that includes several companies that have been with Weber Shandwick for more than a decade, including MasterCard, Emirates, NTT Docomo, Intel, American Airlines, Nestle, J&J, GM, GSK, Nike and Pfizer. There was also plenty of new business in 2016 (\$16.8m to be exact) from the likes of BYD, Tokyo 2020, Cartier, Netflix, SAP, Victoria's Secret and Ericsson. The growth has benefited every practice group, with consumer and corporate each accounting for about a third of

regional revenues, strong capabilities in health and technology—and digital leading expansion.

But the numbers don't tell the full story of Weber Shandwick's impressive performance in Asia-Pacific. Jolly has overseen a fundamental expansion of the firm's integrated capabilities across all of its markets and practices, with a specific focus on establishing a more credible creative offering. That has meant that Weber Shandwick now numbers around 200 digital/studio specialists, supported by 136 content staffers, 109 integrated media specialists, and 34 insight experts. In line with a broader global restructuring, this talent is now placed into 'value-based communities', underpinned by significant senior hires in analytics/insights, creative, planning and digital. Digital assignments, for example, grew in all markets — led by Korea (36%), Indonesia (27%), Hong Kong (20%), China (16%) and Malaysia (10%). Florence Ng joined the firm to lead creative in China, while Ali Grayeli came aboard from Uber as regional ECD, while Uff

Taufek and Emmanuel Caisse took on senior digital and analytics roles in China and Southeast Asia, respectively. And investment in talent and training has focused on numerous initiatives to help the firm become a more nimble creative player in today's integrated marketing communications landscape.

The work, unsurprisingly, reflects the level of innovation that has seen Weber Shandwick outstrip all of its global network rivals over the past few years. For Alba Chunkuk, the firm developed an emotive campaign that heightened awareness of the plight of Korea's part-time workers. For Nescafe Dolce Gusto, it created a WeChat campaign that drove interest and sales. For Ocean Spray, there was influencer activity to ignite awareness and drive ecommerce sales. For Abbott, there was a video series that highlighted how older parents have not lost sight of their dreams. And for Janssen, the firm challenged the standards of mental health across the region, spurring governments to take action. — AS

Finalists

EDELMAN (INDEPENDENT)

While Edelman's Asia-Pacific revenues only grew 1% during its 2017 fiscal year, the firm's regional offering remains one of the most dynamic in the region, encompassing considerable geographic breadth (1,340 employees across 11 markets) along with service depth in such areas as digital, research and creative. Indeed, the agency has restructured its operations to noticeable effect in the region, a process that continues despite the departure of APACMEA CEO David Brain — with Edelman 'collapsing' back into an Asia-Pacific structure that is built around two key practice areas, brand and reputation.

Edelman remains in safe hands under chief operating officer Bob Grove, who has spent more than a decade

with the agency. Grove is supported by vice-chairman (reputation) Iain Twine, another agency veteran; and, vice-chairman (brand) Rupen Desai, one of a number of imports from the advertising industry, as Edelman attempts to elevate its creative capabilities to better compete with advertising and digital agencies for integrated briefs. The regional leadership team also includes global vice-chair of technology, sectors and innovation Jonathan Hargreaves; digital president Gavin Coombes; and, performance EVP Martin Shaw. Meanwhile, it is worth noting just how many of Edelman's senior figures come from a 'non-PR' background — including former Starcom director Joanna Poulton, ex-Saatchi Singapore CEO Celevel Butler; former Dentsu Indonesia CEO Bobby Arthawan; ex-Reliance Jio brand lead Himanshu Saxena; former McCann Mumbai ECD Sachin Talwalkar; and ex-MullenLowe Profero China MD Jackie Xu Rui.

As such, Edelman's growth in the region (where it is forecasting 10% expansion for the current fiscal year) represents a bet on what it calls 'communications marketing', where earned media ideas are brought to life across the full spectrum of marketing communications. It is not a particularly controversial idea, but neither is it especially easy, given the current expectations of PR agencies and the communications directors that they typically work with. Still, the best of Edelman's work indicates that it has been able to bring this concept to fruition, via campaigns for iRobot (integrated work to launch the brand in China); Pond's (a global influencer program); Joie (thought leadership built on visual storytelling); Miranda (award-winning creative work around parental pressure); and Samsung (using AR to promote swimming safety). Even on the more traditional reputation side, the work reflects an ability to innovate, for such clients as ASEAN, Janssen, Vinci Airports, and

AstraZeneca — and there has also been standout analytics work for Barclays, STB and Stop the Traffic.

Accordingly, the network's portfolio across practices is well balanced across corporate and consumer, alongside a strong commitment to both professional development (590 training courses across the region) and thought leadership (from the Trust Barometer to the Cultural Connections initiative). The firm's client roster remains stronger than most, including multi-market accounts such as Adobe, AstraZeneca, California Almonds, GSK, HP, Mars, PayPal, Samsung, Shell, Symantec, Tata and Unilever while there was significant new business from 3M, Alibaba, Chobani, iRobot, Legoland Malaysia, Nissan, Sabre, Telkom Indonesia and Tink Labs. — AS

H+K STRATEGIES (WPP)

Hill+Knowlton Strategies was one of the first US multinationals to expand into Asia, and over the best part of six decades in the region it has certainly experienced its shares of ups and downs—establishing itself as a go-to firm for corporate reputation work and crises, the suffering disproportionately during the Asian flu and dot-com downturns—but the past couple of years have seen the firm on the upswing again, and with 16 offices across nine countries (Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand), now supplemented by two offices of digital content brand Rice5, it covers the entire region as effectively as anyone.

The firm has certainly not abandoned the strategic corporate and public affairs business that has always been its strength, but under the veteran leadership of Viv Lines—who has brought in forward-looking creative and content talent like Felix Fei in China, Thomas Goh in Singapore and Mark Leong in Japan—it has been developing a more integrated,

content-driven approach to consumer, technology and digital work.

That transformation has been paying off with some big new business successes over the past 12 months, being named global agency of record for Daillan's Wanda Group, extending its seven-year relationship with LG Electronics, and providing PyeongChang 2018's with international support. Other additions included Avon, Crocs, Dianrong, Huawei, Haier Electronics, TCL, UnionPay, and WWE, while the firm also managed impressive retention, continuing its work for ANA, Coca-Cola, Ford, HSBC, Microsoft, Nikon, Rolex, Schneider Electric, and Singapore Tourism.

The Singapore office enjoyed a particularly strong year under Michelle Tham (up 33% for the year), while the Greater China operation remains the largest regional operation, increasingly exporting work around the world. — PH

MSL ASIA (PUBLICIS COMMUNICATIONS)

While much of MSL's recent global development has been dominated by its ongoing integration within the broader Publicis Communications group, the agency's business performance remains led by Asia-Pacific, the clear standout across its four global regions. Asia-Pacific CEO Glenn Osaki has overseen a remarkable uplift in MSL's regional fortunes, from a 15-person startup in China in 2005 to more than 1,500 staff working across 41 offices in the region, bolstered by the recent acquisition of the Herd Agency in Australia. That puts MSL (at around €160m) in contention with Ogilvy PR as the region's biggest PR firm, after growing another 16% in 2016, with 12% forecast for 2017, led by excellent performances by China (+15%), India (+13%), Japan (+28%), and Hong Kong (+61%).

Much of the growth is being powered by existing clients (+19%) such as P&G, Netflix, Ikea, UT, Hyundai, Tourism Mexico and Volkswagen, while there was also new multi market business AkzoNobel, Alibaba and ABInbev, to go with plenty of new assignments in local markets — including Yili, Allergan, Hfax.com, Madame Tussauds, Anbang Insurance and BHP Billiton (China); Swisse, Tiger, EA Mobile, Melco Crown and Heineken (Hong Kong); Taitra (Taiwan); SABMiller, Airbnb, Unilever, Mondelez and Coca-Cola (India); Continental, Boston Scientific and Keurig (Japan); Zara and Electrolux (Vietnam); and Downy, MeadJohnson and Disney (Thailand). Increased integration with other Publicis companies is also helping — helping propel 80 new client relationships, including McDonald's, Philip Morris, Takeda and Bacardi.

The firm's burgeoning digital capabilities have been at the heart of its success. The agency's i3 methodology starts with insight (there has been a significant investment in data and analytics), proceeds through integration (which means engaging consumers and other stakeholders through a wide range of digital and social content and non-traditional channels), and ends with impact. And MSL's Conversation2Commerce platform — which integrates of paid, owned and shopper media to add scale, measurability and targeting to the firm's earned media coverage, helping to turn conversations into commercial success — has essentially been adopted across the industry. In Australia, meanwhile, Herd MSL brings the proprietary ROAR measurement system, which should add more heft to the agency's insights and analytics capabilities.

MSL also makes much of the fact that 60% of its office leaders are female, perhaps a reaction to the abrupt departure and subsequent gender discrimination claim by former

Greater China CEO Faith Brewitt. That has since been resolved, and it is worth noting that MSL's existing leaders include China MD Daisy Zhu, 20:20 MSL MD Amrit Ahuja, Australia CEO Vanessa Liell, Singapore MDs Suya Kim and Fabienne Balleux, Vietnam chair Mai Huong, and Sri Lanka director Caryll Van Dort — comfortably giving the network the highest proportion of female leaders of any of the major firms in Asia-Pacific.

It is also worth noting that MSL's footprint extends well beyond the core agency, including China specialist Genedigi; experiential agency Luminous; tech firm 20:20 in India; and corporate agencies Publicis Consultants and CNC. As such, the work reflects a clear flair for integration — it is just a shame that new Publicis Groupe CEO Arthur Sadoun has decided not to enter any of it into peer-reviewed award competitions for the current 12-month period. — AS

OGILVY PR (WPP)

With fee income estimated at around \$165m following high single-digit growth last year, Ogilvy PR continues to serve as the benchmark by which other regional networks are measured in Asia-Pacific. Indeed the WPP agency's Asia-Pacific revenue overtook its US earnings some years ago and it also functions as the largest profit contributor to Ogilvy group in many markets, reflected by the number of Ogilvy PR executives that now lead the broader group in such key markets as Shanghai (Debby Cheung), Beijing (Selina Teng), Guangzhou (Frangelica Liang), and Vietnam (Dieucam Nguyen).

Under the leadership of agency veteran Scott Kronick, Ogilvy PR now has more than 1,200 staff working across 32 offices in 15 countries, giving it the largest regional footprint of the MNC firms, led by particular strength in Greater China, Australia, Korea, the Philippines and Southeast Asia. There has been particular

attention paid to Ogilvy PR's integrated offering, which includes a close working relationship with sister agencies Ogilvy & Mather and Ogilvy One, and a formidable digital and social media practice under the Social@Ogilvy banner. The client list includes integrated relationships with Nestle, Wonderful Indonesia, IHG, British Airways, Unilever, Amex, Coca-Cola, IBM, Ford, Huawei, UPS and NSCS, while there was also notable new business from the Xian

Government, British Council, Kingenta, Sony Music, Adidas, MediaHeal, VipKid, Ziroom, Porsche, China's Ministry of Culture, Bright Dairy, Chunghwa Telecom, AstraZeneca and Hilton.

Ogilvy's thought leadership efforts also remain in strong shape, whether sponsoring the first Asian AMEC Summit, leading Chinese outbound investment efforts, or stepping up its behavioural science initiatives. And

there is a significant commitment to strategic planning ('Ogilvy Brains Community') and talent management and development. The work remains cutting-edge, evidenced by Ogilvy PR's continued success at award shows, via such campaigns as UPS United Problem Solvers, Huawei 'Sing Your Unsent Messages', changing HK's ivory laws for the WWF, returning Indonesia's Bukalapak to relevance, and reviving Intel sales in China.— AS

Asia-Pacific Regional Consultancies of the Year (Midsized)

Winner

RUDER FINN (INDEPENDENT)

A perennial contender for Consumer Consultancy of the Year in Asia-Pacific, Ruder Finn's growth in the region is increasingly propelled by practices beyond its core luxury and automotive strength in China. With regional revenue of more than \$30m, the firm can now call on a corporate capability that is increasingly sophisticated, helping it net new business from the likes of Prudential, Faurecia, Kering Group, L'Oréal (CSR), Penta Hotels and Sembcorp. There has also been growth for Chinese municipalities/provinces such as the Guangzhou Municipal Government (for FDI) and Sanya (for tourism), with Ruder Finn continuing to benefit from a China operation that also features the RF Thunder brand consultancy. Meanwhile, the RFI Daylight digital offering is as advanced as any in the region, featuring a particularly impressive range of products and tools in such areas as data analytics, risk management and crisis simulation, fuelling digital growth of 50%.

All of which helps to explain why Ruder Finn has grown even stronger over the past 18 months, with revenues up 10% in 2016 and forecast to grow by 15% in 2017. That makes Asia-Pacific, unsurprisingly, the fastest-growing of Ruder Finn's global

regions, with a formidable mainland China capability (offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou) complemented by a revitalized Hong Kong operation, a burgeoning presence in India, and a healthy pan-Asian network.

Regional chief Jean-Michel Dumont now oversees 450 staffers across the region, with around half of them based in mainland China. Hong Kong is now up to 60 people from 4 in 2015, with Dumont supported by other senior regional leaders such as Charles Lankester, David Ko, Radha Roy, Elan Shou and Kok Wing Tham. To support its growth, Ruder Finn has stepped up investment in its academy training program, and is also set to launch an operation in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, the firm's campaign work continues to win plaudits, notably via initiatives for AstraZeneca (via WeChat); Prudential's Relationship Index; Changi Airport; Visa; Volkswagen; Volvo; Audemars Piguet; Electrolux and Heineken. — AS

Finalists

COHN & WOLFE (WPP)

After a series of acquisitions in Southeast Asia, Greater China and India, Cohn & Wolfe ended 2015 with regional scale if not stability, thanks to steady turnover of its regional leadership. That turbulence appears

to have ended with the arrival of former Burson-Marsteller executive Matt Stafford to lead the region last year. Already Stafford has overseen a dramatic revival in the firm's regional fortunes, including 11% growth in 2016 and forecast expansion of 22% in 2017, taking Cohn & Wolfe to around \$22m in regional revenue. Stafford has also overhauled the leadership team, bringing in several executives who used to work with him at Burson to join Tiffany Bai in China, Zach James and Rishi Seth in India and Adrian Lee in Southeast Asia.

Around half of that comes from China, where the firm has 100 people and grew 21% in 2016. In India, the acquisition of highly rated agency Six Degrees has helped deliver scale and growth of 12% in 2016. Southeast Asia continues to remain the most mature of Cohn & Wolfe's markets, with around 90 people spread across offices in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and — most importantly — Singapore, which grew 8% in 2016. And in Hong Kong, a turnaround effort is paying off following years of decline, with the firm expected to double its size in 2017 after Stafford merged its P&L with Singapore.

Powering all of that has been an impressive new business haul, with a specific bent towards Chinese brands going global, given Stafford's lengthy experience on the Huawei account.

The Chinese telecoms giant is just one of Cohn & Wolfe's major wins in this regard, joining other names such as Midea, ZTE and Tencent. Elsewhere, there was the \$2m regional win of Dell/EMC, along with further new business from Golden Agri Resources, Coolpad, IHG China, China Fortune Land, Fila China, Dove China, PepsiCo India, Cambridge International, Watson's China, GE China, PurCotton China, Volkswagen, Qualcomm and Lamborghini.

And the campaign work also demonstrates considerable evolution. For Dell, Cohn & Wolfe devised a 13-country program across the region covering internal, marketing communications, regional digital, social media and analyst relations. Other multi-market initiatives include work for VMware, APP, LG, InterCall and Salesforce, while specific highlights include social media uplift for Pernod Ricard China, brand promotion for PurCotton, regional thought leadership for Tencent and integrated work for Google. — AS

GOLIN (IPG)

While the Golin brand has been present in Asia for the better part of two decades, it is only in recent years — under the leadership of global co-CEO Jon Hughes — that the agency has made credible strides in turning itself from a federation of unrelated local offices into a cohesive network that aspires to the same kind of performance demonstrated by Golin's operations in Western markets. Hughes, having previously led Golin in the UK, was one of the architects of the firm's widely-imitated G4 model, which restructured its operations around specialist areas of expertise. Since taking charge of Asia-Pacific in 2013, he has brought that same mentality to a much less developed set of markets, and progress is clear. The G4 model has now been deployed across all Asia-Pacific offices, which includes owned operations in Hong Kong,

Singapore, China (bolstered by the acquisition of Magic Group), India and Taiwan, up around 9% in 2016 to an estimated \$20m in revenue, with a further 15% expansion forecast for 2017.

80% of Golin's top clients are now multi-market, marking a considerable advance on the situation in 2013. And around 40% of the firm's business now involves digital/content, also encouraging from a network that was previously defined around fairly traditional corporate activity. Golin's capabilities now also include genuine strength in consumer and technology, demonstrated by new business from Hyatt, Porsche, Oracle, Qatar Airways, Mattel, and Micron, who join an existing client roster that features Atlantis Sanya, Chinachem Group, Lux, Nestle, Starbucks, Zespri, Boehringer Ingelheim and Heineken. In terms of markets, much of the growth was led by Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, supported by a strong of new hires including Hong Kong MD Jane Morgan and Taiwan MD Terry Chiang.

Perhaps the clearest sign of Golin's transformation, though, comes from its work for such clients as Hyatt, Twitter, LinkedIn, Porsche and Ecovacs — all of which showcases the benefits of the G4 approach. For LinkedIn, Golin created a video series highlighting how LinkedIn helps identify the right talent, while for Mattel, the firm developed a parenting platform to encourage mothers to play with their children more. — AS

STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS GROUP (INDEPENDENT)

It is now 22 years since Richard Tsang launched Strategic Public Relations Group in Hong Kong, and while it has expanded into a network of 10 offices across Asia and established capabilities in consumer marketing and corporate social responsibility, it remains best known as a market leader in the financial

communications space in what remains one of the world's most dynamic business centers: consistently ranking among the region's top 20 M&A advisors and dominating the IPO business, with 10 new listings in 2016 (taking it past the 350 mark).

Longtime clients include Fitbit, Google, H3C, Hong Kong Deposit Protection Board, Hershey, Lenovo, Microsoft, Melco, P&G and UC Rusal, and there was new business over the past year from the likes of ABM AMRO Bank Hong Kong, Asiaray Media Group, Fox Networks, GuocoLand, Land Transport Authority, Lee Tung Avenue, Merck, Nippon, Puma, World Ventures. In terms of capabilities, SPRG made an acquisition to expand its public affairs offering, delivered environmental and social governance reports for several clients, and has continued to expand its digital and social expertise.

The firm now has 300 employees across Asia, generating fee income in excess of \$22 million, making it one of the largest independents in the firm—and perhaps the Asia-based agency with a geographic network—there are offices in Hong Kong, China (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou), Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia—that can offer coverage to rival the western multinationals. It continues to differentiate itself by its focus on a culture where local staff can flourish (15 members of the management team have been with SPRG for 15 years or more, 15% of the 300 staff have been with the firm for a decade) and on a philosophy of giving back to the community that has seen the agency reap numerous awards for its own corporate social responsibility initiatives.

TEXT100 (NEXT15)

Text100's 35-year technology heritage has always given it an edge on many of its rivals — particularly in Asia-Pacific, where a 20-year-old presence translates into strategic depth in key markets across India, Australia,

Southeast Asia and Greater China. And while the firm's 'Vision 2020' global restructuring has dominated the headlines, a quiet transformation is also underway in Asia under the leadership of new regional chief Lee Nugent.

Overall revenues grew 7% to around \$20m in 2016, with profits up 24% to around \$3.6m from 313 staffers in the region. There was significant new business (much of it multi-market) from Red Hat, NetApp, Rolls Royce, China Telecom, Nvidia, Alibaba, Bosch, Harman, Netsuite and TVS Motors — joining an existing client roster that features IBM, Adobe, Lenovo, Cisco, Four Seasons, DHL, Telenor, Swift, Ikea and Gartner.

In particular, the firm has invested considerable resources into talent

and training, enhancing its leadership across creative, insight/ analytics and business development. Always renowned for its culture, former regional director Anne Costello now oversees global people development from Australia, while the regional leadership team also includes Malaysia and mainland China head Meiling Yeow; Rosemary Merz in Hong Kong; and Singapore leader Marc Ha.

Text100's commitment to innovation continues to stand out across an in-house service offering that features strategy, content, PR, social media, and creative technology. Last year, for example, the firm launched a dynamic newsroom that features trackable assets, social sharing, SEO, content retargeting and mobile

optimisation. And the firm's digital capabilities remain a notch above many of its rivals, evidenced by a range of impressive campaigns. For Roam-E, Text100 won a SABRE Award for its work across brand development, content, email, social, paid and influencer management, which helped the flying selfie gadget book more than 250k in indicative orders from 15 countries. Text100 also helps to demystify IBM's Watson by tackling Australia's melanoma challenge, directly generating \$5.6m in revenue. Finally, for TeamIndus, Text100 developed a storytelling effort that helped raise \$70m in a bid to put India's first spacecraft on the moon in 2018. — AS

Australasian PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

HERD MSL (PUBLICIS COMMUNICATIONS)

The Herd Agency is a new brand, but it includes some familiar faces from previous iterations of this list, since it was formed last year by the coming together of public relations brands N2N (best known for its business-to-business technology expertise, and celebrating its 20th anniversary) and Fuel (with more of a consumer focus), and the integration of social media specialist Touch Creative to create a single agency with 50 people and fee income of around \$7.5 million. In mid-2017 the firm was acquired by Publicis Groupe, making it part of MSL's Asia-Pacific footprint.

The firm's position in the forefront of digital communications is made clear by the fact that founder Jamie Verco also continues to serve as head of digital, and by the growth of Touch Creative, now a nine-person content team that offers design and video production services. It is largely that expertise that has helped the agency expand beyond its technology roots

to offer strong capabilities in consumer and lifestyle, health, public affairs, financial and corporate communications—and win national and international awards.

So some of its best work last year was in unexpected categories: working with Primary Health Care to make IVF affordable for all Australians using content creation and social media channels; supporting ING Direct's Living Super Campaign using earned, owned and paid content to persuade Australians to plan for their retirement. New business, meanwhile, came from Carlton United Breweries, Docusign, Reserve Bank of Australia, and Xero, joining a roster that includes Airbnb, American Express, Facebook, Instagram, Opentable, Salesforce.com, and Schneider Electric. — PH

Finalists

CANNINGS PURPLE (WPP)

The fact that Cannings Purple has its headquarters in Perth provides a clue about its strength in the extractive industry sector, but even with a

Sydney office you might not as easily intuit that one of the region's strongest financial communications firms has emerged from Western Australia, where the economy has been sluggish in recent years.

Nevertheless, Cannings Purple—established in 2004 as Purple Communications, it changed its name after selling a 49% stake to STW (now part of WPP) in 2012—had built a thriving corporate and financial business in a challenging environment, filling a gap in the market that followed the decline of some of Australia's prominent financial PR pioneers. The firm has achieved an average growth rate of 18% over five years, and a headcount that has grown from 17 to 38 in the same period. The firm also earned recognition for its impressive crisis communications capabilities, working with mining contractor Macmahon Holdings after seven employees were abducted at gunpoint in Nigeria, tamping down

media hysteria to help secure their safe release.

Beyond all those business metrics (an impressive showing in the M&A rankings, and recognition as the leading lobbyist in Western Australia), Cannings Purple is known for a collaborative, team-first culture, which was undoubtedly a factor in attracting some impressive new talent last year: former Deloitte chairman Keith Jones joined to chair the board; business journalist Peter Klinger came on board to strengthen IR capabilities; stakeholder engagement specialist Charlie Wilson-Clark joined the corporate affairs team. — PH

SEFIANI COMMUNICATIONS GROUP (INDEPENDENT)

The past few years have seen a successful expansion and diversification strategy take shape at Sefiani, which has transformed itself from a relatively traditional corporate and financial communications specialist into something broader, more creative, and more modern without losing sight of the strategic thinking that has set the firm apart since its founded in 1999 by Robyn Sefiani, a veteran of 12 years in senior leadership roles with Edelman.

The firm continues to do both corporate and financial work and public affairs and issues management exceptionally well, often partnering with global leaders who lack their own presence in the Australian market. Crisis work last year spanned cyber-attacks and data breaches, product contamination and workplace disasters. Meanwhile, the group's consumer brand Kite—launched in 2014—continues to flourish, with the appointment of Klick Communications veteran Lori Susko as GM and director of integration.

Major clients include global organisations MetLife, Allen & Overy, ARUP and Hotels.com; Australian market leaders HCF Australia, Vita

Group, McGrathNicol, Crescent Wealth, and The Tax Institute; Asian property developers UEM Sunrise and M&L Hospitality; peer-to-peer disruptor RateSetter; Teachers Mutual Bank, Turks Lawyers and Foodbank NSW. New additions include REST Industry Super (Australia's largest industry superannuation fund by membership), AMP Capital, Expedia LPS, Rabobank, Bright Foods, and many more, helping to drive a 19% revenue increase over the past 12 months. — PH

SENATESHJ (INDEPENDENT)

Now in its 15th year, and with a team of 60 spanning offices in Australia and New Zealand, SenateSHJ is differentiated primarily by its ability to do the difficult things well. While it's business spans a range of practice areas, the firm is at its best handling difficult corporate reputation challenges (change management and employee engagement a particular focus), public affairs and issues management, and healthcare work.

The latter sector has seen considerable growth over the past 12 months under the leadership of Sue Cook, who previously led by Hill+Knowlton's Australian operations and the agency's Asia-Pacific healthcare practice. New healthcare business came from the likes of Bayer and National Disability Insurance, while the firm continues its work for GSK and Novartis, among others. Award-winning work included the "My Cancer, My Voice" CSR program and the "Facing the Health of Australians" initiative with The Australian Medicine Industry.

Elsewhere, there has been a focus on expanding digital and social capabilities: the expanded team includes former APN digital editor Irene Chapple and new head of digital in New Zealand, Erin Leuschke (a veteran of digital roles in the UK and Europe).

Overall growth last year was around 7.5%, with new business from a mix of public sector clients (the Ministry of Justice, the New Zealand Navy) and others (Bank of Melbourne, the University of Auckland). They join a roster that includes Statoil, Waste Management New Zealand, Australia Post, and the Department of Education & Training. The firm ended 2016 with fee income of more than \$10 million (US), one of the largest independents in the market. — PH

WEBER SHANDWICK (IPG)

Now firmly established as one of Australia's top agencies, Weber Shandwick's rise in Australia belies the notion that international agencies (with one or two exceptions) will always struggle against the country's homegrown hotshops. Weber Shandwick grew by almost 25% for the second consecutive year, taking its headcount to 50 across offices in Sydney and Melbourne, bolstered by Powell Tate's presence in one of the region's most sophisticated public affairs markets.

Under the leadership of Text 100 veteran Ava Lawler—who joined four years ago and has engineered much of the turnaround—the firm secured several impressive client assignments, including new business from CrowdStrike, Amazon Retail, Lenovo, ServiceNOW, Qualcomm and Corning, who join an existing roster that features. Aldi, Nespresso, MasterCard, Ocean Spray and Splunk. Meanwhile, Powell Tate has slotted in seamlessly, bringing in such clients as the Sir John Monash Foundation, Grocon, Carlton United Brewery and Asialink.

Lawler has also set about revamping the firm's talent profile, bringing in several new hires including across planning, tech/corporate and consumer. —AS

Greater China PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

OGILVY PR (WPP)

With fee income estimated at more than \$70m, Ogilvy PR remains the largest international PR consultancy in China, a position it has held with distinction for many years. The firm's regional CEO Scott Kronick, of course, made his name in the market, and remains based in Beijing, surrounded by a handpicked leadership team that has, for the most part, remained in place for more than a decade. That kind of stability continues to pay off for Ogilvy PR in Greater China, where Kronick and China/Hong Kong president Debby Cheung oversee a network that includes offices in Hong Kong, Taipei, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing and a new operation in Shenzhen, adding up to around 650 staffers, a little more than half of the network's total Asia-Pacific headcount.

After double-digit growth in 2015, Ogilvy PR weathered tougher market conditions in admirable fashion, posting a mid-single-digit uptick and bringing in new business from Kingenta Ecological Engineering Group, Sony Music, Ziroom, PRC Ministry of Culture, British Council, Astra Zeneca China, VIPKID, Adidas, Magneo, RNG, Philips, Chunghwa Telecom, CITIC Guoan Wine. The firm's reputation with large local players and outbound-focused government entities remains second to none, with a more recent assignment understood to include high-level support for the Xian Government's efforts to promote itself as an international investment destination. Those new accounts join an existing client roster that includes Nestle, CFA, Ford, IBM, Amazon, Tencent, Huawei, Adidas and the Chengdu Government.

But it is not just the agency's scale that impresses in China. The work continues to demonstrate the kind of 'next chapter' thinking that has been

in place for several years now, thanks to a 50-strong creative contingent and one of the strongest digital units in the market. In Hong Kong, for example, the firm's musically-themed work Huawei helped it win over sceptical consumers, while a WWF campaign ultimately convinced the SAR government to announce a total ban on ivory sales. For Intel, meanwhile, a PC refresh effort in conjunction with World of Warcraft reversed years of decline and resulted in increased sales.

Meanwhile, Ogilvy's focus on upgrading its planning, products and services continues to bear fruit. It is worth noting that, while the broader group grapples with the challenges of becoming one agency, Ogilvy PR is already a central presence at Ogilvy China, evidenced by the senior roles held by Cheung (who oversees Shanghai) and Ogilvy & Mather Beijing president Selina Teng. — AS

Finalists

BLUEFOCUS DIGITAL (BLUEFOCUS COMMUNICATIONS GROUP)

Since its launch in 1996 (then known as Blue Focus PR), Oscar Zhao's company has grown into the largest public relations consultancy in China and one of the top 10 public relations businesses in the world, with 2016 fee income (per our 2017 Top 250 ranking) of close to \$270 million—up by 17% last year.

Today, BlueFocus Digital Marketing Agency is the main subsidiary of the BlueFocus Communication Group in China, employing 1,300 people and offering a unique blend of digital marketing and public relations services in China across offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Xi'an. The firm is led by CEO Richard Jiao, supported by COO Stanley Xiao, chief strategy officer Yorf Guo, VP Bruce Zhu and SVP Donna Li. Key new hires last year

included chief technology officer Su Zuan and Otype VP River Wu.

As such, it represents many of the country's largest companies (Lenovo, Baidu, JD.com, Tencent, FAW-Volkswagen, Volvo, Canon, GAC Toyota and NETS). New business over the past 12 months came from Bybo Dental Group, Ferrero, Nestle, WMF, China UnionPay, Chevron, L'Oréal, vivo, Lianjia and 5i5j.

That helped BlueFocus Digital grow its revenues by 8.9% in 2016, despite a challenging market that included many clients looking to optimise their marketing budget. In response, BlueFocus has built a more modern purchasing and operation department, supported by upgraded client servicing capabilities. The firm has also stepped up its creative capabilities, because of the demands placed on its digital work. A central creative team is supported by investments across big data, artificial intelligence and cloud technology, reflecting BlueFocus shift towards digital CRM and social media marketing.

High-profile work includes developing Infini's customer loyalty platform, a mobile effort that leveraged big data to optimise the carmaker's marketing experience and led to a substantial increase in owners' usage. For Baidu, meanwhile, BlueFocus supported the transformation of visual art into music via artificial intelligence, and also developed an AR-fuelled restoration campaign of nine city gates in old Beijing. — AS

MSL (PUBLICIS COMMUNICATIONS)

Having made three very different acquisitions in China—strategic communications consultancy Eastwei, events-driven company Luminous Experiential, and digital marketing and PR firm Genedigi—it has taken a while for MSL's operations in Asia's most dynamic market to mesh, but despite the fact

that the latter two firms retain their original brands, it is becoming increasingly difficult for competitors to pretend that the Publicis-owned agency is not now a major player in the market, uniquely positioned to provide both top level strategic counsel and local market execution that includes 750 professionals in 11 Greater China offices.

Growth over the past 12 months reached 16% despite the economic downturn, along with further 24% expansion during the first half of 2017. Much of that was propelled by a stellar new business haul, which included Yili, Volkswagen, Allergan, Madame Tussauds, Hfax, BHP Billiton, UGG, JD.com and AB InBev in China; Taitra, Princess Cruises, Orient Europharma and Chungwha Telecom in Taiwan; and Swisse, Tiger, EA Mobile, Melco Crown Entertainment, Heineken, Marriott, China Mobile, Coca-Cola and Alibaba in Hong Kong.

An increasing proportion of those assignments, meanwhile, featured integration with sibling firms, in line with the 'Power of One' philosophy that sees MSL sit within the Publicis Communications P&L. And the firm's burgeoning digital capabilities continue to feature at the heart of its success, bolstered by an i3 planning methodology and investment in the high-profile Conversation2Commerce platform, which has already helped develop cutting-edge work for P&G.

That was not the only campaign highlight for MSL in Greater China. For Heineken Hong Kong, the firm's 'Shape Your City' effort created an illuminated tram bar that helped spur the market leader to a 17.3% sales uptick; the innovative Air Ink campaign for Tiger Beer, meanwhile, turned carbon-rich soot into useable ink; Whisper's #LikeAGirl Butterfly initiative addressed the critical issue of puberty education for Chinese girls; and, Ikea's 'Find Your Extraordinary' helped galvanise its

Chinese workforce via an impressive employee engagement effort.

The diversity of MSL's leadership team is also worth noting, with key figures including China MD Daisy Zhu and Hong Kong GM Terence Yam, although the gender discrimination claim filed by former Greater China CEO Faith Brewitt cast a shadow over the firm's efforts on this score. — AS

RED BRIDGE COMMUNICATIONS (WE COMMUNICATIONS)

Red Bridge's rapid rise to prominence since its 2009 launch included winning this category last year, so it came as little surprise when the firm was snapped up by WE Communications in early 2017. And while ownership has changed, the qualities that have made Red Bridge such as unique force in the market are thankfully intact, under the able leadership of founder Penny Burgess, managing partner Nicky Wang and associate director Maho Saito. In particular, Red Bridge has established itself as something of a rarity in the China market — an independent agency that has demonstrated an ability to win big business without the sometimes cumbersome scale that is often required of the country's most successful firms.

Growth in 2016 again shone, with the firm up around 20% to almost RMB25m, drawn from 55 staffers in Shanghai that work across corporate and brand marketing. A profit margin of 31% attests to Red Bridge's successful progression, as do a few other key stats — 100% client retention and an 84% new business conversion rate. The latter included new assignments for WeWork, Taylormade, BridgeClimb, Australian Fashion Week, Cartier, Lululemon, ROLI, Thomas Cook, Schroeders and University Technology Sydney, who join an existing roster that features Value Retail (China & Europe), Melia Hotels & Resorts, Forever 21, DFS, Ted

Baker, Soneva Group, Bloom & Grow, UTS Insearch and Revolve.

That performance, of course, has come despite a slowdown in the market, with Red Bridge addressing this issue by reinforcing its integrated capabilities and focusing on premium brands that target China's middle class. That includes a flair for healthier sectors such as outbound tourism, sports/wellness and corporate. Red Bridge also increased its training budget by 50% and developed a new integrated planning process, helping it to become the only Greater China agency shortlisted in our Best National Agency to Work For category last year.

Campaign highlights included Melia's '365 days of travel', which won over China travellers on a limited budget; the integrated 'Ensemble in China' campaign that helped Forever21 create a distinct brand positioning in China; and 'Stylist in Residence' for Value Retail Europe, another outbound tourism effort. Now backed by investment from WE Communications, it will be intriguing to see how Red Bridge develops its offering in the years to come. — AS

WEBER SHANDWICK (IPG)

Weber Shandwick has posted impressive regional growth over the past three years and Greater China exerts a compelling influence over that expansion, with the sub-region accounting for 51% of regional revenues. More than a third comes from mainland China, where growth slid in line with a tougher market to around 7%, albeit during a year when Weber Shandwick attempted to reset its capabilities around a much clearer focus on digital and creative. The firm now has 510 people across offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Taiwan and Hong Kong, with the latter market continuing to power ahead with another year of double-digit growth, making it one of the SAR's biggest PR firms.

Under the leadership of chairman David Liu and president Darren Burns, China has established itself as a global innovation centre for Weber Shandwick, thanks in large part to the C3 platform that connects content to commerce. The firm has also developed an influencer management tool called Weber Shandwick Kloud Network, and has worked hard to make inroads into integrated digital and creative assignments, hiring senior talent across analytics and creative. Accordingly, there was new business (plenty of it purely digital) from

Massimmo Dutti, TAL, GSK, BYD, Hyatt, Royal Caribbean, Garrett Popcorn Shops, Vanguard and Newell Rubbermaid, joining an existing client roster that features Mars, SGM/GM, Mercedes-Benz, Nike, MasterCard, ExxonMobil, Amazon and Amore.

All of those efforts helped Weber Shandwick shoot up the R3 rankings for PR agency perceptions in the country, bolstered, no doubt, by some eye-catching campaigns for Nescafe Dolce Gusto (a successful social and ecommerce initiative);

Ocean Spray (igniting awareness of cranberries and driving online sales by 50%); and, Abbott (focusing on parents dreams in Taiwan for nutritional supplement Ensure).

Meanwhile, under the leadership of Albert Shu, Hong Kong continued to motor along, growing 12% — its seventh consecutive year of double-digit growth. New business included Facebook, Nasdaq, Tencent and Vanguard, while the firm retained Abbott, AXA, HK Jockey Club, MasterCard, Pfizer, Samsung and Wynn Resorts. — AS

India PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

GENESIS BURSON-MARSTELLER (WPP)

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2017, it is worth pausing to take stock of Genesis Burson-Marsteller's progress as one of the pioneers of India's relatively youthful PR industry. While other firms have fallen by the wayside, GBM remains as relevant as ever, with founder Prema Sagar continuing to oversee a stable leadership team that includes president Nikhil Dey, COO Atul Sharma and CMO Deepshikha Dharmaraj. And while GBM may have parted ways with its PepsiCo client, the firm rebounded in fine style, winning big assignments from Diageo, Microsoft, Zee, Uber, Wrigley/Mars, Star Sports, AmEx, Monsanto and HP.

All of which added up to 18% topline growth in 2016, with a similar increase forecast for 2017. Those are impressive numbers, and they reflect the evolution of GBM's work beyond corporate, financial and public affairs into digital, via a thriving content studio and design operation that is built on realtime apps and intelligence, for a client roster that also includes L'Oreal, Ford, GE, Fitbit, Tourism New Zealand and Tetra Pak.

The firm's focus on training, meanwhile, remains arguably the strongest in the market, a legacy of the Associate Learning Programme which has developed many of India's PR leaders since it began 13 years ago. And there was considerable disciplinary expansion — of its brand/consumer practice into sports & entertainment; of its telecoms and tech practice into distinct consumer tech and enterprise tech units; and the launch of a specialist government business practice that works for Make In India, MyGov.in and PHFI.

The work bears out the success of GBM's approach. The firm took top honours at the SABRE Awards South Asia for its inspiring 'Back to Work' campaign for Medela, and also notched up a Gold for Colgate Palmolive.—AS

Finalists

ADFACTORS (INDEPENDENT)

Long regarded by Indian market watchers as the best corporate and financial specialist in the market (and one of the few local firms to meet western standards of governance), Adfactors was not until recently the first Indian firm that came to mind when the discussion turned to creativity. But the past few years have changed all that: last year, it won five

Asia-Pacific SABRE Awards (no agency won more) and this year it racked up 27 nominations in the South Asia competition, twice as many as its nearest competitor, winning trophies for a broad range of work that included assignments for State Bank of India, Mahindra & Mahindra, and online transportation company Ola.

Ola was just one of number of big wins in 2016, with others including Café Coffee Day, Bank of Maharashtra, the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Honda Motorcycles, M&M Financial Services, Tata Sons, and the Cellular Operators Association of India. The firm also continues to work for energy and infrastructure conglomerate Adani Group, Bombay Stock Exchange, Citibank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Jet Airways, Mahindra Group, and Vodafone India—a veritable who's who of Indian market leaders and giant multinationals, to whom it provides public and investor relations services at a high level.

With 2016 fee income of close to \$25 million—following three years of solid double-digit growth—Adfactors ranks among the top 75 PR agencies in our global ranking of PR firms, and the is the largest Indian firm on the list. It now has 575 people in 13 Indian

offices, with overseas outposts in Singapore, Sri Lanka, and the UAE.

— PH

AVIAN MEDIA (INDEPENDENT)

Avian Media's rise into one of India's top PR consultancies over the past 12 years has been a compelling affair, driven by the zeal of owners Nikhil Khanna and Nitin Mantri and supported by a leadership team that includes co-founder Manash Neog and regional head Neha Mehrotra. After growing 27% in 2015, Avian followed that up with stellar revenue expansion of 46% in 2016, underscoring its presence as the firm to beat in a range of competitive pitches, including wins from Amazon, AB InBev, Dell-EMC, McDonald's, Le Eco, Pernod Ricard, Sony Pictures, Facebook and Vistara, along with a high-profile role advising Tata Trusts through last year's acrimonious leadership crisis.

Those new clients join an existing roster that features Qualcomm, Phillips, eBay, Maruti Suzuki, Sony, Airbus, Google, Tourism Australia and Western Digital Technologies. All of which adds up to fee income of around \$4.3m in 2016, with more than 150 executives working across six offices. And like all of the best PR firms, Avian's growth has been driven by a unique culture, which starts with Khanna and Mantri's focus on values and deliverables. It is no surprise that Avian Media was named one of the Holmes Report's Best Agencies to Work For in Asia-Pacific last year — the firm has worked hard to cultivate a workplace that is collaborative, entrepreneurial and creative, bolstered by its SEED year-long induction programme.

Those values continue to drive Avian's progress into a world-class multidisciplinary firm with strength across consumer, corporate, public affairs and crisis. There is also a market-leading digital and content capability, and a commitment to thought leadership initiatives that has helped underpin its 'clients for life'

philosophy. Mantri, meanwhile, is a tireless presence on the industry scene, helping to elevate the profile of public relations in India and beyond.

And Avian's work has seen a dramatic uplift too, aided by the merger of its digital and content practices with experiential under the EXPD banner. Avian took home four trophies at the recent SABRE Awards South Asia, thanks to standout campaigns for SpiceJet (creating an integrated customer response framework); AB InBev (a responsible alcohol programme, and an internal certification effort for employees; and Qualcomm (the successful #DesignInIndia campaign).— AS

EDELMAN (INDEPENDENT)

Six years after its business was the lucrative Tata mandate, Edelman's expansion in India continues to impress, with the firm now numbering more than 400 people across nine offices, bolstered by particularly strong capabilities in creative and digital. That attitude, built around the network's 'communications marketing' philosophy, was only strengthened over the past 18 months as the firm brought in some heavy-hitters to deepen its creative and brand skills — notably for Reliance Jio exec Himanshu Saxena to lead brand, and former McCann adman Sachin Talwaker as regional ECD in Mumbai.

The work demonstrates that Edelman's investments are paying off. Mirinda's 'Release the Pressure' campaign was one of the region's best efforts, nothing up wins at the SABRE Awards and Cannes Lions, while there were also standout campaigns for Western Union (in research and planning) and the Canola Council of Canada. Neither should the focus on creative overlook the firm's growth, up by more than 15% to around \$17m for its most recent fiscal year, from a client roster that includes Tata, Unilever, HP, Shell, PayPal and the World Gold Council. — AS

MSL (WPP)

Two years after restructuring its leadership under Amit Misra, MSL India's transformation paid off to impressive effect in 2016, with revenues up 13% and profitability finally reaching the levels required of a Publicis Group agency. The agency, one of India's largest, has benefited from paring back its headcount to 550 people and focusing on bigger retainers for the likes of major new clients such as Coca-Cola, Mondelez and the Gates Foundation, who join an existing client roster that features Netflix, Facebook, Instagram, Airbnb, Uber, Dell, P&G, UTC, Airtel, Flipkart and Nvidia.

Yet it is not just the business growth that has helped fuel MSL's turnaround in India. In particular the firm has made good on its promise of developing a more integrated entity, embracing a structured strategic planning approach to help develop some impressive work for the likes of Changi Airport, Dell, Facebook, Coca-Cola, Digital India and Panasonic. With the MSL brand serving as the flagship operation, 20:20 MSL has benefited from a specific focus on technology and unicorns, while Publicis Consultants has developed a credible startup and innovation offering, bolstered by initiatives like Publicis Drugstore, which fosters relationships between large companies and early stage startups.

The diversity of the firm's talent pool reflects this approach. Amrit Ahuja was named MD of 20:20 MSL, while Viju George took charge of Publicis Consultants. New hires under them include senior executives in strategy, digital, video, data, and content — reflecting Misra's focus on building a more holistic set of skills. And there has been plenty of mentoring and training to support this shift, helping revenue from integrated business to grow 30% in 2016. — AS

Winner

PRAIN GLOBAL (INDEPENDENT)

One of the biggest chronic issues facing the people of Korea—let’s ignore the neighboring elephant in the room for now—is the fact that in 2015, South Korea recorded the lowest birth rate in the world. The aging population is the kind of long-term ticking time-bomb problems that democracies don’t often treat with the necessary urgency, so when the Korean Ministry of Health & Welfare decided to devote resources to focus on Korean family culture, including marriages, births, and parenthood, Prain Global needed to pull out all the stops. It didn’t disappoint, coming up with a multi-faceted campaign that won highest honors from the Korean PR Association

It’s no surprise that Prain was the go-to agency for this critical assignment. Since its founding in 2000 by Jason Yeo, the firm has grown to become one of the top 60 PR agencies in the world according to our global ranking, with its \$33 million fee income in 2016 making it the six largest Asia-based firms. With 220 employees, Prain is a leader in public sector work, major events, consumer marketing, entertainment, technology and healthcare, while adding digital and publishing capabilities that acknowledge changing client demands.

Last year was a strong one, with fee income rising by 15%. There was new business from Grand Hyatt, J Trust, World Vision, Boehringer Ingelheim, the Ministries of Health & Welfare and Culture, Tourism & Sports. The firm continues to work for the Seoul Metropolitan Government, Samsung Electronics, Canon, SK Telecom, GSK, Expedia and HP. While it remains focused on the Korean market, it works across North Asia in partnership with Japanese independent Sunny Side Up, and is

also a member of Ogilvy’s global network of affiliates. — PH

Finalists

DENSTU PR (DENTSU)

Founded in 1961, Dentsu Public Relations has probably experienced more change in the past five years than it did in its first 50, with the same forces of integration that are roiling the global communications business—the growing importance of digital and social media, the blurring of lines between earned, owned and paid platforms—having an impact in Japan, where PR has often been seen as a “poor relation” to the ad industry. At the same time, there is growing interest in PR from the public sector, thanks to the regional revitalization policies of the Abe administration and preparations for the upcoming 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

As the market leader, Dentsu has been both leading and benefiting from the changes in the Japanese market. It has continued to produce a wealth of thought leadership material, from its invaluable Guide to PR in Japan, to three published books in 2016 (on topics ranging from risk management to inbound tourism), to its new “attractiveness marketing” service, which analyzes products, people and corporate attractiveness across multiple stakeholder groups. Under the leadership of new CEO Kazunori Azeyanagi—a veteran of Dentsu Inc who took on the role last year—the firm also has more than 100 PR Society of Japan “certified” employees and a host of accredited planners.

The payoff is that Dentsu PR is flourishing in financial terms: its net sales—preferred to fee income as a metric in Japan—rose 3.5% to about ¥11.5 million last year, and its client list includes Starbucks Coffee Japan; Panasonic; the Japanese Ministries of

Foreign Affairs, Defense, Finance, and Health; Tokyo Metropolitan Government; and Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau. It has also been flourishing creatively, with 16 industry awards last year—including three SABRE trophies and two In2 SABRE awards. — PH

KPR & ASSOCIATES (INDEPENDENT)

With 100 people and fee income of close to \$10 million, KPR is not only one of the oldest independent public relations agencies in Korea (it was founded in 1989) but also one of the largest. It has also shown itself to be one of the most innovative in the market, anticipating changing client demands and responding to the decline of print media in Korea and the growing importance of digital and social channels by creating digital communications capabilities and launching the market’s most prominent Social Media Trend Report—now in its fourth year.

The past 12 months saw KPR respond to the blurring of media channels with the launch of collabo K, a new integrated marketing communications brand, which has been particularly effective in helping to attract large multidisciplinary assignments from the public sector, including several Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic projects as well as the Ad Stars Festival in Busan and the Busan One Asia Festival.

Other new business over the past 12 months has come from Continental Korea, Google Korea, Maserati, Red Cross Korea, Tencent, local financial technology company Webcash, and Banyan Tree. The firm continues to work for a mix of multinational and local clients such as 3M Korea, Airbus, Samsung Electronics, Kia Motors, CA Technologies, the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, Singapore Airlines, and Siemens, providing a full array of public relations services, including corporate and consumer, financial and public affairs. — PH

SUNNY SIDE UP (INDEPENDENT)

Like many Japanese companies, Sunny Side Up is gearing up for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. What sets the firm apart is that it has the expertise and heritage in sports marketing to deliver on its offer to “let us be your concierge.” The firm has been the official agency of the Tokyo Marathon since 2011, represents retired soccer star Hidetoshi Nakata and Olympic gold medalist swimmer Kosuke Kitajima, and supports numerous corporate clients in their sponsorship and event management.

Perhaps it all comes down to the firm’s refreshingly simple philosophy, “Let’s Have Fun,” because SSU also excels in the entertainment and event management space, working with the local government and other authorities in Shibuya on the “You Make Shibuya” event, brining public and private sectors together in the ward; supporting RockCorps for the fourth consecutive year as it staged a live performance in Fukushima.

With a team of close to 160, Sunny Side Up is now established as one of Japan’s leading independent agencies, with a client list that includes the Japanese operations of

Coca-Cola, Nestle, Getty Images, Logitech, LVMH, Shake Shack, and Australian eatery bills. New additions last year included ROLI, Kyobashi Edogrand, and the Shibuya Countdown Events. There was growth in new practice areas too, as video marketing and influencer management become increasingly important to public relations in the Japanese market. — PH

WEBER SHANDWICK (IPG)

Weber Shandwick’s Japanese operations can trace their roots back to 1959, when International PR—later acquired by what was then Shandwick—was first established. Its Korean presence is much more recent, with the office founded seven years ago, under the leadership of Edelman veteran Tyler Kim. But both of the North Asia offices have been on a similar trajectory in recent years, with Japan (+14%) and Korea (+15%) both submitting impressive performances in 2016 and 2017.

In Tokyo, the story continues to be about Weber Shandwick’s perseverance and ability to thrive despite challenging economic conditions. Success has come from expanding digital and social

capabilities in the local market, alongside a restructuring that has shifted the 60-person agency away from practice teams to taskforce units that feature more centralised services. New clients include Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics Committee, Expedia/Hotels.com, Visit Finland and Novo Nordisk, joining a client roster that already features Mattel, Facebook/Instagram, Mitsubishi Trust Bank, NTT, J-Power, JRA, Intel, FileMaker JFE and Yamaha.

In Seoul, which Kim has taken from a one-man office to a team of more than 70, growth has been fuelled by integrated marketing and specialist digital work, bolstered by senior hires across consumer, digital and content. New clients included Microsoft, Olympus Medical Equipment, LG Display, POSCO, Adobe, Amazon and Double Star, joining existing clients such as Samsung, Philips, California Walnut Commission, Facebook/Instagram, Goldman Sachs and MBK Partners. The Korean office’s campaign flair also stands out, demonstrated by the Alba Chankuk effort that changed perceptions of the country’s part-time workers. — AS

Southeast Asia PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

VERO (INDEPENDENT)

Now in its 10th year, Vero eye towards being the most future-oriented PR agency in ASEAN seems to be working as the firm now has offices across the region in Thailand, Singapore, Myanmar and Vietnam.

It was two years ago the firm made a pivot to expand its services to include “hard-core digital” offerings, and now, this segment of the business — which includes paid media, analytics and digital lead generation — makes up half of its revenue stream. Next the firm is preparing a virtual reality lab for clients. Vero has 40

professionals across the ASEAN region and grew 30 percent in both 2015 and 2016.

Additions to its client roster include Netflix, LG, Booking.com, Dell and Visa, among others, in addition to local companies in all of its markets. Notable work includes handling Dell’s social and digital responsibilities that resulted in a significant boost in engagement with audiences and Dell expanding the remit to include paid media. Following a crisis, Johnson Controls asked Vero to roll out a campaign to generate positive momentum, for their York brand resulting in a social campaign that expanded engagement in a notable

fashion. This year, the firm is releasing research on Myanmar — specifically on the media habits of people in Yangon. — AaS

Finalists

FORTUNE PR (INDEPENDENT)

Since 2011, Fortune PR—already one of the largest and most respected independent PR firms in South-East Asia—has transformed itself into a well-rounded 21st century

communications firm, supplementing its traditional media relations and events expertise with capabilities in digital and social media, advertising, and brand strategy, while staying true to its mission: “to improve quality of life and bring value through impactful communications” in the Indonesian market.

With a team of 60, and following 10% growth in 2016—despite continuing budget pressure in the market as a whole—the firm represents major multinationals such as Lenovo, Oracle, Syngenta, Royal Enfield and Hankook Tire, while new business last year came from VuClip, Mundipharma, Amadeus, Akamai, British Telecom and more.

Interesting work included raising public awareness of the lifestyle factors that can increase the risk of cancer on behalf of Mundipharma, with a Jakarta running event that emphasized the “courage and strength” of cancer survivors. — PH

KETCHUM (OMNICOM GROUP)

Ketchum’s progress in Singapore since acquiring aviation specialist Icon has been largely under-the-radar, but after 27% growth in 2016, the firm’s performance in the market certainly warrants greater visibility. Icon founder John Bailey oversees an operation that now number 30 people, which has expanded beyond aviation into travel and leisure, CPG, food, technology and, perhaps most notably, science communications — bolstered by what must be one of the market’s strongest issues and crisis capabilities.

Underpinning that growth has been considerable investment in a senior talent team that no includes creative & digital ECD Renee Bender, science communications director Rebecca Kan and deputy GM Judith Knight. Much of the expansion has been powered by P&G, for whom the science comms angle is an obvious fit, but there has also been new

business from HomeAway, Hilton, Leprino and Syngenta.

Campaign highlights included the #NeverFade effort for P&G’s Downy, an idea built for a longer-lasting fragrance innovation, and which has since been exported globally. — AS

SPARK COMMUNICATIONS (INDEPENDENT)

Managing director Tom Athey started Spark Communications 16 years ago without, he says, much of a business plan and a Thai market that at the time had very little history of or demand for public relations. An ex-pat from the Northeast of England with journalism experience in the region, Athey built the firm organically, through personal relationships and word-of-mouth, gaining a reputation for delivering on promises and operating with transparency and integrity.

As a result he has built a firm with \$2 million in fees (headquartered in Thailand but with operations in neighboring Myanmar) that remains, as he says, “independent but connected.” Clients include Visa, Emirates, Lenovo, and Under Armour, with new additions in 2016 such as Roche, Swarovski, and Asics. Highlights of the work over the past 12 months included the launch of the Dyson Supersonic hair dryer in South-East Asia, Swarovski’s “Brilliance for All” event, and the League of Champions 2017 e-sports event.

With key strengths in consumer products, technology and healthcare, the firm has supplemented its expertise over the past few years with digital and social media capabilities—a search engine optimization expertise was added last year—and the launch of a new company focused on recruitment needs in the region. — PH

WEBER SHANDWICK (IPG)

While Southeast Asia may only account for 15% of Weber Shandwick’s regional revenue, that still adds up to more than \$15m across offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, with each of the operations demonstrating impressive growth in 2016.

Singapore, the largest office with 76 people, registered topline growth of 11.5%, marking its 13th consecutive year of double-digit expansion. Much of that came from existing clients, thanks to an impressive top 20 client list that includes its biggest regional client MasterCard along with 25-year partner Emirates. But there was also new business from Netflix, Ericsson, AStar, DSMA, BNP Paribas WTA and Stanchart to go with an existing client roster that also features GM, Exxon, Facebook, Lend Lease, Spotify, Abbott and ION Orchard.

In Indonesia, a team of 28 generated growth of 15%, fuelled by a top 16 retainer list that works across multiple practices, and includes such names as Temasek, SIA, GM, MasterCard, Facebook and Citibank. There was new business from 3M, Grab, QNB and Instagram, along with expansion into design, paid media, events and talent management.

Malaysia (23 people) and Thailand (18 people) continued to register more modest growth. In Malaysia, the firm won two large pieces of business — Prasarana and Alliance Bank, while Thailand’s new business haul included Samsung, Royal Enfield, FedEx, Hotels.com, Skyscanner and Beko. — AS

Winner

ELEVEN (AUSTRALIA/TBWA)

Last year's Australasian Consultancy of the Year, continues its reign as one of the most creative agencies in one of the world's most creative PR regions. Indeed, Eleven actually managed to take things up a notch in 2016, winning every single one its pitches, including major consumer accounts such as McDonald's Australia, Campari Group, Crown Resorts and David Jones.

All of that helped power revenue, profits and headcount to record levels, with revenue and profit more than doubling. The firm retains a core belief in the power of public relations to drive conversations and cultural relevance, and continues to develop cutting-edge products and campaigns to support this vision, in particular the Disruption Live methodology of insights mining, open briefing and audience planning that has helped return some tremendous work for Lastminute.com.au, ANZ and MJ Bale. The agency also launched a Back\slash cultural capability that focuses on Instagram and daily video, powered by culture spotters from the broader TBWA global network.

Other new business included Australia Turf Club, Carousell, Schweppes and Lastminute, joining a client roster that features Tourism New Zealand, MJ Bale, Gatorade, ANZ, Philips and Krispy Kreme.

Roberto Pace has served as MD of Australia since mid-2015, helping to renew the firm's reputation for innovation, alongside new Melbourne-based MD Fee Townshend and GM Fiona Milliken. There is a strong focus on training and development, to immerse staff in relevant cultural trends, while a trainer was hired to shape bespoke programmes for individual staffers.

All of that paid off with some inspiring work. Lastminute.com.au's 'Cards of Spontaneity' gamified the travel experience via a bespoke card game and generated a significant uplift in web traffic. ANZ's #HoldTight, meanwhile, won two Bronze Lions at Cannes, designing a custom wearable tech wristband to promote inclusion and diversity. — AS

Finalists

DEVRIES GLOBAL (IPG)

The DeVries brand may be just five years old in Asia, but it launched with advantages few of its competitors have—the backing of global network Interpublic; a name that is among the leaders in consumer and lifestyle PR in the US (especially in fashion and beauty); a team of 40 professionals transferred from sister agency Weber Shandwick; and a large slice of P&G business.

If all of that enabled DeVries to hit the ground running in Asia, the momentum it has built since then is still very impressive. Under the leadership of regional managing director Andrew Vejarano, DeVries now has 80 people in the Greater China market (including Beijing, Shanghai and Taipei) supplemented by a smaller operation in Singapore. The leadership team was broadened this year with the addition of Lydia Shen (formerly of Cohn & Wolfe) as China MD, with Beijing VP Zoe Wu elevated to a newly-created role as regional VP of operations and business strategy across Asian markets.

The firm has also diversified its client base considerably. In addition to Olay, Pantene, Head & Shoulders and other P&G brands, DeVries now represents Lane Crawford and Zippo in the fashion and lifestyle space; China Telecom and Orange Financial in the consumer tech arena; New Balance, Nestle and Johnson's Baby

in the broader consumer realm—with new business over the past 12 months from Audi, Scoot and Excelsior Beauty, among others. It has been picking up awards too, for its SK-II "Dream Again" campaign strengthening the beauty brand's bond with female consumers, for the New Balance Luxe launch, and for its social media issues management campaign for Orange Financial.— PH

HISTORY WILL BE KIND (AUSTRALIA/INDEPENDENT)

With the lofty aspiration of "creating moments in history for clients," Australia's History Will Be Kind is a new player (the firm is only three years old) with a curiously ambitious selling proposition. Founder (and former Weber Shandwick Australia chief) EJ Granleese started the firm to manage reputations, raise profiles, launch products, and most interestingly, to start movements.

The people-first culture has resulted in growing the team by almost 50% to support more than 18 new business wins – standout new accounts include Google, YouTube, Randstad, Solotel Group and Village Roadshow. The firm's healthy margins indicates HWBK has set the foundation to become a major consumer player for years to come.

Of course, the firm has already made a mark. The client portfolio includes new wins Brown-Forman, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Flordis, Fox Home Entertainment, Football Federation Australia, Loans.com.au, Mindbox, Tom & Teddy, Southern Phone, SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium, in addition to existing clients Aspen Pharmacare, Cheapflights, Deepend, International Convention Centre Sydney, Maille - Unilever, Merlin Entertainments Group among others.

Notable work includes launching one of the country's largest infrastructure projects for ICC Sydney by creating a phased programme to reconfigure ICC Sydney's communications

ecosystem, and drove integrated communications using core story platforms which aligned with business objectives, engaged stakeholders and resonated across channels. Results included 1,200 media hits, 4.9% average engagement rate on social content and 150+ stakeholders activated. For Fox Home Entertainment, HWBK was charged with driving sales for the retail release of 'X-Men: Apocalypse' in a saturated market. Leveraging audience insights, the firm invited Australians to discover their inner mutant on 28 September (Mutant Day), deployed a bespoke 'mutant school' microsite to engage superfans, devised a stand out on-street activation and crafted targeted brand and influencer partnerships. Day one sales exceeded expectations by 17.5%. — AaS

POEM (AUSTRALIA/INDEPENDENT)

Launched just 18 months ago, Poem is defying expectations around the modern PR. The new firm calls itself Poem to represent Paid, Owned, Earned Media — reinforcing that its work is based on creative insights that are amplified through whatever channel fits best. This approach has lured top-shelf clients like Google, Expedia & Wotif, Movember, Tech21, Masterpet and Transport NSW.

Founders Rob Lowe and Matt Holmes have experience at some of the most notable PR and advertising shops across Australia and the UK — Cake,

Freud, Eleven PR and One Green Bean — giving them real insight beyond traditional PR. This is also reflected in the firm's work. For instance, the work for Alternative Meat Co. — a new plant based food product that looks, smells and tastes like meat — tapped into research that shows a growing number of Millennials choosing to eat less meat due to health, environmental or animal welfare reasons while also dealing with the stereotype that eschewing meat is 'unAustralian.'

The two-phase campaign involved going to a kebab shop and pranking meat fans by serving them their favourite kebabs using AMC products, then revealed the truth and filmed their reaction. The video was supported by statistics on the 'flexitarian trend', paid influencer, native advertising and Facebook media spend. The second phase challenged preconceptions that eating meat makes one more Australian. The team recreated MLA's early Australia Day 'lambassador' ads using Sam Kekovitch, rewrote the script and dressed Dave Hughes as the Prime Minister of Australia to make a playful point that 'it doesn't need to moo for you to be true blu'. — AaS

W ASIA (SINGAPORE/INDEPENDENT)

Fast-growing UK consumer PR firm W Communications launched its Asian operation in Singapore two years year, in a bid to bring its disruptive

mentality — based around the concept of 'creative commerce — to clients in the region. The early signs have been promising — the firm was named New Consultancy of the Year in 2016 — and W built sturdier foundations during the past 12 months, supported by the backing of its UK parent firm, one of the top agencies in that market.

Under the leadership of MD Annabel Fox, W has grown to a team of 12, with turnover tripling in 2016.

More importantly, the firm has displayed a penchant for working collaboratively with small brands in a bid to innovate beyond the region's tradition PR offerings. That has helped it net business from bigger brands too, including Princess Yachts, Moët Hennessy Diageo, Bawah Island, Park Hotel Group, Happn, PS Cafe, Ce La Vi, Festival Asia and Marc Jacobs Beauty. They join a client roster that also features MeatLiquor, AppNexus, Oxwell & Co, Foodpanda, Prudential and Kashmi.

While W's practice focus demonstrates clear strengths in F&B, travel and lifestyle, the firm's work has also expanded into consumer technology. And the quality of its work also stands out, not least the content it has developed for AppNexus. Meanwhile, W's 'Paper Lantern' campaign for unknown craft distiller Pozible helped spur not only heightened awareness but \$40k in sales in a month. — AS

Asia-Pacific Corporate PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

SPRG (INDEPENDENT)

It is now 22 years since Richard Tsang launched Strategic Public Relations Group in Hong Kong, and while it has expanded into a network of 10 offices across Asia and established capabilities in consumer marketing and corporate social responsibility, it remains best known as a market leader in the financial

communications space in what remains one of the world's most dynamic business centers: consistently ranking among the region's top 20 M&A advisors and dominating the IPO business, with 10 new listings in 2016 (taking it past the 350 mark).

Longtime clients include Fitbit, Google, H3C, Hong Kong Deposit Protection Board, Hershey, Lenovo,

Microsoft, Melco, P&G and UC Rusal, and there was new business over the past year from the likes of ABM AMRO Bank Hong Kong, Asiaray Media Group, Fox Networks, GuocoLand, Land Transport Authority, Lee Tung Avenue, Merck, Nippon, Puma, World Ventures. In terms of capabilities, SPRG made an acquisition to expand its public affairs offering, delivered environmental and social governance

reports for several clients, and has continued to expand its digital and social expertise.

The firm now has 300 employees across Asia, generating fee income in excess of \$22 million, making it one of the largest independents in the firm—and perhaps the Asia-based agency with a geographic network—there are offices in Hong Kong, China (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou), Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia—that can offer coverage to rival the western multinationals. It continues to differentiate itself by its focus on a culture where local staff can flourish (15 members of the management team have been with SPRG for 15 years or more, 15% of the 300 staff have been with the firm for a decade) and on a philosophy of giving back to the community that has seen the agency reap numerous awards for its own corporate social responsibility initiatives. — PH

Finalists

ALLISON+PARTNERS (MDC PARTNERS)

Four years since entering Asia via a deal with China's Wolf Group Asia, Allison+Partners has built a credible regional presence, bolstered by further acquisitions in China (Century PR) and, last year, Japan (Focus PR), along with expansion into Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Sydney, including the hire of former Upstream Asia co-founder Paul Mottram to lead its All Told content practice.

All of which added up to topline growth of almost 100% in 2016 to \$6.5m in revenue. One year after securing Corporate Consultancy of the Year honours, it is the firm's B2B capabilities that continue to catch the eye, especially in China, where it has 40 staffers working across such clients as Schneider Electric, Canola Council of Canada, Textron Aviation, Tencent, Baidu and iRobot. Across the region as a whole, there was also new business from Casarte, Avery Dennison, GlobalFoundries and Nu

Skin, joining a roster that features Bosch, Cisco, F5 Networks, Home Credit and UL.

Much of that has been driven by the firm's ability to provide credible senior-level reputation and issues management counsel to C-suite executives, thanks to the tireless efforts of China leaders David Wolf and Jerry Zhu. This has included overseas positioning work for Baidu and Tencent along with plenty of crisis and issues support. Meanwhile, Mottram's All Told unit has been the biggest driver of growth, bringing a digital storytelling approach to a range of assignments, including campaigns for UL, Cisco, Carousell, Textron Aviation, Schneider Electric and AIA.

In terms of thought leadership, furthermore, Wolf has cemented his reputation as a thought leader in the China market, with his book "Public Relations in China: Building and Defending Your Brand in the PRC," which argues that "few companies have found the right formula" in China. Allison is helping more and more of them figure out the right way to do that. — AS

APCO WORLDWIDE (INDEPENDENT)

Initially focused on market entry challenges in the Chinese market, expanding to offer its core public affairs and crisis management capabilities throughout South-East Asia, adding management consulting offerings in India, and working with governments on economic development and internal communications, APCO has brought its unique blend of strategic communications capabilities to Asia over the past decade. Today, about \$11.5 million of its \$120 million in global revenue and 165 of its 650 global consultants are spread across 11 offices in the region—and if growth has been modest in recent years, there is every reason to believe that the company's decision to remain independent, coupled with new

funding, will boost the Asia-Pacific region in the years ahead.

The past 12 months saw a host of new clients, with the Government of Guangzhou retaining the firm in China and for international markets, and major assignments from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Oculus, Marriott International, IKEA, Michelin, Elsevier, Janssen, and WhatsApp. The firm also expanded the scope of its work with the likes of the Rockefeller Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Walmart, Estée Lauder, Mars, Microsoft, Airbnb, Bayer, and MSD. While China continues to account for the majority of regional revenues, there has been good growth in Japan and India too.

And the nature of the work continues to set APCO apart from both multinational and local competitors: supporting Microsoft on IP competition guidelines in Korea and on government partnerships in China; facilitating consensus among nine of the world's largest food companies to help create Common Nutrition Criteria for children in India; leading Mars Petcare's government relations and stakeholder engagement strategy across Southeast Asia; elevating the Rockefeller Foundation's mission to close the energy access gap. — PH

CITADEL-MAGNUS (AUSTRALIA/ INDEPENDENT)

According to M&A authority mergermarket, the top five PR advisors on financial transactions in Asia last year included global specialists Brunswick, FTI, and Sard Verbinen, and full-service multinational Edelman. The fifth firm on the list (beating out Edelman for fourth place, as it happens, and working on 24 deals worth a combined \$4 billion) was Australian independent Citadel-Magnus, which despite being a relative minnow with just 20 people across its offices in Sydney and Perth has also worked on 18 IPOs worth \$5 billion since 2015 and can credibly claim to be the

leading independent corporate and financial specialist in Australia.

But Citadel-Magnus is more than just an M&A machine: only about a third of its revenues derive from the deals business, with the remainder coming from retained clients who draw on the firm's expertise in corporate communications, internal communications and change management, investor relations, crisis and issues management—and increasingly digital and social. Indeed, much of the growth over the past 12 months has come from the increasing need for outsourcing listed companies' IR operations and helping clients deal with increasing market activism.

Major clients include Amcor, The Star Group, CITIC Pacific, Brookfield, APN News & Media, Noble Group, and Aconex, with new business from Wise Tech Global, Vitaco, CYBG, Smart Group, Quick Service Restaurant, and V8 Super Cars contributing to revenues of about \$5.4 million (Australian).

But the company's real strength is a senior leadership team that combined entrepreneurial zeal with international experience: chairman

Martin DeBelle was a media director to the premier of New South Wales; managing directors Peter Brookes and John Gardner worked UK consultancy College Hill and international agencies GCI and Ogilvy respectively; founding partner Helen McCombie is a former journalist who was business editor for Sky News.

— PH

HONNER (AUSTRALIA/ INDEPENDENT)

A veteran of respected UK communications agency Fishburn, of Australian institutional investment journal Super Review, and of the banking sector in both the UK and Australia, Philippa Honner launched her own communications firm in 1997 and has built it into the leader in the financial services sector in Australia, with a team of close to 20 in Sydney (there are plans for an additional office in New York) serving a client portfolio that includes big-four bank NAB, \$55 billion superannuation fund UniSuper, and the world's largest listed hedge fund manager Man Group. A wealth of new business from clients such as Franklin Templeton, MoneyTree, Plato, Antipodes, Quantifeed, Bell Direct,

PM Capital, bfinance, and Antipodes helped fuel healthy growth last year.

Honner was recognized at the Financial Standard MAX Awards as PR Agency of the Year in 2016, having earlier been voted Australia's best agency by financial journalists, and it has built a reputation for thought leadership in the sector—and the media environment in particular—and partnering with international specialists to bring a global perspective to clients. In terms of expanding capabilities, Honner forged a strategic partnership with digital agency Spark Green to build websites and digital platforms to assist in content-led campaigns.

Last year, the firm provided Australian communications activity for the global announcement of the proposed merger between Henderson Global Investors and Janus Capital; was engaged by fund manager Antipodes Partners to manage the launch communications for its first listed investment company; and worked with Australian Ethical, the oldest and most successful ethical investment manager in Australia, to support its next phase of growth. — PH

Asia-Pacific Digital PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

BLUEFOCUS DIGITAL (BLUEFOCUS COMMUNICATION GROUP)

Since its launch in 1996 (then known as Blue Focus PR), Oscar Zhao's company has grown into the largest public relations consultancy in China and one of the top 10 public relations business in the world, with 2016 fee income (per our 2017 Top 250 ranking) of close to \$270 million—up by 17% last year.

Today, BlueFocus Digital Marketing Agency is the main subsidiary of the BlueFocus Communication Group in China, employing 1,300 people and offering a unique blend of digital

marketing and public relations services in China across offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Xi'an. The firm is led by CEO Richard Jiao, supported by COO Stanley Xiao, chief strategy officer Yorf Guo, VP Bruce Zhu and SVP Donna Li. Key new hires last year included chief technology officer Su Zuan and Otype VP River Wu.

As such, it represents many of the country's largest companies (Lenovo, Baidu, JD.com, Tencent, FAW-Volkswagen, Volvo, Canon, GAC Toyota and NETS). New business over the past 12 months came from Bybo Dental Group, Ferrero, Nestle,

WMF, China UnionPay, Chevron, L'Oréal, vivo, Lianjia and 5i5j.

That helped BlueFocus Digital grow its revenues by 8.9% in 2016, despite a challenging market that included many clients looking to optimise their marketing budget. In response, BlueFocus has built a more modern purchasing and operation department, supported by upgraded client servicing capabilities. The firm has also stepped up its creative capabilities, because of the demands placed on its digital work. A central creative team is supported by investments across big data, artificial intelligence and cloud technology, reflecting BlueFocus shift towards

digital CRM and social media marketing.

High-profile work includes developing Infinet's customer loyalty platform, a mobile effort that leveraged big data to optimise the carmaker's marketing experience and led to a substantial increase in owners' usage. For Baidu, meanwhile, BlueFocus supported the transformation of visual art into music via artificial intelligence, and also developed an AR-fuelled restoration campaign of nine city gates in old Beijing. — AS

Finalists

EDELMAN (INDEPENDENT)

Edelman's digital capabilities have always remained a notch above most of their rivals, and now account for more than 15% of the firm's revenues in Asia-Pacific, even if that number is slightly misleading because that's only the firm's pure-play digital activity. A broad restructuring has moved those capabilities into a horizontal construct that spans the firm's brand and reputation practices across all markets, led by performance Edelman digital president Gavin Coombes, who is supported by such executives as COO Stuart Edwards and performance EVP Martin Shaw.

That restructuring has ensured that all aspects of digital — including those more readily associated with advertising agencies — are delivered across Asia-Pacific. Edelman has invested significant sums in this initiative, across such specialist areas as search engine marketing, social media optimisation, paid media and measurement/analytics, building centralised hubs that feature skills and talent that each of its markets can tap into on a local basis.

Keeping with Edelman's pioneering spirit, meanwhile, is a considerable focus on data and digital intelligence (up 39% in terms of headcount), led by global technology chair Jonathan

Hargreaves, who has relocated from London to Singapore. This has already paid off in the form of psychometric audience profiles for Barclays that helped them understand their entrepreneur customer base, and using predictive data to create new markets for the Singapore Tourism Board. For Stop the Traffik, meanwhile, Edelman built a big data platform that helped to create a particularly successful social media campaign.

Beyond those efforts, much of the firm's best work involves a sophisticated use of digital marketing, such as developing Pond's global influencer program; creating compelling online video for iRobot and Mirinda; Weibo work for Joie; and using AR to support Samsung's swimming safety program. — AS

RFI ASIA LIMITED (INDEPENDENT)

Ruder Finn's digital capabilities in Asia were transformed by the 2016 acquisition of Daylight Partnership, the firm founded by former WE Communications regional chief David Ko. Combined with Ruder Finn Innovation Studios (RFI), that gives the firm a 50-person digital presence across China, Hong Kong, Singapore and India — with specific strengths in product development and analytics. Unsurprisingly, that helped fuel 25% digital growth in 2016, with around half of Ruder Finn's regional revenues now being drawn from digital work.

RFI Asia Limited's work, meanwhile, demonstrates a clear focus on innovation, via such efforts as immersive storytelling, marketing chatbots and interactive content. That is supported by an array of products, including new influencer analytics tool Beacon, a risk management app called Riskstat and the Sonar crisis simulation platform.

All of this adds up to an impressive array of clients, including new business from Nike, HSBC, Pacific Place and Macy's while also helping it

expand existing relationships with such clients as Prudential and L'Oreal. And the work is suitably compelling too — including an immersive 360-degree video and VR mini-movie for Sino Group; Hong Kong's first marketing chatbot for Pacific Place; UGC campaigns for Swire Properties; and live streaming Prudential's Relationship Index Forum. — AS

SOCIAL@OGILVY (WPP)

Now numbering more than 250 staffers, Ogilvy's digital/social unit remains one of region's strongest and, unsurprisingly, fastest-growing, up by double-digits to account for as much as 50% of overall revenues at Asia's biggest PR firm. Major clients include Merck, Huawei, Nestle, Hilton Hotels, British Airways and Hawaiian Airways, while the work spans the full spectrum of digital activity, from selling products to social care, realtime newsrooms, crisis management, audience targeting, social listening/intelligence and paid media.

While, Social@Ogilvy's content to commerce play is as strong as any in the region, it's influencer work also stands out, notably for Huawei — for whom the firm has helped completely revamp a moribund system into an industry-leading effort that has built strong relationships with key opinion leaders around the globe, powered by an impressive use of social listening and analytics. Elsewhere, there has been impressive work for Coca-Cola in Southeast Asia, where the firm has built a nine market social hub network that consolidates all social activity, develops more relevant content and cultivates brand advocates. — AS

Asia-Pacific Healthcare PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

SPAG ASIA (INDEPENDENT)

Launched just four years ago, SPAG has already established itself as an industry game changer in the Asia-Pacific market as a cross between a public affairs and healthcare shop with three distinct brands: SPAG Asia, D Yellow Elephant and Giga Health (which was acquired in 2016).

The group has grown more than 100% year-over-year since its 2013 launch while still keeping headcount low with the philosophy that one right individual is worth more than 10 others. The team works on clients that include PhRMA, Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, US Chamber of Commerce, Hilleman Laboratories, Intertek, ResMed in addition new clients include Advamed, Novartis, Cipla, Dr. Reddy Laboratory Abbott, Boston Scientific, Abbott Vascular, Biocon and Pfizer Nestle. The firm holds the unique positioning of never yet losing a client.

Its work has garnered SPAG recognition as the Holmes Report's New Agency of the Year in the region two years ago, in addition to multiple SABRE Awards for work with clients like PFC and US Chamber of Commerce. — AaS

Finalists

COSMO PR (JAPAN/INDEPENDENT)

One of the most enduring PR firms in Japan, Cosmo navigated through significant changes in technology, government and beyond — but has remained focused on helping brands steer through the nuanced Japanese market and connect with influential key opinion leaders. The firm maintains a network of senior advisers to ensure up to date knowledge on current legislation and regulations — in particular when strict changes were recently enacted

regarding Japan's promotional code within the health industry.

The firm maintains a stable headcount of up to 50 full time staff, excluding its network of specialized advisors. Maintaining a relatively small staff gives the firm the ability to stay agile and remain specialized — while still being able to support client needs across various project sizes. The firm has been around since the 1960's.

In 2016, Cosmo grew its operating profit by 13%, this coincided with a period when Japan's GDP growth rate was less than 1%. Despite challenging changes to the regulatory environment, healthcare continues to represent more than 70% of its client base with services that range from disease awareness campaigns (including a novel online news platform, to help educate the public and move away from doctor-led conversations), to advocacy activities (to promote drug value and support accurate pricing).

Separately, Cosmo refocused Women's Health as one of its key practice areas. Recent activities include developing the Women's Health Policy Primer 'Healthier Women, Healthier Economy – Building a Stronger Economy by Empowering Women through Better Health,' with the Healthcare Committee at the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) and the European Business Council in Japan (EBC). The primer recommends improvements to government and businesses on health literacy and education, self- health, and reproductive health. — AaS

SENATESHJ (AUSTRALIA/INDEPENDENT)

Now in its 15th year, and with a team of 60 spanning offices in Australia and New Zealand, SenateSHJ is differentiated primarily by its ability to do the difficult things well. While it's business spans a range of practice

areas, the firm is at its best handling difficult corporate reputation challenges (change management and employee engagement a particular focus), public affairs and issues management, and healthcare work.

The latter sector has seen considerable growth over the past 12 months under the leadership of Sue Cook, who previously led by Hill+Knowlton's Australian operations and the agency's Asia-Pacific healthcare practice. New healthcare business came from the likes of Bayer and National Disability Insurance, while the firm continues its work for GSK and Novartis, among others. Award-winning work included the "My Cancer, My Voice" CSR program and the "Facing the Health of Australians" initiative with The Australian Medicine Industry.

Elsewhere, there has been a focus on expanding digital and social capabilities: the expanded team includes former APN digital editor Irene Chapple and new head of digital in New Zealand, Erin Leuschke (a veteran of digital roles in the UK and Europe).

Overall growth last year was around 7.5%, with new business from a mix of public sector clients (the Ministry of Justice, the New Zealand Navy) and others (Bank of Melbourne, the University of Auckland). They join a roster that includes Statoil, Waste Management New Zealand, Australia Post, and the Department of Education & Training. The firm ended 2016 with fee income of more than \$10 million (US), one of the largest independents in the market. — PH

WEBER SHANDWICK (IPG)

While healthcare can still feel like something of an afterthought for the region's top PR networks, Weber Shandwick's growth in the sector suggests that it might finally be coming of age in Asia-Pacific. The firm grew its healthcare revenue by 21% in 2016, driven by strong

performances from Australia, India, Singapore and Malaysia. There was particularly strong expansion from its top 10 healthcare clients, which includes such names as Abbott and Takeda, along with new business from Sanofi, Pfizer, Asia Dengue

Vaccination Advocacy, Parkway Health Group, Novartis and GSK.

Much of that work, furthermore, is increasingly digital, involving data visualisation, online video-streaming and WeChat engagement. Highlights included a campaign for Abbott's Ensure supplement, which brought

to life the forgotten dreams of the elderly to help children re-examine their roles as caregivers. For Janssen, meanwhile, Weber Shandwick challenged the standards of mental health, partnering with the EIU to call on multiple governments to take action. — AS

Asia-Pacific Technology PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

TEXT100 (NEXT15)

Text100's 35-year technology heritage has always given it an edge on many of its rivals — particularly in Asia-Pacific, where a 20-year-old presence translates into strategic depth in key markets across India, Australia, Southeast Asia and Greater China. And while the firm's 'Vision 2020' global restructuring has dominated the headlines, a quiet transformation is also underway in Asia under the leadership of new regional chief Lee Nugent.

Overall revenues grew 7% to around \$20m in 2016, with profits up 24% to around \$3.6m from 313 staffers in the region. There was significant new business (much of it multi-market) from Red Hat, NetApp, Rolls Royce, China Telecom, Nvidia, Alibaba, Bosch, Harman, Netsuite and TVS Motors — joining an existing client roster that features IBM, Adobe, Lenovo, Cisco, Four Seasons, DHL, Telenor, Swift, Ikea and Gartner.

In particular, the firm has invested considerable resources into talent and training, enhancing its leadership across creative, insight/analytics and business development. Always renowned for its culture, former regional director Anne Costello now oversees global people development from Australia, while the regional leadership team also includes Malaysia and mainland China head Meiling Yeow; Rosemary Merz in Hong Kong; and Singapore leader Marc Ha.

Text100's commitment to innovation continues to stand out across an in-house service offering that features strategy, content, PR, social media, and creative technology. Last year, for example, the firm launched a dynamic newsroom that features trackable assets, social sharing, SEO, content retargeting and mobile optimisation. And the firm's digital capabilities remain a notch above many of its rivals, evidenced by a range of impressive campaigns. For Roam-E, Text100 won a SABRE Award for its work across brand development, content, email, social, paid and influencer management, which helped the flying selfie gadget book more than 250k in indicative orders from 15 countries. Text100 also helps to demystify IBM's Watson by tackling Australia's melanoma challenge, directly generating \$5.6m in revenue. Finally, for TeamIndus, Text100 developed a storytelling effort that helped raise \$70m in a bid to put India's first spacecraft on the moon in 2018. — AS

Finalists

IN.FOM (INDEPENDENT)

Last year's Technology Consultancy of the Year, In.fom, is in the vanguard of a new generation of Asian PR firms—all launched in the early years of this decade—that have eschewed the scale and bureaucracy of established firms, for an approach that prizes sustainable employee and client relationships.

The leadership team includes managing partners Wong Voal Voal and Mike Liew, who bring impressive pedigrees with global agencies H+K and Burson-Marsteller, respectively, and who understand the transformation of marketing and technology. Xiuwen Lien heads its key Microsoft relationship, which has been a consistent award-winner in recent years.

Last year saw continued healthy growth, with fee income up by more than 20% to around \$3.3 million, with Microsoft adding Xbox Asia-Pacific work to the firm's existing Singapore and Asia-wide assignments, and new clients including UnionPay Southeast Asia, Parallels, Nokia Networks Asia Pacific, Intralinks, Expedia and Logicals joining a client roster that also includes CA Technologies, Herbalife, Intel, and Singtel.

As ever, the work impresses: the firm managed Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella's tour of nine Asian cities in 2016, picking up a SABRE Award for media outreach that generated more than 1,800 stories across six countries. This year, the firm promoted the software giant's regional Digital Transformation Study and "youth and technology" outreach. — PH

RICE COMMUNICATIONS (INDEPENDENT)

With 30 people in Singapore, Myanmar and now Hong Kong, and fee income of \$3.3 million, Rice Communications is beginning to transcend the "boutique" label and

establish itself as one of the leading independents in South-East Asia, leveraging a focus on workplace culture to achieve stability and consistency in an often turbulent marketplace, and the leadership of Sonya Madeira, who founded Rice in 2009, and partner/director James Brasher to compete with larger multinationals for regional assignments in the technology sector: more than 80% of Rice clients are now serviced in multiple markets.

While the core technology business continues to account for about two-thirds of the firm's fee income, Rice has been diversifying into adjacent areas, including marketing tech, consumer, corporate, hospitality, financial services, and some government work. New business over the past 12 months came from Thales, Ooyala, ECA International, VML, Blu, Get in the Ring, Houzz, Digital Shadows, Dow

Chemical and Oracle, while the firm continues to work for longtime retainer clients such as Palo Alto Networks, Hilton Worldwide, Inmarsat, Subaru, Bosch, LinkedIn, Eset, FICO, National Instruments, and Digital Realty.

High-profile assignments included the "Bring In Your Parents" initiative for LinkedIn, based on the insight that many parents don't really understand what their kids do at work; establishing Palo Alto Networks as a credible industry leader and authority in the cybersecurity space; and generating extensive coverage of Inmarsat's regional growth story on the back of the opening of a new office in Singapore. — PH

SLING & STONE (INDEPENDENT)

Founder/CEO Vuki Vujasinovic started Australian firm Sling & Stone just over six years ago with just one solid client — and since then, has doubled every

year. The agency positions itself as the firm for "the world's best challengers, disrupters and entrepreneurs" where work is fueled with passion.

Hiring was a big focus this year with Vujasinovic acknowledging "we know as we scale from a midsize agency to a large agency, that we will lose what has made us special, if we don't make the right hiring decisions." To deal with this, Sling & Stone has become transparent about its internal workings and culture to the public.

New clients like Twitter, Slack, Stripe, Campos Coffee, Guzman y Gomez, HealthEngine and Trov join existing clients Findex, GreenSync, Xero, Kogan.com, Shoes of Prey, Domain Xero, Campaign Monitor, Autodesk, Nearmap, Criteo, Meltwater and Brightcove to fuel 71.6% revenue growth with a team of 31 people in 2016. — AaS

Asia-Pacific New PR Consultancies of the Year

Winner

REDHILL COMMUNICATIONS (SINGAPORE)

Before launching Redhill in September of 2015, Jacob Puthenparambil had held communications positions with Government of India's Ministry for External Affairs, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller in the Middle East, and the UN's MUrgency global response network in San Francisco. Partner Surekha Yadav, meanwhile, has a background that spans software development and finance. Together, they bring a wealth of international and business experience to a new firm, which helps to explain how Redhill has grown from five people in 2015 to about 25 today.

Those people are spread across offices in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Colombo—giving Redhill good reach across South-East Asia—and serving a roster of about 20 clients,

including seven of the region's largest venture capital firms. The client roster includes Jungle Ventures, Wavemaker Partners, Venture Craft, SoCash, Zumata, BankersLab, RHL Ventures, and Vickers Venture.

The firm worked with Jungle Ventures to announce that the firm had successfully raised an initial \$50 million for their first investment round of 2016, while respecting the insistence that some aspects that the company wished to keep confidential, generating good coverage without awkward questions. It also helped SOCash, a socialised cash payment system, persuade consumers that cash can still be king in a world focused on cashless transactions. — PH

Finalists

ASTRUM (INDIA)

Launched in 2015 by Ashwani Singla, Astrum has already grown to more

than \$1.5m in fee income from a headcount of 22, marking it out as a very different animal from the low fee-per-head agencies that dominate India's PR market. Much of that is down to Singla himself, who served as one of the key architect of Genesis Burson-Marsteller's enduring success before leaving to lead WPP's Penn Schoen Berland unit in 2011. But Singla has also built a strong partnership cadre at Astrum, featuring Suvir Paul (client service); Soumya Ghosh (corporate affairs); Sharada Sharma (insights/planning); and, Shefali Khanna (digital marketing).

Those titles reflect Astrum's focus on reputation management at a C-suite level, backed by a robust data and analytics offering. The firm has unveiled a number of specific products to support this approach, including a proprietary 4D campaign management framework, net

advocacy scores to benchmark and measure reputation, and a considerable focus on competitive research. Unfortunately, the firm keeps its client list confidential but it includes major global and domestic players across technology, healthcare, industrial and media. Campaign highlights include the transformation of SME chemical intermediary Alok Masterbatch into an innovation-focused company that makes plastics safer, sustainable and cheaper.

Meanwhile, Astrum's focus on professional development also stands out for such a young firm. There is a Reputation Academy that oversees learning and a fellowship program to bring in young talent via a 12-month training system. Astrum also utilises a collaborative approach to bring in multi-disciplinary support and expertise as required, helping it achieve profitability by the end of year one. — AS

INFLUENCE MATTERS (CHINA)

"We are on a mission to break the Chinese PR habit of working day and night" — bold words for a firm that's focused on the fast-paced world of startups and technologies looking to wield influence in China and beyond. But with a business model that's focused on flexibility, agility and results, the firm, so far seems well-positioned to for delivering smart work while maintaining a sustainable culture.

The focus is on smaller technology companies, startups or SMBs looking for an agency with the expertise and culture to support cross-border needs. The team is six people full-time, plus a small network of freelancers to step in when demand is particularly high. Revenue in 2016 was already 5x that of the nine months the firm operated in 2015.

The roster includes 21 clients including La French Tech (Business France, French government), Enchant.VC (Singapore, smart

hardware accelerator and VC), Virtuos (China, Video games production), Geneformics (Israel, Biotech), Outfit7 (UK, mobile games), Rayno (Korea, aftermarket auto tech), CAST Software (US, IT), Terark (China, Database management engine), Travel Alberta (Canada, tourism), Glispa Global Group (Germany, Ad tech), Immersion Corporation (US, mobile hardware tech) Swiss Global Enterprise (Switzerland government) and Bee7 (UK, Ad tech).

Founder Simon Vericel started Influence Matters after working at several of the region's larger players and deciding that structure "did not suit the need for flexibility and efficiency required by today's fast growing tech companies." — AaS

POEM (AUSTRALIA)

Launched just 18 months ago, Poem is defying expectations around the modern PR. The new firm calls itself Poem to represent Paid, Owned, Earned Media — reinforcing that its work is based on creative insights that are amplified through whatever channel fits best. This approach has lured top-shelf clients like Google, Expedia & Wotif, Movember, Tech21, Masterpet and Transport NSW.

Founders Rob Lowe and Matt Holmes have experience at some of the most notable PR and advertising shops across Australia and the UK — Cake, Freud, Eleven PR and One Green Bean — giving them real insight beyond traditional PR. This is also reflected in the firm's work.

For instance, the work for Alternative Meat Co. — a new plant based food product that looks, smells and tastes like meat — tapped into research that shows a growing number of Millennials choosing to eat less meat due to health, environmental or animal welfare reasons while also dealing with the stereotype that eschewing meat is 'unAustralian.' The two-phase campaign involved going to a kebab shop and pranking meat fans by serving them their favourite

kebabs using AMC products, then revealed the truth and filmed their reaction. The video was supported by statistics on the 'flexitarian trend', paid influencer, native advertising and Facebook media spend.

The second phase challenged preconceptions that eating meat makes one more Australian. The team recreated MLA's early Australia Day 'lambassador' ads using Sam Kekovitch, rewrote the script and dressed Dave Hughes as the Prime Minister of Australia to make a playful point that 'it doesn't need to moo for you to be true blu'. — AaS

For the second year, the Holmes Report's Best Agencies to Work For research expands to Asia-Pacific, via a comprehensive survey of agency employees, at around 25 consultancies throughout the region.

The process solicits employee views on a wide range of issues ranging from the integrity of senior management to the quality of professional development, from empowerment and risk-taking to compensation.

Being selected as a Best Agency to Work For by the Holmes Report is considered the ultimate benchmark of PR firm culture and workplace performance, in an industry whose primary asset remains its people. This year, we partnered with Ketchum Global Research and Analytics for the data analysis.

BEST ASIA-PACIFIC NETWORK TO WORK FOR: RUDER FINN

Ruder Finn debuts on this list in the top spot. The US-based independent has around 400 employees throughout Asia-Pacific. Among its most notable attributes is the firm's training and career development program that includes initiatives like S.T.A.R — which stands for Strategic Training and Recognition — in addition to its customized Leadership Training module and the RF Academy that is intended to identify high-potential employees with a fast-track mentor program. There's also the firm's staff exchange program, a regional initiative to build and strengthen teamwork and culture across offices, which has resulted in an average of one exchange per month across Asia.

Honorable mentions: APCO, Lewis, WE Communications, Zeno.

BEST NATIONAL AGENCY TO WORK FOR: SLING & STONE

Last year's specialist winner, once again, lands at the top of our list — reflective of its workplace that prioritizes talent as its best asset. In 2016, the independent firm invested heavily in its work environment with sit-stand desks, Herman Miller chairs and Macbook Airs with second screens for all, among other tech upgrades and with more coming this year.

"Because we were experiencing rapid growth, we worked hard this year to make communication a hallmark of our agency," said founder/CEO Vuki

Vujasinovic. "We share the company strategy, direction, and planning, not just with leadership but with everyone. Every single team member has played a part in forming this strategy."

Also in 2016, Sling & Stone overhauled its career development program. The agency now measures staff happiness weekly and conducts performance reviews on a quarterly basis in addition to regular all-staff check-ins. The firm also conducts regular market surveys to ensure staff are being paid top-of-the-market salaries and does end-of-the-year profit sharing. This is all in addition to frequent trainings for all staff.

Honorable mentions: Avian Media (India), Maverick (Indonesia), SPAG Asia (India), Sunny Side Up (Japan).

BEST SPECIALIST AGENCY TO WORK FOR: IN.FOM

When IN.FOM won Asia-Pacific Technology Consultancy of the Year for the second consecutive year in 2016, we called it "the vanguard of a new generation of Asian PR firms." This forward-thinking approach is reflected in its culture too. Like many big agency veterans who launch their own firms, managing partners Wong Voal Voal and Mike Liew have eschewed scale and bureaucracy for an approach that prizes quality, longevity and talent management. This approach seems to be paying off, the firm's trajectory is stunning. After launching in 2011, IN.FOM was already shortlisted among our APAC

Agencies of the Year in 2012 and by 2015 it was named among our most creative firms around the world. And, of course, this year IN.FOM is again a contender for Tech Agency of the Year in the region.

Honorable mentions: Kommune, N2N, Rice Communications, Stellar.



The SABRE Awards Global

From more than 5,000 entries submitted around the world to The Holmes Report's SABRE Awards competition, the judges selected 40 to receive Global SABRE Awards at the 2017 Global Public Relations Summit in Miami.

The SABRE Awards--which include competitions for the Americas, EMEA, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region--attract more than 5,000 entries from more than 60 countries, so that the winners of the Global awards are the elite of the elite, representing best practice in categories ranging from social media to social responsibility, from public affairs to employee communications.

The evening also honoured our 2017 Global Agencies of the Year.

Our 40 best campaigns of the year, in order, were revealed at the Global SABRE Awards on 25 October:

Winners

1. „MEIN KAMPF – GEGEN RECHTS“

Gesicht Zeigen! Für ein weltoffenes Deutschland e.V. with Ogilvy Public Relations GmbH

2. FINDING OUR FIRE: BERNZOMATIC BRAND REFRESH

Bernzomatic with Zeno Group

3. THE DNA JOURNEY

momondo

4. THE AUTISM SIMULATOR

SPOSA Bratislava with Seesame s.r.o.

5. CHEETOS MUSEUM

Frito-Lay (the Cheetos brand) with Ketchum

6. UNCOVER THE TRUTH

Transparency International Sri Lanka with Ogilvy Public Relations

7. #BRUTALCUT

ActionAid UK with Weber Shandwick

8. SAFE STORIES / HISTÓRIAS SEGURAS

Ananse with Little George (Ketchum)

9. BACK TO WORK

Medela with Genesis Burson-Marsteller

10. SAVLON HEALTHY HANDS CHALK STICKS

ITC SAVLON with PR Pundit

11. THE SWEDISH NUMBER

Svenska Turistföreningen with Cohn & Wolfe Stockholm AB

12. PANTENE DAD-DO/STRONG IS BEAUTIFUL

Pantene Pro-V with DeVries Global

- 13. MAKING NUCLEAR NECESSARY**
Rosatom with Instinctif Partners
- 14. PLAYMOBIL: SETTING ENGAGEMENT TARGETS ABLAZE WITH LONDON FIRE BRIGADE**
PLAYMOBIL UK with OneChocolate
- 15. LAUNCHING IQOS AND HELPING THE TOBACCO GIANT QUIT SMOKING**
Philip Morris International with Pagefield Communications
- 16. HIV: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF THE TEST**
Taiwan AIDS Society & Taiwan AIDS Nurses Association with Golin Taiwan
- 17. EBAY ADOPTS L'AQUILA**
eBay Italy with APCO Worldwide
- 18. IN SEARCH OF THE UAE'S UNLUCKIEST TRAVELER**
RSA with Edelman UAE
- 19. PEPSICO: PERFORMANCE WITH PURPOSE**
PepsiCo
- 20. ONE RAMADAN**
Huawei CBG with Mamac Ogilvy Public Relations
- 21. DARON**
The Quest for Knowledge—Norad - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation with Gambit Hill + Knowlton Strategies
- 22. SA TOMORROW**
Johannesburg Stock Exchange with Hill+Knowlton Strategies
- 23. NERD AGAINST NATURE**
The Norwegian Trekking Association with Geelmuyden Kiese AS
- 24. THE FRIENDSHIP BREAKFAST**
TINE SA with JCP
- 25. JETBLUE REACHES ACROSS THE AISLE**
JetBlue with MullenLowe
- 26. WHY MICROSOFT AND A BOYBAND PRANKED DUTCH YOUTH**
Microsoft with Progress Communications
- 27. HOW KOREAN PART-TIME WORKERS GOT FULL-TIME RESPECT**
Media Will (Alba Chunkuk) with Weber Shandwick Korea
- 28. BRING BACK THE BEES**
General Mills Canada with Veritas Communications
- 29. THE VASELINE HEALING PROJECT**
Unilever/Vaseline with Edelman
- 30. LEADING A CAMPAIGN FOR A COMPANY UNDER ATTACK**
Herbalife with SKDKnickerbocker
- 31. ALWAYS LIKE A GIRL EMOJIS**
P&G with MSLGROUP
- 32. #QUÉONDA (WHAT'S UP WITH)**
AVON Foundation with LLORENTE & CUENCA
- 33. MIRINDA - RELEASE THE PRESSURE**
Pepsico with Edelman India
- 34. EMPOWERING HAITIAN FARMERS THROUGH TREE PLANTING**
Timberland with Cone Communications
- 35. MAYA RUDOLPH COMES CLEAN ABOUT FEMININE CARE WITH SEVENTH GENERATION'S "VAJINGLE"**
Seventh Generation with Allison+Partners
- 36. LOVE DIGITAL IN THE TIMES OF DEMONETISATION**
ICICI Bank with Adfactors PR
- 37. THE LAUNCH OF ABSORB: A REVOLUTIONARY, GAME-CHANGING, FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND FULLY DISSOLVING HEART STENT**
Abbott with GCI Health
- 38. #IHATETHEWAIT**
Airlines for America
- 39. SELLING THE IDEA OF LUXURY TO SAVE A BRAND FROM U.S. EXTINCTION: THE 2016 VOLVO XC90 SUV**
Volvo Car USA with WE Communications
- 40. THE CIRCUS TAKES THE CIRCUS BACK**
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey with MullenLowe



The SABRE Awards North America

The 2017 North America SABRE Awards winners were selected from among more than 2,000 entries in this year's competition, which recognizes Superior Achievement in Branding, Reputation and Engagement.

The campaigns were evaluated by a jury of more than 40 industry leaders. The winners were announced at the awards ceremony on May 2 at Cipriani 42nd Street in New York along with the Agencies of the Year.

Winners

PLATINUM

BEST IN SHOW

Finding Our Fire: Bernzomatic Brand Refresh—Bernzomatic with Zeno Group

DIAMOND

COMPANY OF THE YEAR

The Un-Carrier in 2016—T-Mobile USA

THE SABRE AWARD FOR SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN BRAND-BUILDING

Finding Our Fire: Bernzomatic Brand Refresh—Bernzomatic with Zeno Group

THE SABRE AWARD FOR SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Navigating an Exit from Merchant Power—Entergy with Burson-Marsteller

THE SABRE AWARD FOR SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN RESEARCH & PLANNING

Blowing Wind in the Face of Opposition—E.ON Twin Forks Wind Farm with Davies

THE SABRE AWARD FOR SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

Communications Measurement Journey—Cleveland Clinic with Ketchum Global Research & Analytics

GOLD

PRACTICE AREAS

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

Paint as a Powerful Tool—Sherwin-Williams with Carmichael Lynch Relate

CONSUMER MARKETING (EXISTING PRODUCT)

JetBlue Reaches Across The Aisle—JetBlue with MullenLowe Communications

CONSUMER MARKETING (NEW PRODUCT)

LG G5 “Low Battery Anxiety” Campaign—LG Electronics with Ogilvy

INTEGRATED MARKETING

AXE ‘Find Your Magic:’ A Celebration of Individuality & Self-Expression—Unilever/AXE with Edelman

INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE

PepsiCo: Performance with Purpose—PepsiCo

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

Mind Your Business—General Motors with MSLGROUP

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Be Remarkable: Recruiting Physical Therapists in an Understaffed Industry—ATI Physical Therapy with Burson-Marsteller

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Executive Leadership - Antonio Lucio, CMO, HP Inc.—HP Inc.

FINANCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Highwire PR for Twilio IPO—Twilio with Highwire Public Relations

CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING

The Vaseline Healing Project—Unilever/Vaseline with Edelman

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Empowering Haitian Farmers through Tree Planting—Timberland with Cone Communications

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Bring Back the Bees—General Mills Canada with Veritas Communications

PUBLIC EDUCATION

VacciNation Campaign with Dr. Jennifer Arnold—Pfizer with Ogilvy

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Leading a Campaign for a Company Under Attack—Herbalife with SKDKnickerbocker

ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Barbie: Evolve the Doll, and the Conversation—Mattel with Weber Shandwick

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FP1 Strategies and Grocery Manufacturers Association Successfully Build Support To Pass Controversial Food Labeling Legislation—Grocery Manufacturers Association with FP1 Strategies LLC

CORPORATE MEDIA RELATIONS

Generation Beyond—Lockheed Martin with Weber Shandwick

PRODUCT MEDIA RELATIONS (CONSUMER MEDIA)

The Jim Beam Apple Watch—Jim Beam Apple with Olson Engage

PRODUCT MEDIA RELATIONS (TRADE MEDIA)

Microsoft Breaks Through the Noise to CONNECT with Developer and IT Pros—Microsoft with WE Communications

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

#WhatTheFlush: Disrupting the Water Conservation Conversation—Niagara Conservation with Padilla

INFLUENCER MARKETING

Scott Tube-Free Impact-FULL Crash—Scott Brand/Kimberly-Clark with Ketchum

SOCIAL MEDIA/SOCIAL NETWORKING CAMPAIGN

Creating #Cupfusion—The Hershey Company with Ketchum

BLOGGER OUTREACH

Maya Rudolph Comes Clean About Feminine Care with Seventh Generation's "Vajingle"—Seventh Generation with Allison+Partners

BRANDED JOURNALISM

Starbucks Upstanders - Stories of Extraordinary Humanity in Unexpected Places—Starbucks with Edelman

WORD OF MOUTH

Doritos Boldest Choice: Election 2016—Frito-Lay with Ketchum

GUERRILLA MARKETING

JetBlue Honors The Jet Age With RetroJet Design And 1960s Celebration—JetBlue

PUBLICITY STUNT

PIZZA HUT TAKES 100TH COUNTRY CELEBRATION TO NEW HEIGHTS—Pizza Hut with Creation

SPECIAL EVENT

Producing a Global Event for the Vatican—Stem for Life with Allison+Partners

SPONSORSHIP

JetBlue Parties with Papi—JetBlue with MullenLowe

TRADE SHOW

Escape the Bathroom—Synergy Pharmaceuticals with Golin

MARKETING TO MEN

Pantene Dad-Do/Strong is Beautiful—Pantene Pro-V with DeVries Global with Grey New York

MARKETING TO WOMEN

The Power Trip—Marie Claire and JetBlue

MARKETING TO YOUTH

Stop Smears, Spread Joy with Paper Mate InkJoy—Newell Rubbermaid with Cohn & Wolfe

MULTICULTURAL MARKETING

Emery's 9-1-1 All Stars—King County E-911 Program Office with C+C

INDUSTRY SECTORS

AUTOMOTIVE

Selling the Idea of Luxury to Save a Brand from U.S. Extinction: The 2016 Volvo XC90 SUV—Volvo Car

FASHION AND BEAUTY

Rethink Reuse—Savers with Edelman

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

The World's Largest Blind Taste Test—Kraft Macaroni & Cheese with Olson Engage

HOME AND FURNITURE

Schlage Elevates Perception of Door Hardware—Schlage with Havas Formula

CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Disrupting SXSW Interactive with Analog by American Greetings—American Greetings with MullenLowe U.S.

ENTERTAINMENT

The Circus Takes The Circus Back—Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey with MullenLowe

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Investing Capital to Create Change: State Street's 'SHE' Gender Diversity ETF Campaign—State Street Corporation with Ogilvy

FOOD SERVICE

SONIC Drive-In Launches #SquareShakes, the First Campaign Designed For and Sampled Through Instagram—SONIC Drive-In with Cohn & Wolfe

RETAILERS

One Scary Election—IT'SUGAR with M&C Saatchi PR

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Becoming America's Cruise Line—Carnival Cruise Line with M Booth

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

FPL's Manatee Lagoon—FPL's Manatee Lagoon with rbb Communications

CHEMICALS AND INDUSTRIALS

Bayer Bee Care Program—Bayer with Porter Novelli

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE FIRMS

Giving Millennials "A Way to Work"—Adecco Group North America with Allison+Partners

REAL ESTATE AND CONSTRUCTION

First American Financial Corporation—First American Financial Corporation with RF Binder

TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS

#iHateTheWait—Airlines for America with JDA Frontline

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

LG SideKick 'Fit Fashion' Campaign—LG Electronics with Ogilvy

TECHNOLOGY: HARDWARE

Radeon Rebellion—AMD

TECHNOLOGY: SOFTWARE AND SERVICES

How GE is Digitizing Electricity: Software for a Cleaner Planet—GE Power

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Charter Communications and FP1 Strategies: Telling The Charter Story—Charter Communications with FP1 Strategies

WEB-BASED BUSINESS

PayPal & Jonathan Adler Team Up to Reinvent the Gift of Money—PayPal, Inc. with Edelman

ANIMAL CARE

National Aquarium Dolphin Sanctuary Announcement—National Aquarium with Golin

CONSUMER HEALTH

Re-entering the Marketplace, with a Snap—Zicam with Kwittken

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

For The First Time Ever, TV Doctors Save Real Lives!—Cigna with Edelman

MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY

The Launch of Absorb: A Revolutionary, Game-Changing, First-of-Its-Kind Fully Dissolving Heart Stent—Abbott with GCI Health

PHARMACEUTICAL: RX

MS: No Filter—Novartis Pharmaceuticals AG with Creation

ASSOCIATIONS

ORBA #SiteUnseen—Ontario Road Builders' Association with FleishmanHillard

EDUCATION AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

It's Time to Take Another Look at Richard Nixon—Richard Nixon Foundation, Library and Museum with KTStewart and Pinkston Group

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Better Buildings Challenge SWAP Campaign—U.S. Department of Energy with C+C

NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

LUNG FORCE: Women Against Lung Cancer—American Lung Association with Edelman

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Always Like a Girl Emojis—P&G with MSLGROUP

MULTIMARKET CAMPAIGN

Spin Master's Global Hatchimals Launch—Spin Master Ltd. with Zeno Group

CANADIAN CAMPAIGN

Girls Belong Here—Plan International Canada with Hill+Knowlton Strategies

SILVER

PR AGENCY EMPLOYEE PROGRAM

FH4Inclusion—FleishmanHillard

PR AGENCY CITIZENSHIP

"Sparks" Across Ketchum Ignite Passion for CSR—Ketchum

PR AGENCY MARKETING

Conversation 2 Commerce—MSLGROUP

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN PR

Micro-tribes and the Future of Marketing—M Booth



The IN2 SABRE Awards North America

Golin took home top honors at the IN2 SABRE Awards last night for its work with McDonald’s on ‘All Day Breakfast’ at the gala held at the W Hotel in Chicago.

IN2 SABRE judges praised the work for “turning a menu change into a movement.” The big win comes after a record number of Innovation SABRE Award entries this year. Best in Show was presented as a countdown among the top five winners of the night (listed below, including a full list of winners for the night).

Winners

BEST IN SHOW #1

‘All Day Breakfast’—McDonald’s with Golin

BEST IN SHOW #2

The World’s Largest Blind Taste Test—Kraft Macaroni & Cheese with Olson Engage

BEST IN SHOW #3

COVERGIRL Challenge Industry Norms with First Male Spokesperson—COVERGIRL with Marina Maher Communications

BEST IN SHOW #4

Pantene Dad-Do: Fostering the Next Generation of Strong Women—Pantene with DeVries Global

BEST IN SHOW #5

Flybabies—JetBlue Airways with MullenLowe

EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

LIVE EVENTS

U by Kotex Brings Women’s Ideas to Life via The Period Projects, Opens World’s First and Only Period Shop—U by Kotex/Kimberly-Clark with Marina Maher Communications

DIGITAL PROMOS & ACTIVATIONS

Ball® Canning Helps Consumers Tackle Food—Ball® Canning with 360PR+

SPONSORSHIPS

Arby’s and Andrew “Beef” Johnston—Arby’s with Edelman

TRADE SHOWS & AWARDS

Simple Swab, Shorter Stay – Take a Swipe at Antibiotic Resistance—Clorox Healthcare with Ketchum

EARNED MEDIA

DIGITAL AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA - PRINT (EARNED)

The World’s Largest Blind Taste Test—Kraft Macaroni & Cheese with Olson Engage

DIGITAL AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA - BROADCAST (EARNED)

Pantene Dad-Do: Fostering the Next Generation of Strong Women—Pantene with DeVries Global

PRODUCT REVIEWS (EARNED)

Building BLOCKS’ Profile—ROLI with Max Borges Agency

EARNED MEDIA WITH INFLUENCERS + COMMUNITIES (EARNED)

Nexon America's LawBreakers—
Nexon America with Wonacott
Communications

CREATION OF PERSUASIVE CONTENT

Excedrin Presents The Migraine
Experience—GSK Excedrin with
Weber Shandwick

CONTENT CREATION FOR MEDIA SITES (EARNED)

When a Baby Dies—Children's
Minnesota with Weber Shandwick

DIGITAL NEWSROOMS

Barilla's Listening Room Gives Voice
To Entire Category—Barilla with
Edelman Chicago

SPONSORED & PAID MEDIA

CONTENT CREATION FOR MEDIA SITES (PAID)

What is Brain Health?—U.S.
Department of Health and Human
Services, Administration of
Community Living with Ogilvy PR

INFLUENCER ENDORSEMENTS + PAID/UNPAID PRODUCT PLACEMENT

COVERGIRL Challenge Industry
Norms with First Male
Spokesperson—COVERGIRL with
Marina Maher Communications

MEDIA PARTNERSHIP

Dove Love Your Curls Emojis—
Unilever - Dove Hair with Edelman

SEO/CONTENT DISTRIBUTION (PAID + ORGANIC)

Sony Music Site Now Hits the Right
Notes—Sony with the Hoffman
Agency

DIGITAL MARKETING/ADVERTISING

Answering a Mom's Cry for Help—
Colief Infant Digestive Aid with RLA
Collective

SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

BEST USE OF INTEGRATED SOCIAL MEDIA

#IHatetheWait—Airlines for America
with JDA Frontline

BEST USE OF FACEBOOK, TWITTER OR LINKEDIN

McDonald's: All Day Breakfast—
McDonald's with Golin

BEST USE OF YOUTUBE, FACEBOOK VIDEO OR VIMEO

Going Supernova: Achieving #1 in the
Doll Category—Moose Toys with
MWWPR

BEST USE OF TUMBLR, VINE, PINTEREST, SNAPCHAT OR INSTAGRAM

Tumblr Delivers Massive Impact To
Multi-year Pasta Category Effort—
Barilla with Edelman

BEST USE OF BLOGS

LinkedIn Engineering Blog—LinkedIn
with Bulleit Group

CROWDSOURCING & CO-CREATING

America's Diabetes Challenge—Merck
with GCI Health

REAL-TIME ENGAGEMENT

Creating #Cupfusion-The Hershey
Company with Ketchum

MEME

The Jim Beam Apple Watch—Jim
Beam Apple with Olson Engage

GAMIFICATION/USER-GENERATED CONTESTS

The I'm Feeling Lucky Experience
presented by Google Store—Google
with FleishmanHillard

BRAND CONTENT & CREATIVITY

INTEGRATED BRAND NARRATIVES

Bernzomatic Torch Bearers—
Bernzomatic with Zeno Group

DIGITAL BRAND PLATFORMS

Wrangler Network—Wrangler with
French/West/Vaughn

BRAND VIDEOS

Flybabies—JetBlue Airways with
MullenLowe

BRAND ANIMATION VIDEOS

Disney Consumer Products and
Interactive Media + Star Wars
Superfans Go Rogue to Launch New
Toy Line—The Walt Disney Company

ILLUSTRATIONS + PHOTOGRAPHY

Marvel x Garage—Disney Consumer
Products and Interactive Media

AUDIO: PODCASTS + MUSIC

The Deal With Yield—WinField with
Exponent PR

Hacks and Flacks: Charting a Path for
PR Podcasts with Unfiltered,
Engaging Content—March
Communications and Hacks & Flacks

IDENTITY BRANDING

Peace Corps: Inspiring New
Generations—The Peace Corps with
Ogilvy PR

SOCIAL GOOD + PUBLIC SERVICE

Whirlpool Care Counts Program—
Whirlpool with Ketchum

ANALYTICS + INSIGHTS

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA OR ANALYTICS FOR AUDIENCE INSIGHTS OR INFLUENCER TARGETING

Using Advanced Social Listening to
Uncover Relevant Purchase Barriers
and Micro-Moments in Order to
Unearth Audience Insights and Create
a Targeted Campaign Engagement
Strategy—Procter & Gamble/Head &
Shoulders with Marina Maher
Communications

ORIGINAL/COMMISSIONED RESEARCH FOR PR

Pet-Friendly Workplace
PAWrometer—Banfield Pet Hospital
with H+K Strategies

MEASUREMENT, POST-CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

Be the solution—Businessolver with
Edelman Chicago

MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

CEI: Connect. Engage. Influence.—
JMRConnect

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

BEST AGENCY MARKETING

Micro-tribes and the Future of
Marketing—M Booth

BEST AGENCY DISRUPTION - TOOLS & TACTICS

How Slack's AOR runs an email-free
PR firm—Rsquared Communication

BEST AGENCY BLOG, EDITORIAL, COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORM

Let Go & Lead—Gagen MacDonald

BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA - AGENCY

Conversation 2 Commerce—
MSLGroup

BEST LIVE EVENT—AGENCY

2016 SXW20—The W2O Group

SPECIAL CAMPAIGNS

BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA/DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT ACROSS SECTORS CORPORATE/B2B

Simple Swab, Shorter Stay – Take a
Swipe at Antibiotic Resistance—
Clorox Healthcare with Ketchum

CONSUMER GOODS

#WhatTheFlush—Niagara
Conservation with PadillaCRT

HEALTHCARE

Driving Crowd-Sourced Cancer
Innovation to Change Lives and Build
Leadership: The Astellas Oncology C3
Prize—Astellas Oncology with
Spectrum

FINANCIAL SERVICES/INSURANCE

Closing the Gender Investing Gap:
Empowering Women to Take
Financial Control—Havas PR

CHARITY/NONPROFIT

Producing a Global Event for Pope
Francis—The Stem for Life
Foundation with Allison + Partners

GOVERNMENT/PUBLIC AFFAIRS/ LOBBYING

ReThink: Why Housing Matters -
Challenging Misperceptions of Public
Housing—HAI Group Inc. with Cone
Communications

TECHNOLOGY

Binge Watching to Victory: How to
break a world record and launch
CyberLink's PowerDVD to mainstream
audiences—CyberLink with Diffusion

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The Astellas Way—Astellas America
with Gagen MacDonald

LEAN MARKETING

America's Sweatiest Cities by
Honeywell Fans—Honeywell Fans
with 360PR+

MICRO MARKETING

Blast Motion Knocks New Partnership
Out of the Park—Blast Motion with
Greenroom PR

NEW TO MARKET

NEW COMPANY TO MARKET

Taking Tourism to New Heights:
Launching OUE Skyspace LA—OUE
Skyspace with Ogilvy PR

NEW PRODUCT TO MARKET

Redefining NARCAN—A Life-Saving
Medication—Adapt Pharma with
Ketchum

INNOVATION EXCELLENCE

MOST INNOVATIVE AGENCY INITIATIVE

Striving for a Healthy Work/Life Blend
at GroundFloor Media—GroundFloor
Media

MOST INNOVATIVE BRAND MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Coming Clean with Cottonelle—
Kimberly-Clark, Cottonelle

MOST INNOVATIVE BRAND/AGENCY COLLABORATION

Colgate Encourages Consumers to
Save Water—Colgate with Cohn &
Wolfe



The SABRE Awards

EMEA

The 2017 EMEA SABRE Awards winners were selected from among more than 2,400 entries in this year's competition, which recognizes Superior Achievement in Branding, Reputation and Engagement. The campaigns were evaluated by a jury including more than 40 industry leaders.

The winners were announced at our annual awards dinner, held at the Roundhouse in London on May 23.

Winners

PLATINUM

WINNER

„Mein Kampf – gegen Rechts“—
Gesicht Zeigen! Für ein weltoffenes
Deutschland e.V. with Ogilvy Public
Relations GmbH

DIAMOND

COMPANY OF THE YEAR

Building McDonald's UK's Reputation
as a Responsible and Respected
Business—McDonald's UK with Teneo
Blue Rubicon

BRAND-BUILDING

The adidas Women "Workout
Series"—adidas LDN Newsroom with
Hope&Glory

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

In Search of the UAE's Unluckiest
Traveler—RSA with Edelman UAE

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

#ParallelBarking—Vauxhall with
Weber Shandwick

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

The Magic of Mobile Tickets—
Trainline with Tin Man

GOLD

GEOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES

AFRICA

SA Tomorrow—Johannesburg Stock
Exchange with Hill+Knowlton
Strategies

THE BALKANS

Energy Library—CEZ Vanzare with
Rogalski Damaschin PR

THE BALTIC

Safe at Work Coalition—CWS-boco
with FleishmanHillard sp. z o.o.

BENELUX

Why Microsoft and a Boyband
Pranked Dutch Youth—Microsoft with
Progress Communications

DACH

„Mein Kampf – gegen Rechts“—
Gesicht Zeigen! Für ein weltoffenes
Deutschland e.V. with Ogilvy Public
Relations GmbH

CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE

The Autism Simulator—SPOSA
Bratislava with Seesame s.r.o.

FRANCE

This Cob is Amazing!—French corn/maize industry bodies (AGPM, FNPSMS, Gnis) with BURSON-MARSTELLER I&E

IBERIA

First IBM Cognitive Menu in Spain—IBM with Text100

MEDITERRANEAN

#LetsputOnyourHead—UNHCR with INC - Istituto Nazionale per la Comunicazione Srl

MIDDLE EAST

Infiniti Speed Pitching—Infiniti with Four Communications

NORDICS

The Language Barrier—The Norwegian Red Cross with Try Advertising Agency

RUSSIA AND THE CIS

Russia Is ŠKODA Country—ŠKODA Russia with Ketchum Maslov

TURKEY

Melek & Serhat Series—Novartis Turkey with Communication Partner

UK (SMALL BUDGET)

The Magic of Mobile Tickets—Trainline with Tin Man

UK MID BUDGET

Zookeeper Zoe Eye Check Storybook—Boots Opticians with Red Consultancy

UK AND IRELAND (LARGE BUDGET)

The Year of the Fix for Direct Line from Unity—Direct Line with Unity

MULTI-COUNTRY PROGRAMME

The Truck Driver's Mother—The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority / The social partners within the Norwegian transportation sector with Geelmuyden Kiese

PAN-EUROPEAN PROGRAMME

Croatia - Out of Office Award—Croatian National Tourist Board with Grayling Austria GmbH, Grayling Croatia and Grayling Germany

GLOBAL PROGRAMME

The Swedish Number—Svenska Turistföreningen with Cohn & Wolfe Stockholm AB

PRACTICE AREAS

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS

HOW ALMONDS BECAME EUROPE'S NUMBER ONE NUT—Almond Board of California with Porter Novelli London

CONSUMER MARKETING (EXISTING PRODUCT)

In Search of the UAE's Unluckiest Traveler—RSA with Edelman UAE

CONSUMER MARKETING (NEW PRODUCT)

Launching IQOS and Helping the Tobacco Giant Quit Smoking—Philip Morris International with Pagefield Communications

INTEGRATED MARKETING

Shame or Glory—SodaStream Intl, Ltd.

INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE

The Next Rembrandt—Microsoft with Progress Communications

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

360 Degree-Campaign That Put the Heart Into Communication—Moscow Exchange with Comunica

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Multi-Generational Working by McDonald's UK—McDonald's UK with Teneo Blue Rubicon

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Good Advice from Young Minds—Statoil ASA with TRY and IUM Norway

FINANCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

I'm More Than My Debt—KRUK Romania with MSLGROUP The Practice

CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING

eBay Adopts L'Aquila—eBay Italy with APCO Worldwide

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Jointly Chartering New Territory – Early Participation in Germany's

Largest Electricity Grid Project—TenneT TSO GmbH with navos - Public Dialogue Consultants GmbH

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Friendship Breakfast—TINE SA with JCP

PUBLIC EDUCATION

#BetterThanThat—Polish Cultural Institute with APCO Worldwide

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Saving Importer's Reputation in Dieselgate—D'leteren with Interel Belgium

ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Making Nuclear Necessary—Rosatom with Instinctif Partners

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hands Off of My Insurance!—SLASPO (Slovak Insurance Association) with Seesame, s.r.o.

CORPORATE MEDIA RELATIONS

From Fat to Fuel - The World's 1st Christmas Diesel—Finnish Chemical Industry, Neste, K-Group, Lassila & Tikanoja, Rinki, Honkajoki, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation, Finnish Water Utilities Association, Finnish Environmental Industries with Miltton

PRODUCT MEDIA RELATIONS (CONSUMER)

Astounding the Front Row at London Fashion Week with Crocs—Crocs with FleishmanHillard Fishburn

PRODUCT MEDIA RELATIONS (TRADE)

Get a Job in 24 Hours—CornerJob with Allison+Partners

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

momondo - The DNA Journey—momondo with momondo A/S

SOCIAL MEDIA

HIGH FIVE TO TEAM RUSSIA—Yandex

BLOGGER OUTREACH

Lubyatovo Helps Kids With All Your Heart—Kellogg's/ Lubyatovo with FleishmanHillard Vanguard

INFLUENCER MARKETING

#BrutalCut—ActionAid UK with Weber Shandwick

GUERRILLA MARKETING

SOCIAL CRIME SHOPPING—eBay Corporate Services GmbH with achtung! GmbH

PUBLICITY STUNT

Sky.P.A.—Innis & Gunn with Manifest LDN

SPECIAL EVENT

Campaign: Supermarket C-Suite - Google Takes Retailers Back to the Floor—G Suite with Man Bites Dog

SPONSORSHIP

PLAYMOBIL: Setting Engagement Targets Ablaze with London Fire Brigade—PLAYMOBIL UK with OneChocolate

TRADE SHOW

World Premiere Mercedes-Benz E-Class - The First Car Seating 450 People—Daimler AG with Oliver Schrott Kommunikation GmbH

MARKETING TO MEN

Make Time For It—Meantime Brewing with Hope&Glory

MARKETING TO WOMEN

Avon's #Don'tWaitDrive: Take Your Mother for a Doctor's Check-Up—Avon with FleishmanHillard Vanguard

MARKETING TO YOUTH

Daron - The Quest for Knowledge—Norad - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation with Gambit Hill + Knowlton Strategies

MULTICULTURAL MARKETING

Sports Swedish for Immigrants—Svenska Spel with Jung Relations

INDUSTRY SECTORS

AUTOMOTIVE

Dacia Family Project—Renault - Dacia with MSLGROUP- Publicis Consultants Italia

FASHION AND BEAUTY

The Explorer—ALFA Sko AS with PR-operatørene AS

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Spare Chair Sunday—Bisto with Weber Shandwick

HOME AND FURNISHINGS

Ariel Care Centre for Clothes—P&G with Graffiti PR

ENTERTAINMENT

CZECH RUGBY LIVES!—Czech Rugby Association with PR.Konektor

FINANCIAL SERVICES

You Can't Work Forever—OTP Voluntary Pension Fund with Café PR Kft

FOOD SERVICE

Quality Made in Spain—McDonald's with apple tree communications

RETAILERS

The Dining Club—IKEA with Hope&Glory

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Nerd Against Nature—The Norwegian Trekking Association with Geelmuyden Kiese AS

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Make Denmark Greener—DONG Energy with Hill+Knowlton Strategies

CHEMICALS AND INDUSTRIALS

a-ha - Eternalized by Hydro in Virtual Reality—Norwegian Hydro with Burson-Marsteller Oslo

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Europe's Refugee Crisis: The Journey of Hero Norway—Hero Norway with Geelmuyden Kiese AS

REAL ESTATE AND CONSTRUCTION

The Repiping Project that Renovated the Industry—Fira Palvelut with Drum Communications Ltd.

TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS

The Pride Flag Stamp—PostNord with MSLGROUP Stockholm

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

Cubetto : A World Record Kickstarter Created by a Low Budget PR Campaign.—Primo Toys with Common Industry

TECHNOLOGY (HARDWARE)

One Ramadan—Huawei CBG with Memac Ogilvy Public Relations

TECHNOLOGY SOFTWARE AND SERVICES

Meal for Geeks (Jedlo pre Ajtákov)—T-Systems Slovakia with AC&C Public Relations

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Empowering the People Through Debate on Digitalisation—Telefónica Deutschland

WEB-BASED BUSINESS

eBay Adopts L'Aquila—eBay Italy with APCO Worldwide

ANIMAL CARE

Drontal & Advantage - The Inseparables—Bayer Animal Health with Pegasus

CONSUMER HEALTH

RB & LIONS HEALTH INNOVATION HACK—RB (RECKITT BENCKISER) with Virgo Health

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

What Would You Take from Your Home in the Event of an Emergency?—santalucía with LLORENTE & CUENCA S.L.

MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY

Health Tech Innovation for People with Dementia—CRDL with Porter Novelli

PHARMACEUTICAL RX

Manversation—Bayer with Cohn & Wolfe

ASSOCIATIONS

Makers Wanted—Bavarian Crafts Association with Ketchum Pleon GmbH

EDUCATIONAL CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

When the Ravann Makes Its Way to
the Notation System—ABAIM with
Blast Burson-Marsteller

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Enlightenment Trail: The World's
Most Beautiful Night Trek—Norad -
Norwegian Agency for Development
Cooperation with Gambit Hill +
Knowlton Strategies

NOT FOR PROFIT

„Mein Kampf – gegen Rechts“—
Gesicht Zeigen! Für ein weltoffenes
Deutschland e.V. with Ogilvy Public
Relations GmbH



The IN2 SABRE Awards EMEA

More than 25 public relations firms from across the EMEA region were presented with IN2 SABRE Awards during our IN2 Innovation Summit at the Ham Yard Hotel in London in May.

The IN2 SABREs recognize excellence in various categories of innovation and insight—with an emphasis on content creation—as well as PR agency management and marketing.

Winners

DIGITAL AND PRINT MEDIA

Plusnet Emojis—Plusnet with Kaper

BROADCAST MEDIA

The Next Rembrandt—Microsoft with Progress Communications

NON-JOURNALIST INFLUENCERS/ COMMUNITIES

#BrutalCut—ActionAid UK with Weber Shandwick

PERSUASIVE CONTENT

Therese's Tech Takeover—The Association of Swedish Engineering Industries with Volontaire

CONTENT CREATION ON MEDIA SITES

Sending Bill Bailey Where No Man Has Been Before—PlayStation with Fever PR

SPONSORED CONTENT

Good Advice from Young Minds—Statoil ASA with TRY and IUM Norway

INFLUENCER ENDORSEMENT

Face Your Fear—Samsung with Wenderfalck

MEDIA PARTNERSHIP

Future Health—Philips with OneVoiceConnect (Ketchum London), The Story Lab, Carat and The Telegraph

SOCIAL GOOD

The Friendship Breakfast—TINE SA with JCP

ONLINE ADVERTISING

An Empty Bottle is Full of Energy—Infinitum with Geelmuyden Kiese AS and Anti

BEST USE OF FACEBOOK

momondo - The DNA Journey—momondo A/S

BEST USE OF TWITTER

Global Slavery Index 2016—Walk Free Foundation with FTI Consulting

BEST USE OF LINKEDIN

Optimising Arup's Global Content Strategy—Arup with Brands2Life

BEST USE OF TUMBLR, VINE, PINTEREST, SNAPCHAT OR INSTAGRAM

ShareWear—Visit Sweden & The Swedish Institute with Prime Weber Shandwick

BEST USE OF BLOGS

Trick and Treating Kids Since 2016—Arla Luonto+ with Miltton Oy

SOCIAL MEDIA COLLECTIVE

#ParallelBarking—Vauxhall with Weber Shandwick

CROWDSOURCING AND CO-CREATING

The Swedish Number—Svenska Turistföreningen with Cohn & Wolfe Stockholm AB

REAL TIME ENGAGEMENT

Royal Jordanian US Elections Ad—Royal Jordanian Airlines with Memac Ogilvy

MEME

#BETTERTHANTHAT—Azimo with Harvard

GAMIFICATION

Daron - The Quest for Knowledge—Norad - Norwegian Agency for Development

BRANDED NARRATIVES

Nerd Against Nature—The Norwegian Trekking Association with Geelmuyden Kiese AS

BRAND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Panama Canal. The Major Engineering Work of the XXI Century—Sacyr with LLORENTE & CUENCA S.L.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Carbon Couture—BMW Group with iris Worldwide

DIGITAL VIDEO

Parkour Action—EnBW Energie Baden-Württemberg AG with Ketchum Pleon GmbH

ANIMATION VIDEO

Talk to Us—RUStelefonen with Nucleus AS

IDENTITY BRANDING

The Hassle-Free Christmas—Norwegian Property / Aker Brygge with Geelmuyden Kiese

SEO

Improving Diabetics' Lives: Reaching Diabetics Through An Online Community—Roche Diabetes Care with Farner Consulting AG

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA OR ANALYTICS

Science of Business Sharing—Alpha Grid, a Financial Times company

RESEARCH FOR PR

Vodafone's Anti-Bullying Emojis—Vodafone Group

MEASUREMENT

The Magic of Mobile Tickets—Trainline with Tin Man

MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

VW-SMART SCREEN PROJECT—VOLKSWAGEN COMMERCIAL VEHICLES with Lobby Communications

BEST AGENCY WEBSITE

The Agency Website of the Year—Eulogy & gt&i

BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA - AGENCY

Pro-Vision Dream Team 18+. Anything Is Possible—Pro-Vision Communications

BEST LIVE EVENT - AGENCY

Social Media Week London Emoji Takeover—Weber Shandwick

INNOVATIVE AGENCY INITIATIVE

Octopus Group - Brand To Sales—Octopus Group

INNOVATIVE MARKETING/ COMMUNICATIONS TEAM - BRAND

De Beers Bot 50 Campaign—De Beers with Engage Joe Public

MOST INNOVATIVE BRAND/AGENCY COLLABORATION

Raising Up the New Startup Stars—Portuguese Start Ups with Corpcom PR

PR AGENCY MARKETING

#CiceroCardboard—Cicero Group

PR AGENCY CITIZENSHIP

G(irls)20 2016 Summit—G(irls)20 with Burson-Marsteller

PR AGENCY EMPLOYEE PROGRAM

Creativity Syndrome—MSLGROUP The Practice

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN PR

Inside the Hearts and Minds of Arab Youth: The Eighth Annual Arab Youth Survey 2016—ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller



The SABRE Awards Asia-Pacific

Winners were announced at the 2017 Asia-Pacific SABRE Awards ceremony, which was held at the JW Marriott Hong Kong, on September 14. The awards dinner followed the Asia-Pacific IN2 Innovation Summit, which also featured the IN2 SABRE Awards. Also announced at the evening Awards Ceremony were the 2017 Asia-Pacific Consultancies of the Year.

Winners

PLATINUM

BEST IN SHOW

Uncover the Truth—Transparency International Sri Lanka with Ogilvy Public Relations

DIAMOND

CEO OF THE YEAR

Chanda Kochhar—ICICI Bank with Adfactors PR

COMPANY OF THE YEAR

Paytm

BRAND-BUILDING

Outthink Melanoma—IBM with Text100, Ogilvy, George P. Johnson

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Making Olive Oil Famous in Thailand, by Hill + Knowlton Strategies Thailand—Bertolli Olive oil, Thailand with Hill+Knowlton Strategies - Thailand

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

The Microsoft Asia Digital Transformation Study—Microsoft Asia with IN.FOM

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

HOW KOREAN PART-TIME WORKERS GOT FULL-TIME RESPECT—Media Will (Alba Chunkuk) with Weber Shandwick Korea

GOLD

GEOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

Outthink Melanoma—IBM with Text100, Ogilvy, George P. Johnson

GREATER CHINA

MW vs MWR - A Battle for Reputation—Man Wah Holdings Limited with Strategic Public Relations Group

INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

Back To Work—Medela with Genesis Burson-Marsteller

JAPAN

Election in the Dark—Yahoo Japan Corporation with DENTSU INC.

KOREA

HOW KOREAN PART-TIME WORKERS GOT FULL-TIME RESPECT—Media Will (Alba Chunkuk) with Weber Shandwick Korea

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Making Olive Oil Famous in Thailand, by Hill + Knowlton Strategies Thailand—Bertolli Olive Oil, Thailand with Hill+Knowlton Strategies - Thailand

MULTI-COUNTRY CAMPAIGN

Visa Rallies Cross-Nation Support for Successful 2016 China-U.S. Year of Tourism—VISA with Ruder Finn China

REGIONAL CAMPAIGN

United Problem Solvers (Asia Pacific)—UPS with Ogilvy Public Relations

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Tackling the Sanitation Crisis—LIXIL Corporation

PRACTICE AREAS

MARKETING TO CONSUMERS (EXISTING PRODUCT)

Unhungry India - A New Beginning—Godrej Appliances with Adfactors PR Pvt Ltd

MARKETING TO CONSUMERS (NEW PRODUCT)

Leading the Cashless Revolution in India—Paytm with Value 360 Communications

INTEGRATED MARKETING

Making Olive Oil Famous in Thailand, by Hill + Knowlton Strategies Thailand—Bertolli Olive Oil, Thailand with Hill+Knowlton Strategies - Thailand

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

Cisco Awakens a New India – Enabling Digital Transformation in India—Cisco India with Adfactors PR Pvt. Ltd.

CORPORATE IMAGE

Love Digital in the Times of Demonetisation—ICICI Bank with Adfactors PR

EXECUTIVE POSITIONING

Announcing the First Acquisition of an English Premier League Club by a Mainland Chinese Owner—Yunyi Guokai (Shanghai) Sports Development Ltd with FTI Consulting

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

HIV: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF THE TEST—Taiwan AIDS Society & Taiwan AIDS Nurses Association with Golin Taiwan

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

GA NA DA Campaign to Encourage Childbirth in Korea—Ministry of Health and Welfare-The Republic of Korea with Prain Global Inc. & Daehong Communications

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Savlon Healthy Hands Chalk Sticks—ITC SAVLON with PR Pundit

FINANCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Leading India's Financial Revolution!—Paytm with Value 360 Communications

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

Women at Viacom18 – Ushering in a WAVE of Change—Viacom18 Media Pvt. Ltd.

CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING

Pocket Patrol—Samsung with Edelman

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Characters of Kings Cross—Coca-Cola with N2N Communications

CORPORATE MEDIA RELATIONS

Say Cheese to LiHO—Royal T Group Pte Ltd with Ruder Finn Asia Pte Ltd

PRODUCT MEDIA RELATIONS

Asia's First Crowdfunded Gin—Paper Lantern with W Asia

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

GLICODE—Ezaki Glico Co.,Ltd. with Dentsu inc.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

#IShapeMyWorld – Redefining the Shape of Gender Stereotypes in India—Levi's Strauss India Pvt. Ltd with Zeno Group India

INFLUENCER MARKETING

Putting Canola Oil in Every Indian Kitchen—Canola Council of Canada with Edelman

MARKETING TO MEN

General Tire's Debut in China - Making Your SUV, More SUV—General Tire with Burson-Marsteller

MARKETING TO WOMEN

2016, The Year of adidas Women—adidas Singapore with Creation Singapore (a company of CMG Group Pte Ltd)

MARKETING TO YOUTH

BREAK-UP INSURANCE—goodroom. inc with Dentsu.inc

INDUSTRY SECTORS

AUTOMOTIVE

TASTE DRIVING—Toyota Marketing Japan Corporation with Dentsu Inc.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Winning Back Trust—Nestle India with Genesis Burson-Marsteller

FASHION AND BEAUTY

Olay Mystery Campaign—P&G with DeVries Global

HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

China Gets Colourful—Dulux AkzoNobel with Ketchum

TRAVEL AND LEISURE

WTA FINALS Best Sports PR Campaign—Lagardere Sports, WTA with Weber Shandwick

ENTERTAINMENT

A Gift from Minecraft Chinese Edition Launch: Water Cube to Grass Block—NetEase with UTOP Communications-South China Office

RETAILERS

FamilyMart Little Store Manager–
Play Together, Learn Better—Taiwan
FamilyMart with Ogilvy Public
Relations Taiwan

RESTAURANTS AND FOOD SERVICE

Preparing the Perfect Pizza:
#PizzaExpressSG—PizzaExpress
Singapore with The Hoffman Agency
Asia Pacific Pte Ltd

CONSUMER HEALTH

Through My Eyes—Pfizer Oncology
with BlueCurrent Group Hong Kong

PHARMACEUTICAL

Taking Mental Health Out of the
Shadows: Launching the Asia Pacific
Integration Index—Janssen Asia
Pacific with Weber Shandwick Hong
Kong

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Back To Work—Medela with Genesis
Burson-Marsteller

INDUSTRIAL AND MANUFACTURING

Honeywell Hometown Solutions &
Safe Water Network - India—
Honeywell with Weber Shandwick

TECHNOLOGY CONSUMER

Samsung Newsroom—Samsung
Electronics with Edelman Korea

TECHNOLOGY (B2B)

Appreciating The World's First
Regional Operating System—Indus
OS with Text100

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Lighting the Way Forward—Myanmar
Post and Telecommunications with
Echo Myanmar

**FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES**

PayPal mCommerce Index—PayPal
with Edelman

ASSOCIATIONS

HIV: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF THE
TEST —Taiwan AIDS Society & Taiwan
AIDS Nurses Association with Golin
Taiwan

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Fur Out! Canine Idols Woo(f) Tourists
to Akita—Akita Inu Tourism with
Dentsu Public Relations Inc.

CHARITIES AND NOT FOR PROFITS

Uncover the Truth—Transparency
International Sri Lanka with Ogilvy
Public Relations



The IN2 SABRE Awards Asia-Pacific

The 2017 IN2 SABRE Awards, which recognize excellence in multi-media content creation, were presented at a lunchtime ceremony at the Asia-Pacific IN2 Innovation Summit, held at the JW Marriott Hong Kong, on September 14. The conference preceded the 2017 Asia-Pacific SABRE Awards ceremony, at the same venue, in the evening.

Winners

LIVE EVENTS

ALL-STAR RESTAURANT—Volvo Car Japan Limited with DENTSU INC.

SPONSORSHIP

2017 Colgate Games New Zealand's Junior Olympics—Colgate-Palmolive with SenateSHJ

TRADE SHOWS AND AWARDS

DHgate One Belt and One Road Summit Campaign—DHgate.com with FleishmanHillard

DIGITAL AND PRINT MEDIA

Cartier Nails Down Millennials—Cartier with Creation

BROADCAST MEDIA

Turning Up the Heat for Singapore's Hottest Startup—Carousell with Allison+Partners

PERSUASIVE CONTENT

#NamakKeWaastey—Tata Salt with Rediffusion Edelman

MEDIA PARTNERSHIP

Lighting the Way Forward—Myanmar Post and Telecommunications with Echo Myanmar

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

HIV: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF THE TEST—Taiwan AIDS Society & Taiwan AIDS Nurses Association with Golin Taiwan

ADVERTISING

JD + Hasbro Transformers Co-branding Marketing—JD & Hasbro with BlueFocus Digital

GLOBAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Balance the Equation—General Electric – India with Edelman India Pvt Ltd

VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Lenovo Global Social Strategy—Lenovo with Text100 Hong Kong

ASIAN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Eason Chan Singing I Do to You—I Do with HIERSUN

BRAND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

CRÉATEURS DE CONVIVIALITÉ 创享欢聚—Pernod Ricard China with Cohn&Wolfe

DIGITAL NEWSROOMS

Thought Leadership Through Personal Stories—Microsoft Asia with IN.FOM

DIGITAL VIDEO

How to Eat Sushi the Right Way—
simpleshow Foundation with
simpleshow Japan

PODCAST/WEBCAST

Audi: The World's Fastest Interactive
Livestream—Audi with Ogilvy Public
Relations, Beijing

BRANDING AND IDENTITY

#beORANGE—Disaster Prevention
Girl with PR TIMES



The SABRE Awards South Asia

The winners were announced at the awards ceremony in Mumbai on 27 July.

Winners

PLATINUM

BEST IN SHOW

Back to Work—Medela with Genesis Burson-Marsteller

DIAMOND

CEO OF THE YEAR

Arundhati Bhattacharya—State Bank of India

COMPANY OF THE YEAR

Paytm—Paytm

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN BRAND-BUILDING

Keep India Smiling—Colgate Palmolive India with Genesis Burson-Marsteller

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN CREATIVITY

Savlon Healthy Hands Chalk Sticks—ITC SAVLON with PR Pundit

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Paytm Demonetization Campaign—Paytm

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

#ChangiBarepackers—Changi Airport Group with MSLGROUP India

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN RESEARCH & PLANNING

Western Union - Enabling Financial Inclusion in India through Remittances—Western Union Financial Services Inc. with Edelman

PRACTICE AREAS

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

Making Storage Flashy—NetApp India with Text100

CORPORATE IMAGE

Dream BIG with Ola—Ola with Adfactors PR Pvt Ltd

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

SERVING ALCOHOL RESPONSIBLY – A CULTURAL CHANGE PROGRAMME—AB-INBEV with Avian Media Pvt Ltd

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

LAUNCH OF GOODKNIGHT FABRIC ROLL ON—GODREJ

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

Reignite Flipkart—Flipkart Internet Pvt. Ltd.

FINANCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Bit by Bit: Building Bitcoin in India—Unocoin with Value 360 Communications

INTEGRATED MARKETING

Back To Work Genesis—Medela with Genesis Burson-Marsteller

MARKETING TO CONSUMERS (NEW PRODUCT)

LAUNCH OF GOODKNIGHT FABRIC ROLL ON—GODREJ

MARKETING TO CONSUMERS (EXISTING PRODUCT)

BRINGING BACK THE CHARM OF
FLYING—Vistara with Avian Media Pvt
Ltd

MEDIA RELATIONS

State Bank of India - Braving the
Tsunami of Demonetization—State
Bank of India with Adfactors PR
Private Limited

PUBLIC AFFAIRS/GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

SERVING ALCOHOL RESPONSIBLY – A
CULTURAL CHANGE PROGRAMME—
AB-INBEV with Avian Media Pvt Ltd

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mirinda - Release the Pressure—
PepsiCo with Edelman India

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Get Angry!—Viacom18 Media Pvt. Ltd.

SPECIAL EVENT

Himalayan Highs—TVS Motor
Company with Text100 Global
Communications

INDUSTRY SECTORS

ASSOCIATIONS

Putting Canola Oil in Every Indian
Kitchen—Canola Council of Canada
with Edelman

CONSUMER PRODUCTS/SERVICES

Himalayan Highs—TVS Motor
Company with Text100 Global
Communications

FASHION AND BEAUTY

#UnitedByHalf—United Colors of
Benetton with PR Pundit

FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Bringing Half a Billion Population to
Mainstream Economy—Paytm with
Value 360 Communications

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

“LEARN VPO, LIVE VPO, LOVE VPO”—
AB-INBEV with Avian Media Pvt Ltd

HEALTHCARE

Back to Work—Medela with Genesis
Burson-Marsteller

INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING

Driving Rural Prosperity through
Trringo—Mahindra & Mahindra with
Adfactors PR

MEDIA, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Budhia Singh – Running Against All
Odds—Viacom18 Motion Pictures
with Viacom18 Media Pvt. Ltd.

NOT FOR PROFIT

Creating Warriors out of Survivors—
Free a Girl Movement with
FleishmanHillard

PUBLIC SECTOR/GOVERNMENT

State Bank of India - Braving the
Tsunami of Demonetization—State
Bank of India with Adfactors PR
Private Limited

TECHNOLOGY

Powering India To The Moon—
TeamIndus with Text100

TRAVEL AND LEISURE

There’s Nothing Like Australia—
Tourism Australia

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Back to School—Flipkart



The SABRE Awards Latin America

The 2017 Latin America SABRE Awards includes categories recognizing the best programming in various countries and regions—from Mexico and the Caribbean to Argentina and Brazil—as well as practice areas from crisis communications to consumer marketing and industry sectors from healthcare to technology.

Winners

COMPANY OF THE YEAR

A Communications Way for
Legendary Communications at
Kimberly-Clark—Kimberly-Clark Latin
America Operations

BRAND-BUILDING

Football in Latam: A Passion
Cultivated in Small-Sided Roots—
Nike with Extend Comunicaciones

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

ONEMI, A Reputational Rebirth—
Oficina Nacional de Emergencia with
Extend Comunicaciones

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Milking Stories Inside—Nestlé with
S/A LLORENTE & CUENCA

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Introducing The K-C Way—Kimberly-
Clark Latin America Operations

GEOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES

MEXICO

Stay with El Chavo del 8—Airbnb with
JeffreyGroup

CENTRAL AMERICA

TAN FACIL COMO—AED with CAC
Porter Novelli

ARGENTINA

#QuéOnda (What's Up With)—AVON
Foundation with LLORENTE &
CUENCA

BRAZIL

UMA ÁRVORE, UMA VOZ—UNILEVER
with IN PRESS PORTER NOVELLI/ in
partnership with CRITICAL MASS

LATIN AMERICA

ONEMI, A Reputational Rebirth—
Oficina Nacional de Emergencia with
Extend Comunicaciones

MULTI-MARKET

Nissan NP300 Frontier, A Legendary
Launch—Nissan Latin-America

PRACTICE AREAS

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS

Suvinil Maxx Rendimento: Quebrando
Preconceitos—Suvinil with Máquina
Cohn & Wolfe

CORPORATE IMAGE

Puertas Abiertas—Arcos Dorados with
Porter Novelli

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONBSIBILITY

Recicláveis Que Valem kWh—AES
Eletropaulo with In Press Porter
Novelli

CRISIS/ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Say Yes to the Sweet Things in Life—
Splenda with JeffreyGroup

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

#AustraliaTotalmenteDemais—
Tourism Australia with Interamerican
Network

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

“JULIETA” Historia Clínica Electrónica
de CASMU—casmu with Improfit

FINANCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

From Unknown to Referent—VeriTran
with Edelman

MARKETING TO CONSUMER (NEW PRODUCT)

#Redefinite—LG with Hill + Knowlton
Strategies Argentina

MARKETING TO CONSUMER EXISTING PRODUCT)

Vaseline Beauty Skin Deep—Unilever/
Vaseline with In Press Porter Novelli

MEDIA RELATIONS

¿Cómo Hacer Crecer un Destino
Turístico en un Economía
Inestable?—Promperú with Axon

PUBLIC AFFAIRS/GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Organizational Strengthening and
Survival - CNC—Consejo Nacional de
la Competitividad (CNC) with
Burson-Marsteller

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mobilizing Against Zika—UNICEF with
JeffreyGroup

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Age Shamelessly | Envelhecer Sem
Vergonha—Pfizer with Ketchum

SPONSORSHIP

Sustainable Business—Unilever with
URBAN Grupo de Comunicación

INDUSTRY SECTORS

ASSOCIATIONS

Projeto Transforma: Como a
Comunicação Ajuda a Construir um
Legado Olímpico—Rio 2016 Olympic
and Paralympic Games with
Approach Comunicação

CONSUMER PRODUCTS/SERVICES

Football in Latam: A Passion
Cultivated in Small-Sided Roots—
Nike with Extend Comunicaciones

FASHION AND BEAUTY

AVON, Beauty Empowers Women—
AVON with LLORENTE & CUENCA

FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

#RiobyPayPal - A 100% Carioca
Experience—PayPal with MSLGROUP
ANDREOLI

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Diageo Brand Mexico—Diageo with
Burson-Marsteller

HEALTHCARE

#RespireAgosto Digital Campaign—
Bristol-Myers Squibb with Ogilvy
Public Relations Brazil

INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING

Puerto Ventanas, Abierto a la
Comunidad—Puerto Ventanas with
Extend Comunicaciones

MEDIA, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Need for Speed: Own the Streets—
Electronic Arts with S2Publicom
Weber Shandwick

NOT FOR PROFIT

Safe Stories / Histórias Seguras—
Ananse with Ketchum/Little George

PUBLIC SECTOR/GOVERNMENT

ONEMI, A Reputational Rebirth—
Oficina Nacional de Emergencia with
Extend Comunicaciones

TECHNOLOGY

Mozilla Nativo: Opening the Internet
to Indigenous Cultures—Mozilla with
JeffreyGroup

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Kia Ora Buenos Aires—Air New
Zealand with Hill + Knowlton
Strategies



The SABRE Awards Africa

The first ever African SABRE Awards ceremony was held as part of the African Public Relations Association's annual conference in Morocco in May.

Winners

PLATINUM

BEST IN SHOW

#ProTESTHIV—Anglo-American with Ogilvy Public Relations Johannesburg

DIAMOND

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

SA Tomorrow—Johannesburg Stock Exchange with Hill+Knowlton

BRAND-BUILDING

Ford—Ford with PR Media

GOLD

GEOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES

NORTHERN AFRICA

Mawazine—Mawazine

WESTERN AFRICA

The Royal Visit—Facebook with Red Media Africa

EASTERN AFRICA

My #ColgateSmilefie—Colgate-Palmolive with Burson-Marsteller Africa

SOUTHERN AFRICA

“Sage Knows” Budget Speech Campaign 2016—Sage

PRACTICE AREAS

CORPORATE IMAGE

Making Nuclear Necessary: South African Campaign—Rosatom with Instinctif Partners Africa

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

#ProTESTHIV—Anglo American with Ogilvy Public Relations Johannesburg

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

Mawazine—Mawazine

FINANCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

#Maymkench (Impossible!)—Credit du Maroc

MARKETING TO CONSUMERS (NEW PRODUCT)

Ford—Ford with PR Media

MARKETING TO CONSUMERS (EXISTING PRODUCT)

Coke Studio Africa—The Coca-Cola Company with Ogilvy Public Relations

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Be a Buddy and Not a Bully with CN Buddy Network—Turner Broadcasting - Cartoon Network with Burson-Marsteller Africa

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

#ProTESTHIV—Anglo American with Ogilvy Public Relations Johannesburg

SPECIAL EVENT

Lion Guard – Return of the Roar—
MultiChoice Kenya with Engage
Burson Marsteller

INDUSTRY SECTORS

FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

NextGenFactor - Fishing for Talent—
PwC Mauritius with Blast Burson-
Marsteller

HEALTHCARE

#MissingType—The South African
National Blood Service with
FleishmanHillard South Africa

INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING

Making Nuclear Necessary: South
African Campaign—Rosatom with
Instinctif Partners Africa

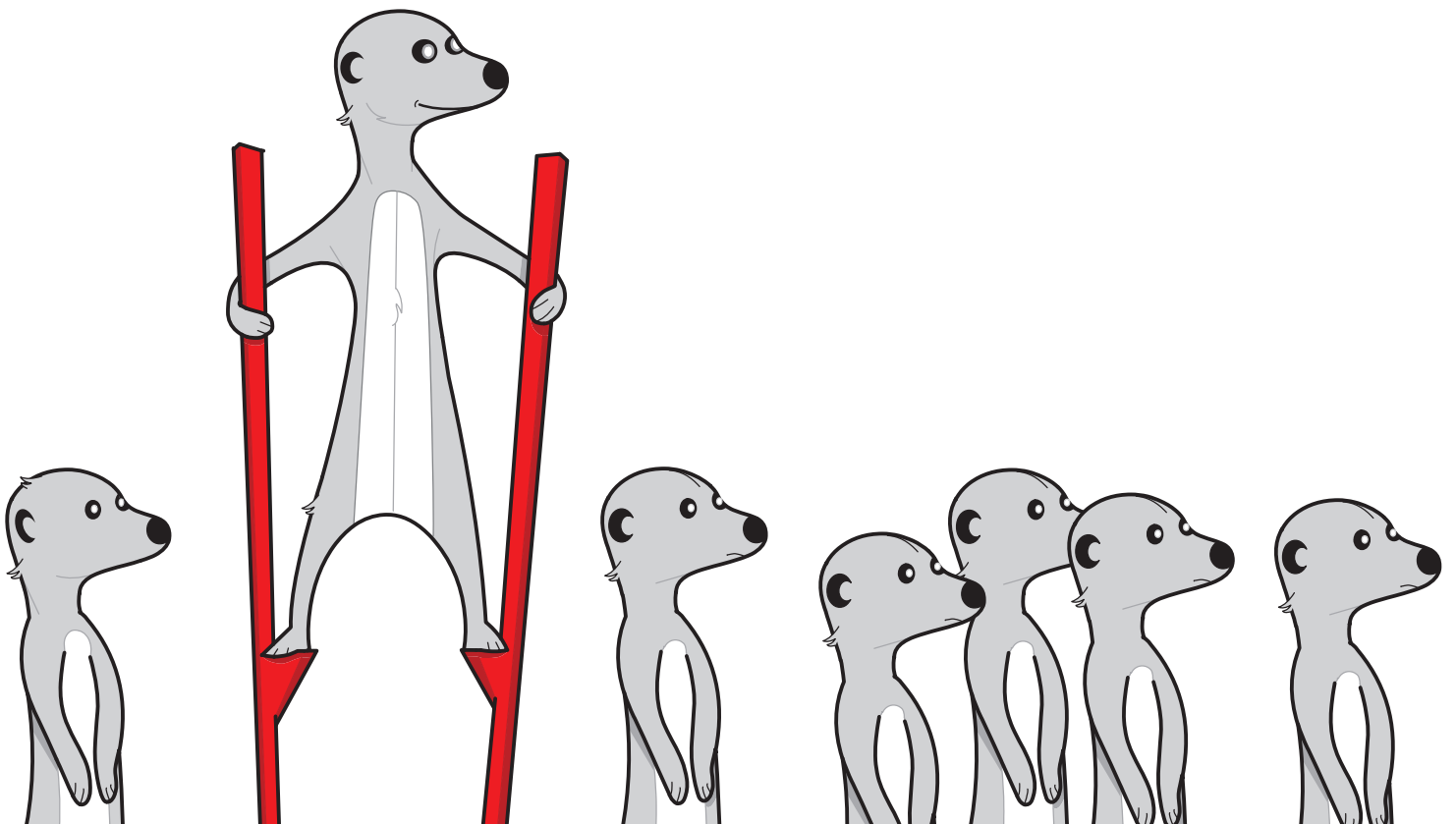
NONPROFIT

Help, Hope, Life—Faraja Cancer
Support Trust with Levanter Africa

PUBLIC SECTOR

2016 Municipal Elections –
Democratic Alliance (DA) with the
King James Group

STAND OUT





2017 Global Creative Index

Daughters of Mother India named top campaign, as Weber Shandwick pips Ogilvy to top honours in Holmes Report’s annual ranking of creative excellence in PR.

Weber Shandwick has returned to top spot in the 2017 edition of the Global Creative Index, marking the second time in three years that the Interpublic PR firm has ranked first in the Holmes Report’s annual benchmark of creativity in the public relations world.

The sixth edition of the Global Creative Index analyses entries and winners from more than 25 PR, digital and marketing awards programmes from around the world over a 12-month period. This year, the formula was revamped to take into account the expansion of ‘public relations’ work across multiple categories at advertising-oriented shows such as the Cannes Lions, with the methodology favouring agencies designated for ‘idea-creation’.

That helped Weber Shandwick prevail at the top of the ranking over Ogilvy and Edelman, which ranked first last year. Weber Shandwick’s performance was powered by the Daughters of Mother India campaign for Vibha Bakshi, a courageous effort to address violence against women in India — which swept awards shows in 2016 and 2017, in the process topping the campaign ranking as the most awarded PR program in the world

(see below). Other key award-winning efforts included the #BrutalCut campaign for ActionAid UK, Pearson’s Alphabet for Illiteracy and work for Vauxhall, Universal Pictures and Mattel.

Ogilvy rebounded to second spot after dropping to fourth last year following first-place finishes in 2015 and 2014. The WPP firm benefited from a range of campaigns from across the world, including the ‘Mein Kamp - Gegen Rechts’ effort that took Best of Show at this year’s SABRE Awards EMEA.

Edelman dropped to third after taking top spot last year, while MSL jumped two spots from sixth to fourth. Elsewhere, H+K Strategies, FleishmanHillard and Porter Novelli all improve by one spot, while BBDO makes its debut appearance in the top 10.

2017 Rank	2016 Rank	Agency	Points
1	2	Weber Shandwick*	125
2	4	Ogilvy	119
3	1	Edelman	84
4	6	MSL	68
5	5	Ketchum	66
6	6	Burson-Marsteller	64
7	8	H+K Strategies	60
8	9	FleishmanHillard	49
9	10	Porter Novelli	37
10	28	BBDO	32.5

*includes Prime & Creation

Once again, the top of the overall agency table is dominated by global PR networks, thanks to their volume of awards.

However, an alternative measure of agency creativity comes from weighting agency scores according to their staff size. Accordingly, the Holmes Report has again used a points per head calculation to identify which are, ‘pound for pound’, the most creative PR agencies in the world.

In 2017, this title is taken by three-year-old UK boutique Tin Man. Remarkably, Tin Man is part-owned by third-ranked Unity, which itself has led the weighted table for four of the past five years. Both firms, unsurprisingly, were shortlisted for Creative Consultancy of the Year honours in EMEA this year.

Singapore’s IN.FOM, which ranked fourth in 2015, takes second spot, with the top five rounded out for the second consecutive year by US consultancy LDWWgroup and perennial UK creative powerhouse Hope&Glory.

The weighted table also reflects considerable geographic diversity beyond the US and UK — there are also agencies from Singapore (IN.FOM), UAE/Africa (Djembe), Slovakia (Seesame), and Spain (Marco). Rather surprisingly, Scandinavia’s status as a premier creative market is only reflected by one firm — Sweden’s Jung Relations.

2017 Rank	2016 Rank	Agency	Country	Weighted Score
1	-	Tin Man	UK	667
2	-	IN.FOM	Singapore	579
3	2	Unity	UK	400
4	4	LDWWgroup	USA	375
5	5	Hope & Glory	UK	241
6	-	Djembe Communications	UAE	213
7	-	Seesame	Slovakia	200
8	-	Jung Relations	Sweden	171
9	13	JeffreyGroup	USA	98
10	-	MHP Communications	UK	95
11	-	RF Binder	USA	88
12	7	Olson Engage	USA	86
13	-	M&C Saatchi PR	UK	76
14	-	GCI Health	USA	73
15	-	Marco de Comunicacion	Spain	67

DAUGHTERS OF MOTHER INDIA TOPS CAMPAIGN RANKING

Daughters of Mother India, a Weber Shandwick campaign supporting the documentary by Vibha Bakshi, emerged as the most-awarded PR program of the past 12 months according to the Holmes Report's 2017 Global Creative Index. The brave campaign addressed the police response to sexual crime in India, and saw Weber Shandwick use the documentary as a basis for training to help police better deal with rape situations.

The Index analysed entries and winners from more than 25 PR award programmes from around the world, over a 12-month period, using the 2017 Cannes Lions as a cut-off point. Scores were weighted according to a Holmes Report formula that placed particular emphasis on Best of Show winners, while also taking into account the expansion of 'public relations' work across multiple categories at advertising-oriented shows such as the Cannes Lions.

In second spot was Philips Breathless Choir by OneVoice agencies Ketchum and FleishmanHillard, ahead of the Swedish Tourist Association's Swedish Number effort from Ingo & Cohn & Wolfe, both of which continued to perform well at award shows this year after cracking last year's top 10.

UK campaign Missing Type from the NHS and MHP Communications came in fourth, while Whirlpool's data-centric Care Counts effort by Digitas LBi and Ketchum ranked fifth. Meanwhile, Momondo's inspiring DNA Journey initiative — the Holmes Report's favourite Cannes PR Lions winner — came in at sixth.

The results, which rank the top 10 PR campaigns as determined by award shows, reflect how brand 'purpose' has become a key ingredient in award-winning work, with many of the campaigns focusing on broader social issues. Our recent longread explores whether brand purpose has reached the end of the line.

Rank	Points	Campaign	Agency	Client
1	23	Daughters of Mother India	Weber Shandwick	Vibha Bakshi
2	18	Philips Breathless Choir	OneVoice	Philips
3	14	The Swedish Number	Cohn & Wolfe & Ingo	Svenska Turistforenigen
4	13	Missing Type	MHP Communications	NHS Blood and Transplant
5	12	Care Counts	Ketchum & Digitas LBI	Whirlpool Brand
6	11	The DNA Journey	&co	Momondo A/S
7	9	HSBC Now	MerchantCantos	HSBC
7	9	Share the Load	BBDO & DeVries Global	P&G India
7	9	SpiceJet: Rising Like A Phoenix	Adfactors	SpiceJet

P&G TAKES FIRST PLACE IN NEW COMPANY RANKING

P&G retains top spot in the Global Creative Index's ranking of companies according to the performance of their campaigns in the various award shows that are tracked around the world. The FMCG giant again prevails over rival Unilever at the top of the table.

P&G's haul is led by the impressive Share the Load campaign for Ariel in India, along with continued work for the #LikeAGirl theme that has been running for several years now.

2017 Rank	2016 Rank	Company	Points
1	1	Procter & Gamble	45
2	2	Unilever	37
3	-	Samsung	28
4	5	McDonald's	24
5	10	Philips	23
6	-	Vibha Bakshi	23
7	7	Nestle	22
7	8	Microsoft	22
9	6	Coca-Cola	21
10	4	Heineken	18

The Global Creative Index analyses entries and winners from more than 25 PR award programmes from around the world, over a 12 month period, using the 2017 Cannes Lions as a cut-off point. Scores were weighted according to a Holmes Report formula that placed particular emphasis on Best of Show winners.



The 2017 Influence 100

The Holmes Report's Influence 100 recognizes the most important and influential in-house communicators from around the world. Corporate communications executives are facing more complexity than ever. Not only do major corporations face more intense public and media scrutiny, senior PR executives are expected to deliver more than ever — more strategy, more content, more channels, more creativity and more measurement.

Meanwhile, smart CEOs have come to realize a trusted communications advisor is integral to their success — and their organization's — success.



Aaron Sherinian

Chief Marketing & Communications Officer
Aga Khan Foundation



Aline Santos

EVP Global Marketing and Global Head of Diversity
Unilever



Andreas Gall

Chief Innovation Officer
Red Bull Media House



Adele Ambrose

Senior vice president, CCO
Merck



Alison Lewis

Global CMO
Johnson & Johnson



Andrew Parker

Group Executive, Government, Industry and International Affairs
Qantas



Adrienne Lofton

SVP, Brand Marketing
Under Armour



Anders Bylund

Head Of Group Communications
Interogo Holding AG



Andy Pharoah

Vice President, Corporate Affairs and Strategic Initiatives
Mars



Ann Mukherjee

Global CMO
SC Johnson



Chris Maroleng

Group Executive for
Corporate Affairs
MTN Group



D'Arcy Rudnay

CCO
Comcast



Anthony Palmer

President, Global
Brands and Innovation
Kimberly-Clark



Chris Monteiro

CCO
KPMG



Dan Bartlett

EVP of Corporate
Affairs and Government
Relations
Walmart



*Beatrice
Dautresme*

EVP Corporate
Communications and
External Affairs
L'Oreal



Christine Graeff

Director General
Communications
European Central Bank



Dan Tarman

CCO
eBay



Beatriz Perez

SVP, Chief
Public Affairs,
Communications and
Sustainability Officer
The Coca-Cola
Company



Christof Ehrhart

Head of corporate
communications and
responsibility
Deutsche Post



Darcy Keller

CCO & CMO
FT



Boutros Boutros

Senior SVP, Corporate
Communications,
Marketing and Brand
Emirates



Claire Divver

Group Communications
Director
BAE Systems



Dave Samson

General Manager of
Public Affairs
Chevron



Brent Gardner

Chief Government
Affairs Officer
Americans for
Prosperity



*Claire Dorland
Clauzel*

Director of
Communications &
Brands
Michelin



David Palombi

SVP & CCO
CVS Health



Brian Lott

Executive Director,
Group Communications
Mubadala



Corey duBrowa

EVP /CCO
Salesforce



David Roman

SVP & CMO
Lenovo



Debasis Ray

Head —
Communications
Tata Trusts



Deirdre Latour

VP and CCO
GE



Hans-Gerd Bode

VP of Communications
Volkswagen



Jennifer Kuperman

Head of International
Corporate
Communications
Alibaba



*Devry Boughner
Vorwerk*

Corporate VP,
Corporate Affairs
Cargill



Isabel de Paoli

Head Of Group
Communications
Merck KGaA



Jon Banner

Executive Vice
President
Communications
Pepsico



Ed Walsh

SVP - Global Integrated
Communications &
Events
Phillips



Frank X. Shaw

Corporate Vice
President,
Communications
Microsoft



Jon Iwata

SVP Chief Brand Officer
IBM



Elliot Schrage

Vice President of Global
Communications
Facebook



Jake Siewert

Global Head
Of Corporate
Communications
Goldman Sachs



*Jonathan
Adashek*

VP Global
Communications and
Chief Communications
Officer
Nissan



Eugenio Simioni

Corporate
Communications &
Public Affairs Director
Nestle



Jan Runau

CCO
adidas



*Jonathan
Friedland*

CCO
Netflix



Franz Paasche

SVP of Corporate
Affairs
PayPal



Jane Lawrie

Group Communications
Director
Tesco



Joy Tan

President of
Global Media and
Communications
Huawei



Geoff Morrell

Group Head of
Communications
BP



Jay Carney

SVP Corporate Affairs
Amazon



Karen Kahn

CCO
HP



*Miguel Veiga-
Pestana*

SVP of Corporate
Communications &
External Affairs
Reckitt Benckiser



Kate James
 Chief Corporate Affairs
 & Global Marketing
 Officer
 Pearson



**Margit
 Wennmachers**
 Partner
 Andreesen Horowitz



Michael Preuss
 Head of
 Communications and
 Public Affairs
 Bayer



Kelly McGinnis
 Chief Communications
 Officer
 Levi Strauss



**Marie-Noëlle
 Brouaux**
 Executive
 Communications
 Director
 Carrefour



Mike O'Neill
 SVP, Corporate Affairs
 and Communications
 American Express



Ken Hong
 Sr. Director Global
 Communications
 LG



**Martin von
 Arronet**
 SVP of Corporate
 Communications
 Electrolux



Musa Tariq
 Chief Brand Officer
 Ford



Kim Rubey
 Head of
 Communications
 AirBnB



Mary Lynn Carver
 CCO
 General Mills



Nasser Al Nafisee
 VP, Corporate Affairs
 Saudi Aramco



Leslie McGibbon
 Corporate Director
 and Global Head of
 Communications and
 Public Affairs
 AkzoNobel



Mary Osako
 Senior Vice
 President, Global
 Communications
 Activision Blizzard



Nick Fox
 Partner & Director of
 External Relations
 Virgin



Marc Mathieu
 CMO, USA
 Samsung



Michael Mand
 CCO
 CAA



Nick Ragone
 SVP - Chief Marketing
 and Communications
 Officer
 Ascension Health



Marc Pritchard
 Global Brand Building
 Officer
 P&G



Michael Mullen
 SVP of Corporate &
 Government Affairs
 Kraft Heinz



Nigel Powell
 VP, Global
 Communications
 Nike



Olga Podoinitsyna
 Global Head of
 Communications and
 Marketing
 VTB Capital



Oliver Roll

CCO
Cisco



Roma Balwani

President, Group
Communications,
Sustainability & CSR
Vedanta



Stephen Doherty

Managing Director,
Head of Corporate
Communications
Barclays



Paul Cohen

SVP/CCO
Visa



Roxanne Taylor

Chief Marketing &
Communications
Officer
Accenture



Steve Dowling

VP of Communications
Apple



*Paulo Henrique
Soares*

Director, Corporate
Communications
IBRAM



Sabia Schwarzer

Head of
Communications North
America
Allianz



Steve John

Partner, Global Director
of Communications
McKinsey



Phil Thomson

Senior Vice
President, Global
Communications
GSK



Sally Susman

Executive Vice
President, Policy,
External Affairs and
Communications
Pfizer



Steve Thomas

Group Head, Corporate
Communications
AIA Group



Pierre Goad

Group Head of Human
Resources and
Communications
HSBC



Sarah Manley

CMO
Burberry



*Suzanne
McCarron*

VP Public Affairs
ExxonMobil



Pragnya Ram

Group Executive
President, Corporate
Communications & CSR
Birla Group



*Shannon Stubo
Brayton*

CMO
LinkedIn



SY Lau

President of Online
Media Group, Senior
Executive Vice
President
Tencent



Robert Gibbs

Executive Vice
President and Global
Chief Communications
Officer
McDonald's



Simon Sproule

Global Director
of Marketing and
Communications
Aston Martin



Tom Collamore

Senior Vice President,
Communications and
Strategy and Counselor
US Chamber of
Commerce



Tony Cervone

SVP Global
Communications
GM



Wrenelle Stander

SVP, Public Affairs
Sasol



Tricia Primrose

Chief Global
Communications and
Public Affairs Officer at
Marriott International
Marriott



Zenia Mucha

CCO, EVP of Corporate
Comms
Disney

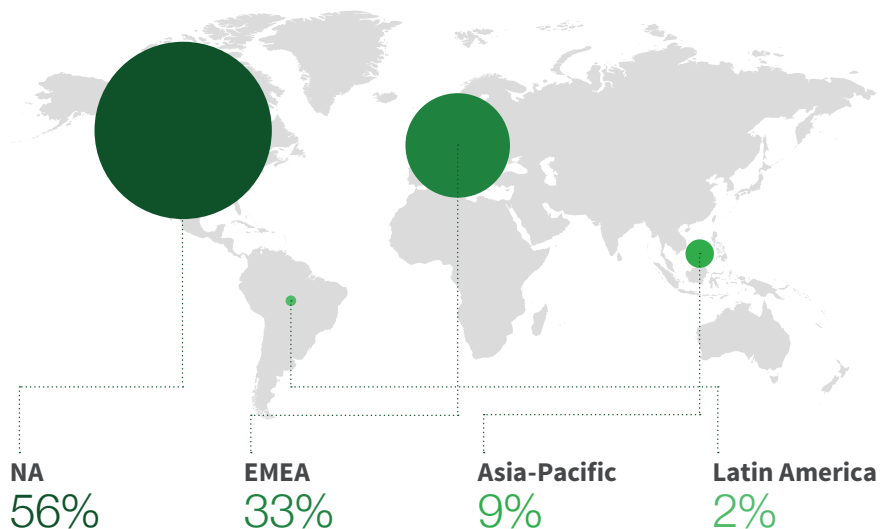
The Research: Part 1 - Who Are the 100 & Their Early Years

The following research is based on responses from a survey sent to this year's Influence 100, and when applicable, our own analysis and research. Because of rounding, some percentages might exceed 100%.

Who Are The 100?

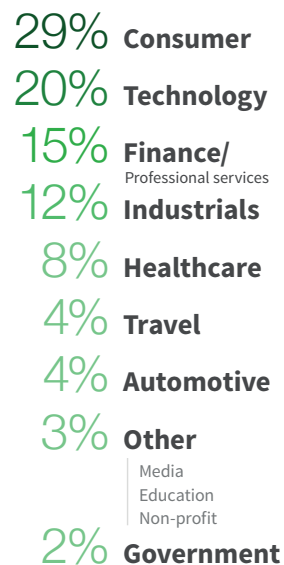
Geography

Compared to last year, there are 26 new entrants in this year's compilation. This is due to a variety of factors, including job changes (several of last year's Influence 100 have left their roles) and the rise of certain executives, companies, industries and regions. The influence of North America has continued to rise with 56 influencers from this region (up from 55 last year) — this is somewhat unsurprising considering the size and stature of the US public relations industry. Meanwhile, 33% come from EMEA and the remainder come from Asia-Pacific and Latin America.



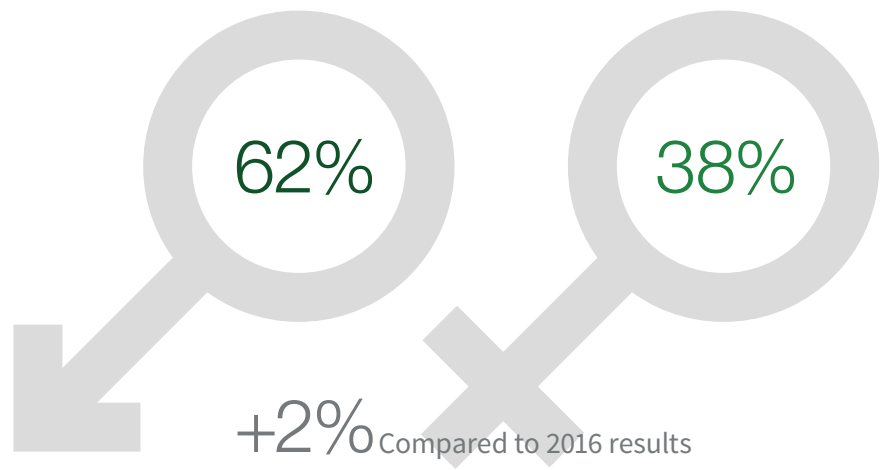
Sector

Breaking the Influence 100 down by sector has become increasingly complex, especially as technology continues to touch nearly every other sector of the economy. While consumer (29%) and technology (20%) dominate the list, there's considerable overlap between those groups — for instance, Facebook, Microsoft, Lenovo and Amazon are all technology companies with a significant consumer-facing portfolio. PayPal, meanwhile, straddles both the consumer and financial services sectors. This year, we also created new categories like Travel, Automotive and Media.



Gender

The number of women on the list continues to rise — it's now 38%, compared to 36% last year (33% in 2015). Women who newly joined the ranks of the Influence 100 this year were: HP's Karen Kahn, Marriott's Tricia Primrose, Unilever's Aline Santos, Coca-Cola's Beatriz Perez, Cargill's Devry Boughner Vorwerk, Merck's Isabel de Paoli, General Mills' Mary Lynn Carver, LinkedIn's Shannon Stubo Brayton, the FT's Darcy Kellyer and Tesco's Jane Lawrie.



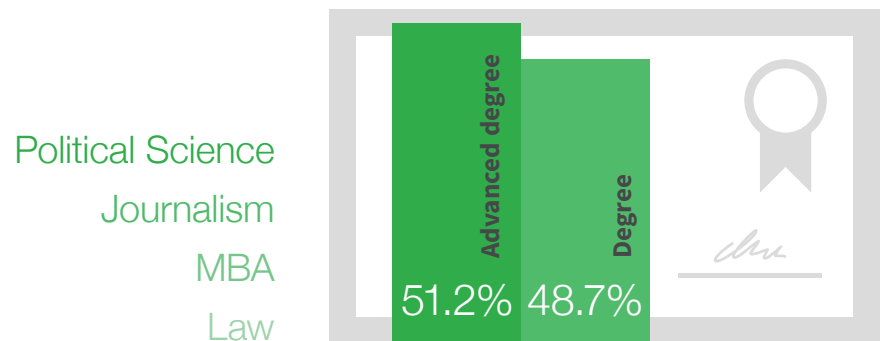
Tenure

The tenure of Influence 100 communicators dropped slightly to 9 years, down from 9.3 in previous years — in part because of recent job changes like Corey DuBrowa moving from Starbucks to Salesforce, Oliver Roll joining Cisco, Paul Cohen at Visa and Musa Tariq at Ford, among others.



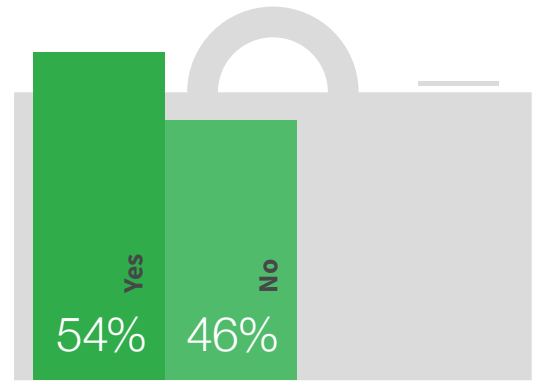
The Early Days

EDUCATION



FIRST CAREER

Journalism
Politics
Management
Attorney

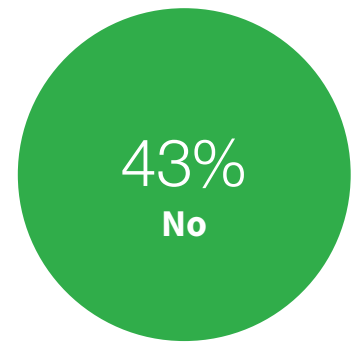
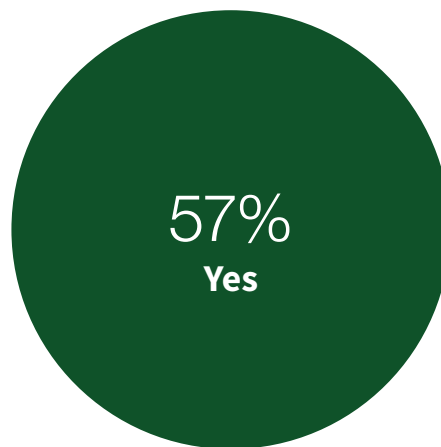


HAVE YOU WORKED AT AN AGENCY? IF SO, FOR HOW LONG?

The Influence 100 2017 includes more professionals with advanced degrees (49% had advanced degrees in 2016), but this still represents a decline from 2015 when 57% of those on the Influence 100 held advanced degrees.

Like last year, the majority of respondents (54%) said PR is their first career — a notable contrast to 2015 when 60% of the respondents said PR was not their first career. Predictably, journalism and politics were the most common previous careers. There were, however, some unexpected responses: administrative assistant, litigation attorney, teacher, Russian literature and United States Marine.

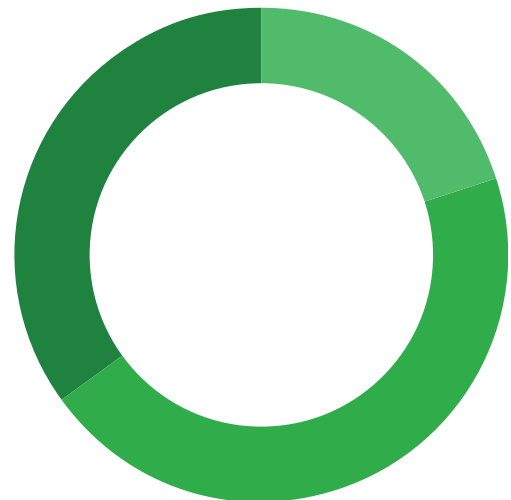
Nearly 60% of the respondents have spent time agency side — among those, most (45%) spent between five to 10 years on the professional service side of the business.



Up to 5 years
20%

5-10 years
45%

More than 10 years
35%



The Research: Part 2 - Teams, Budgets & Agencies

The following research is based on responses from a survey sent to this year's Influence 100, and when applicable, our own analysis and research. Because of rounding, some percentages might exceed 100%.

The Organizations & Budgets

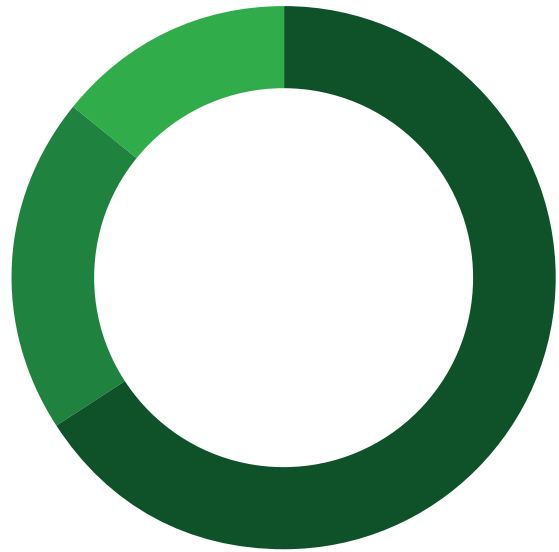
Whom do you report to?

There's a slight dip in the number of respondents reporting into the CEO/ chair (down from 70% in 2016, but up from 60% in 2015); meanwhile the CMO oversight rose slightly to 14.3% with the remaining 20% reporting into various functions including COO, among others.

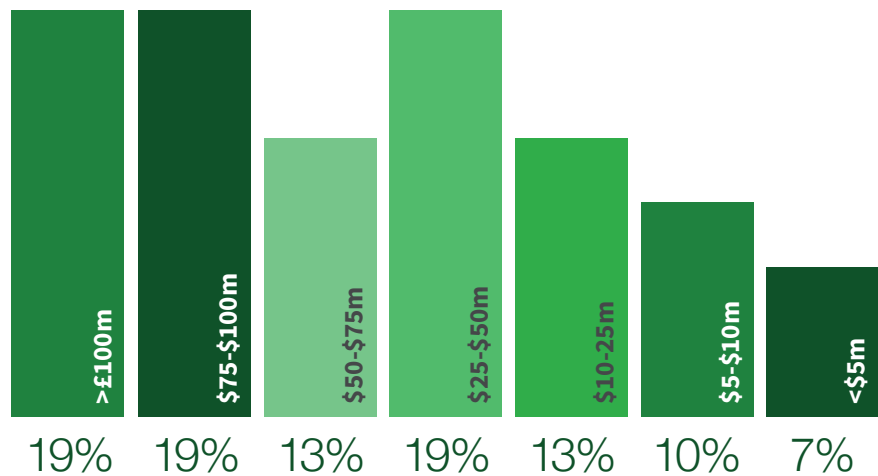
Chair/CEO
66%

Other
20%

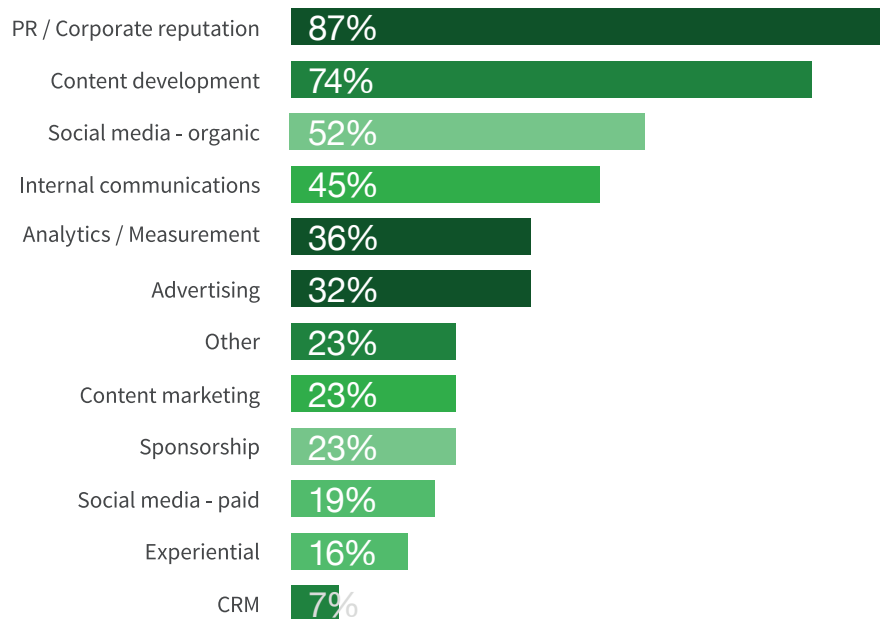
CMO
14%



What is the overall PR budget at your organization?



In which areas do you expect to spend more next year?



Team Size

In a hopeful reversal, the number of executives who oversee PR budgets greater than \$100m continues has rebounded after a multi-year free fall: 50% in 2014, 27% in 2015 and 14% in 2016. Meanwhile the number of people who peg their budget between \$75m and \$100m spiked up to 19.35% after two years steady at 10% and those who report a budget between \$50m to \$74m tumbled down to 12.9% from 28% in 2016. Another near 20% oversee budgets between \$25m to \$49m. Meanwhile, nearly 30% have PR budget oversight for budgets under \$25m.

These budgets include a range of activities, most commonly: media relations, employee engagement, all communications, executive visibility, events, analyst relations, content marketing, social media — in a handful of instances, this included staff salaries, agency fees, branding and advertising.

The number who saw budgets increase is down, meanwhile 46% respondents saw their budgets hold steady over 2016 (meanwhile, increases were mostly under 10%,

1-20
19%

21-50
25%

51-100
9%

100+
47%



plus 4% saw decreases that ranged from 15% to 5%). Most of the Influence 100 — 47% — manage teams that exceed 100 people and while budgets were flat, 36% of respondents were able to expand their teams up to 30%. Meanwhile, 54% kept their teams flat and the rest reported a decrease.

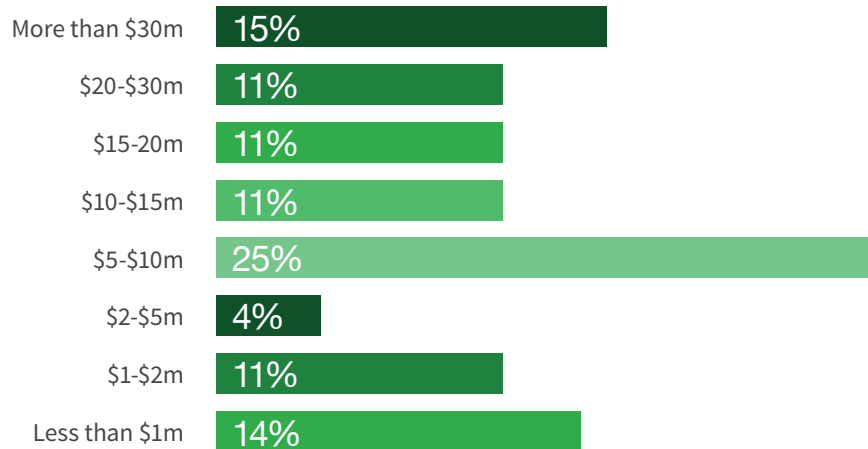
The majority of spend goes towards PR/corporate reputation — but respondents expect to spend less on this and content development in 2018 and, instead, spend more on organic and paid social media. Advertising, CRM and employee engagement are others areas where respondents expect to spend less

next year. Spend on analytics, experiential and sponsorships are expected to hold relatively steady.

The Agencies

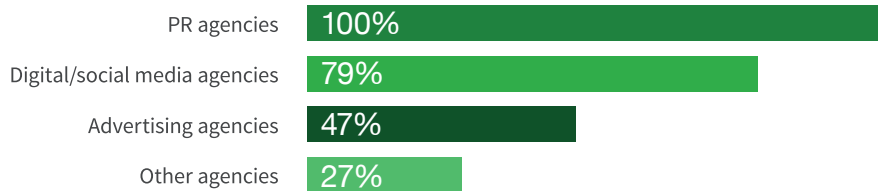
How much does your organization spend on PR agencies?

Agency spend appears to be up with 15% spending more than \$30m on partners, up from 4% in this category last year. Meanwhile, one-third of the respondents spend between \$10m to \$29m on agencies. On the lower end, the number of respondents spending less than \$1m declined from 20% to 14% this year.



For which of the following hiring decisions are you the primary decision maker?

The Influence 100, this year, has more influence on hiring agencies beyond PR firms. This year, 79% of respondents were the primary decision-maker for digital/social agencies (up from 64% last year) and 47% said the same of advertising agencies (up from 43% in 2016).



Which best describes your approach to using PR agencies?

There's been a surge of respondents who use one global agency of record. Last year, only 6.5% said they use one global AOR — that figure doubled this year. It makes sense, then, the number who said they have a global AOR, but also work with other firms dropped by 16 points down to 32%. Even so, selecting firms on a project basis is on the rise — this is up 13 points from last year. Those who have AORs for each region slipped down from 6.5% in 2016.



13%

We have one global agency of record

32%

We have one global AOR, but also work with several other firms

13%

We have separate AORs in each region

3%

We have separate AORs in each market

36%

We select firms on a project basis

3%

We do not use PR agencies

How do you hire a PR agency?

There's been a big uptick those preferring an invitation-only pitch — 63% versus 55% from last year. This comes at the cost of the traditional RFI/RFP process which is losing steam at 27% from 35% in the previous year. Also, notable — the number of respondents who prefer to hire an agency they have previously worked with is down to just 3% from 17% last year. Those opting to tap into their referral network is down three points to 7%.



Invitation-only pitch

63%

Traditional RFI/RFP process

27%

Via a referral network

7%

Which do you consider the greatest benefit of working with a PR agency?

There's also been some significant shifting in the perceived value that agencies bring to their clients. This year, generating new ideas and creative thinking soared past last year's top response — strategic counsel and direction. Somewhat disappointingly, strategic counsel and direction is down considerably from last year's 40%, while tactical support and execution has surged ahead from 17% last year. Geographic coverage is down from last year's 10%.

40%

Generating new ideas and creative thinking

27%

Tactical and execution support

27%

Strategic counsel and direction

7%

Geographic coverage



The Research, Part 3: The Big Questions & Inspiration

The Big Questions: Measurement, Analytics & Diversity

How does your CEO evaluate PR/communications?

This year, for the first time, we asked respondents how their CEOs evaluate their function. Reputation benchmarking, by far, came out on top. Interestingly, one of the options — sales and lead generation — garnered no responses. Several respondents, however, did indicate their CEOs evaluate PR/communications using “all of the above.” Other notable responses:

“A mix of external and internal analytics. No single measure or methodology.”

“A variety of ways including all the above mentioned plus others like speed of adaption to change by employees [internal coms], strategic advancement of a specific narrative externally etc.”

“All of the above plus tactical analytics.”

“Support business growth, investor confidence, reputation.”

“On our ability to help enable business outcomes as part of integrated teams.”

BUSINESS SPEND

All of the respondents have considerable input on how much their organizations spend on communications. When asked the same question about marketing spend, only 60% report having considerable input on spend— 18% do not have input (the rest answered neutrally). Perhaps most notably, 36% report having considerable input on overall business spend at their organizations — 33% don't feel they have an input and the remaining were neutral.

Reputation benchmarking

63%

Other

27%

Tactical analysis (impressions, media, placements, social media engagements)

10%



ANALYTICS

This year, we also explored the way organizations are using data & analytics to drive and evaluate their marketing and communications efforts. Here's what we found:

- 30% of respondents always use data to allocate resources and spend, meanwhile 50% do this either usually (27%) or about half the time (23%). Only 20% report rarely using data to allocate their resources and spend.

- 79% use data and analytics for research and planning always (38%) or most of the time (41%), 14% do this about half the time and 7% do so rarely.

- When it comes to using data to alter the course of a campaign in real-time, 62% of respondents do this always (28%) or usually (34%) while 17% do this about half the time and 20% do so rarely.

- 80% of respondents use data and analytics to measure the business impact of their efforts, the rest do this about half the time (13%) or rarely (7%).

THE FUTURE CCO

Also new this year, we asked respondents their prediction for the future of the CCO role. "The CCO role will continue to grow in importance and influence," said one respondent. "Comms and reputation management are on the rise: marketing is struggling to find its new mission in post-brand advertising world where the 30-second TV spot has been made redundant."

"As the lines between Comms and Marketing continue to blur, as people engage and consume information from an ever-changing array of sources, and the need to demonstrate ROI increases, the CCO role must adapt/be adapted to succeed and thrive in a 'post-PR' world," said another respondent. "Increasingly the CCO is leveled to report to the CMO. This trend should worry all of us in the industry."

"It is a strategic business role in any forward looking organisation and essentially he/she is part of the leadership team," said Roma Balwani.

"The importance of a company's reputation on its financial success will continue to rise in direct proportion to how fragile reputations have become," said MaryLynn Carver. "Certainly the social media echo-chamber and 'fake news' are playing a role in this fragility, but we are also seeing extreme polarization of key stakeholders' expectations. The CCO role is unique in that it is often the only c-suite entity that has visibility across the company and across external stakeholders to connect the dots and see around corners."

Diversity

This year, we also asked the Influence 100 for their perspectives on diversity. After some companies have started requiring their agencies to be more representative, we wondered if this could be a more widespread trend. Among the respondents, 81% agree their agency must have an ethnically diverse account team (12.5% agree strongly) and 19% were neutral to the statement. Just over 56% of respondents agree the industry is committed to retaining and promoting people of color and women while 44% were neutral to this statement.

“PR does not have a problem with women in positions of power except at the very top of large, international agencies,” said one respondent. “In fact, I think communications is an area more college men should be encouraged to consider.” Another lamented about the lack of talent in the APAC region.



The Inspiration

Best & Worst Communicators Among World Leaders



Which company (other than your own) manages its reputation most effectively?



Which public relations agency do you most admire/respect?

BRANDS & COMPANIES

Asked to identify companies, other than their own, that managed brand communications and corporate reputation most effectively, the list, once again, showed continuity of year's past — reinforcing the lasting effects of a well-managed reputation. Among the returning names, Southwest Airlines, Unilever, J&J, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, BMW, GE, Nike, IBM, Mahindra Group, Apple, Google and Facebook, somewhat surprising considering its challenging news cycle after the US presidential election. New this year were MasterCard, Hero Motors, Amazon, Microsoft, Diageo, Netflix, Saint Gobain, VW (returning to the list after fading last year), Tata Group and BHP Billiton.



WORLD LEADERS & COMMUNICATORS

For the first time, former US president Barack Obama wasn't named among the most best communicators. When it comes to world leaders, new players Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau and French president Emmanuel Macron emerged as some of the best communicators. Among the most admired communicators from the geopolitical and spiritual sphere were German chancellor Angela Merkel, Pope Francis — who returns to the list after being absent last year — Indian prime minister Narendra Modi and the Dalai Lama made the list. Among other leaders Michael Bloomberg, Sheryl Sandberg and Dr. Ichak Adizes were named.

Meanwhile, US president Donald Trump joins Russian president Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un as the worst communicators among today's world leaders. "Donald Trump is too emotional and petty and is harming the US from a diplomacy standpoint," said one respondent. One respondent listed Trump as both the worst and best communicator. This is a notable shift from Obama who consistently appeared on the list as one of the best communicators.

The most influential marketing/communications list was, once again, dominated by men. Moreover, not a single female in the communications or marketing sector were named among the most influential. IBM's Jon Iwata was listed several times along with WPP head Sir Martin Sorrell and Richard Edelman. Among others listed were Nike's head of global marketing John Slusher, Airbnb CMO Jonathan Mildenhall, McKinsey's Steve John, Unilever's Keith Weed, Tim Cook and Apple's Johnny Ives, and Jeff Bezos. One respondent named Sean Spicer adding "and that creates lots of challenges for the profession." (The survey was dispatched before Spicer resigned.)

AGENCIES

Edelman is— for now the fifth year in a row — the most frequently cited public relations agency when respondents were asked which firm they most admired. Other firms with repeat mentions include Brunswick, WE Communications, Burson-Marsteller, Ketchum and WE Communications. A few respondents lamented about their agency options — "not many are really distinguishing themselves" and "no single agency stands out," they said.

The Crossover Stars

Last year, the Holmes Report created a new ‘Hall of Fame’ category for those communicators whose career trajectory spans beyond communications, marketing and sales into a business function within their organizations. The ‘Crossover Stars’ have titles that range from vice chair all the way through CEO.



Beth Comstock

Vice Chair
GE

Beth Comstock’s promotion to vice chair leading GE Business Innovations seemed like an inevitable accomplishment given her career trajectory from corporate communications into broader management roles. Not only is this a groundbreaking achievement for communications, Comstock also becomes the first woman in GE’s history to be named vice chair and joins three other executives who hold the title.

As vice chair, she operates GE Business Innovations, which develops new businesses, markets and service models and drives brand value and partners to enhance GE’s culture. This unit includes GE Lighting, GE Ventures & Licensing and GE sales, marketing and communications.

She began her career in local television production in Virginia—including a brief time on camera—before making the move into public relations, holding communications and publicity jobs at CBS and Turner Broadcasting before joining GE’s NBC unit in 1993 as vice president of NBC News communications. Comstock was named a GE company officer in 1998 when she became vice president of corporate communications. She was named GE’s first chief marketing officer in more than 20 years in 2003 and also served as president of integrated Media at NBC Universal.



David D’Alessandro

Chairman of the Board,
Seaworld Parks &
Entertainment

David D’Alessandro was perhaps the prototype for public relations executives seeking to expand beyond the communications function and into the C-suite.

Having started his career in the public relations agency business at Edelman (Orville Redenbacher was a client), he made the move to the client-side of the business in 1984, joining Boston-based financial services company John Hancock to spearhead communications. Once there, he expanded his remit to include marketing—masterminding the company’s celebrated “Real Life, Real Answers” advertising campaign and writing “Brand Warfare,” a well-received marketing tome that drew on his experience in PR to present a holistic view of brand-building.

He was named president and COO in 1998 and was lead strategist of the firm’s demutualization and conversion to a public company. In 2000 he became chairman and CEO and presided over Hancock’s merger with Manulife, serving as president and COO of the merged company until his retirement in 2004.

His current role, chairing the board of Seaworld, provides plenty of opportunity to draw on his PR experience as the company navigates its own crises. In June, D’Alessandro didn’t win re-election at the

company’s annual meeting Wednesday after a controversy related to incentive payments. The board will determine what happens with his role next.



John Fallon

CEO
Pearson

John Fallon’s trajectory is especially unique — he joined the education company as director of communications in 1997 and within three years was named president. He’s been the company CEO since 2013, taking on the job of “encouraging all 40,000 colleagues, in 70 countries, to work as one global company.” Before this, since 2008, he had been responsible for the company’s education businesses outside North America and a member of the Pearson management committee.

In 2003, he was appointed CEO of Pearson’s educational publishing businesses for Europe, Middle East & Africa. Prior to joining Pearson, John was director of corporate affairs at Powergen plc, and was also a member of the company’s executive committee. Earlier in his career, Fallon held senior public policy and communications roles in UK local government. He is an advisory board member of the Global Business Coalition for Education and a member of the Council of the University of Hull.



Juan Manuel Cendoya

Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors
Banco Santander

In December of 2016, Juan Manuel Cendoya—longtime head of corporate communications for Banco Santander—was named vice chairman of the board of directors for Santander Spain, an unusual promotion for a public relations executive.

“Our clients know us to be a trustworthy, strong and solid brand, and this a reputation we aim to keep,” according to Cendoya, who led corporate communications and marketing for Santander, one of the few financial services companies that can look back at the global crisis of recent years with any satisfaction, having diversified into emerging economies such as Brazil and via acquisition into established markets such as the US and the UK.

The bank operated under more than 20 separate names in 2004, but the emphasis since then on building the Santander brand has paid off. Cendoya has played a major role in that, leading the group’s internal and external communications, corporate marketing, corporate social responsibility, institutional relations, economic research and public policy and serving as a member of the bank’s global executive committee.

Can you share a moment in your career that you recognized PR’s direct impact on business performance?

We have a very broad, strategic approach to PR at Santander as we believe PR has to be a reflection of the bank’s mission, values and behaviours. PR needs to be backed and strongly supported by business performance, not the other way around. When there’s a gap between the message you want to convey and

what’s truly happening in the business, it will not work in the long run. I believe PR is strongly linked to reputation, corporate culture and brand building. It is about communicating to our stakeholders what we do and how we do things. Santander’s mission is to help people and businesses prosper and that is what we are building on as a whole throughout the Group. Fostering our corporate culture, led by our Executive Chairman, Ana Botín, is my top priority right now.

What are the industry’s biggest challenges and opportunities?

It is not different to the challenges and opportunities other industries are currently facing. The world is changing rapidly. Digitalisation involves a profound transformation in the way people interact and that affects us at the very heart of our core activity: communicating to others. From a more financial industry perspective, digitalization is of course a huge challenge for banks, but also a source of opportunity for future business growth. Banks will definitely be different in coming years, becoming open, financial platforms providing a broad variety of value-added products and services to customers. I would also say rebuilding the industry’s reputation and enhancing trust towards banks following one of the worst financial crises in history is a challenge we, as a sector, will have to continue to work hard on.

How do you handle the unexpected?

Trying to look for ways to expect the unexpected! Putting sound contingency plans in place is essential and having good, strong, engaged teams makes a huge difference.

How do you relax?

Doing sport, reading and spending time with family and friends.

Book/movie/TV show/podcast that teaches you valuable lesson about PR?

I love history and have recently watched the series *The Crown* on Netflix. The first part of the series is extremely interesting from a PR professional’s standpoint.



Pete Marino

President of Tenth and Blake/Chief Public Affairs and Communications Officer
MillerCoors

Having conquered the agency business—building one of the most creative midsize firms in the US before selling it to Minneapolis-based ad agency Olson—Marino has spent the past four years making the client side of the business look easy. Now he’s adding business oversight to his hugely accomplished career, as of September 1, he takes on operational leadership for MillerCoors’ craft and import division, Tenth and Blake.

Marino succeeds the retiring Scott Whitley as president of Tenth and Blake. He will continue to oversee communications, a position he has held since 2014. Prior to joining MillerCoors in 2012, Marino led Dig Communications, which he sold to Olson in 2011.

“Pete has consistently brought sharp insight and a commercial point-of-view to his current role, and I know he will also bring incredible energy and great leadership to Tenth and Blake as we look to grow our terrific regional craft brands – Saint Archer, Hop Valley, Revolver and Terrapin – alongside our prestige imports, Peroni and Pilsner Urquell,” said MillerCoors CEO Gavin Hattersley in a memo.

Can you share a moment in your career that you recognized PR’s direct impact on business performance?

We had a situation many years ago where we were boycotted by a minority group over a troubling that

a Congressman from our HQ district was advocating. We didn't support the bill at all, but were used by the boycott organizers to make a national statement. The business impact was swift and painful. We quickly mobilized and agreed to some provisions to end the boycott. Upon execution, we made an error and found ourselves in a boycott from the controversial bill supporters. At that moment, I realized that everything really does communicate and that what we do and HOW we do it has a direct impact on business. Given the proliferation of social media, that impact has been accelerating.

What are the industry's biggest challenges and opportunities?

Our biggest challenge and opportunity is to continually develop our creative product. Everything else can and ultimately will be commoditized, but using creativity smartly, will continue to differentiate our profession and make sure we can continue to add value to our companies.

How do you handle the unexpected?

With as much humor as I can muster and a sense of calm to demonstrate to my team that we can handle whatever comes our way.

How do you relax?

I love to hang out with my family and friends and am blessed that my kids still choose to hang out with their parents. I enjoy playing basketball and golf as much as possible. An occasional beer helps too. Luckily we make many delicious beers that I can choose from.

Book/movie/TV show/podcast that teaches a valuable lesson about PR?

The last two books I have read, "Shattered" by Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes and "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F!ck" by Mark Manson both teach very valuable lessons about PR and leadership.

If I wasn't working in marketing/communications, I would be...

Running my own simple, profitable and low stress business that required little capital. Actually, if that existed, I would leave comms and do it in a second.



Simon Pearce

Special Advisor to the Chairman
Executive Affairs
Authority Of Abu Dhabi

Entrusted with building and protecting Abu Dhabi's reputation, Pearce has a big budget and an even bigger remit. He is considered one of the UAE's most influential officials, particularly close Khaldoun Al-Mubarak, for whom he helped "smooth the communication of the Manchester City Football Club takeover" according to the WSJ.

Since taking on the position in 2006, Pearce has overseen a significant revamp of the Gulf Kingdom's communications offering, and also plays an important role in key assets such as the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and media initiative 2454. Pearce came to the Middle East role after a varied life in the agency world, including a lengthy stint at Burson-Marsteller, encompassing positions on four continents and - in his last job at the firm - CEO of Australia.

RISING STARS

Anna Choi
BASF

Blair Decembrele
LinkedIn

Brian Besanceney
Walmart

Catherine Franklin
Apple

David Affentranger
IKEA

Jan Dietrich Müller
MAN Diesel & Turbo

Kelly Cheeseman
Amazon

Russell Dyer
Mondelez International

Terry Anderson
Slack

Will Valentine
Lyft

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Stephen Forshaw

Managing Director of
Corporate Affairs &
Managing Director,
Australia & New
Zealand
Temasek, Singapore

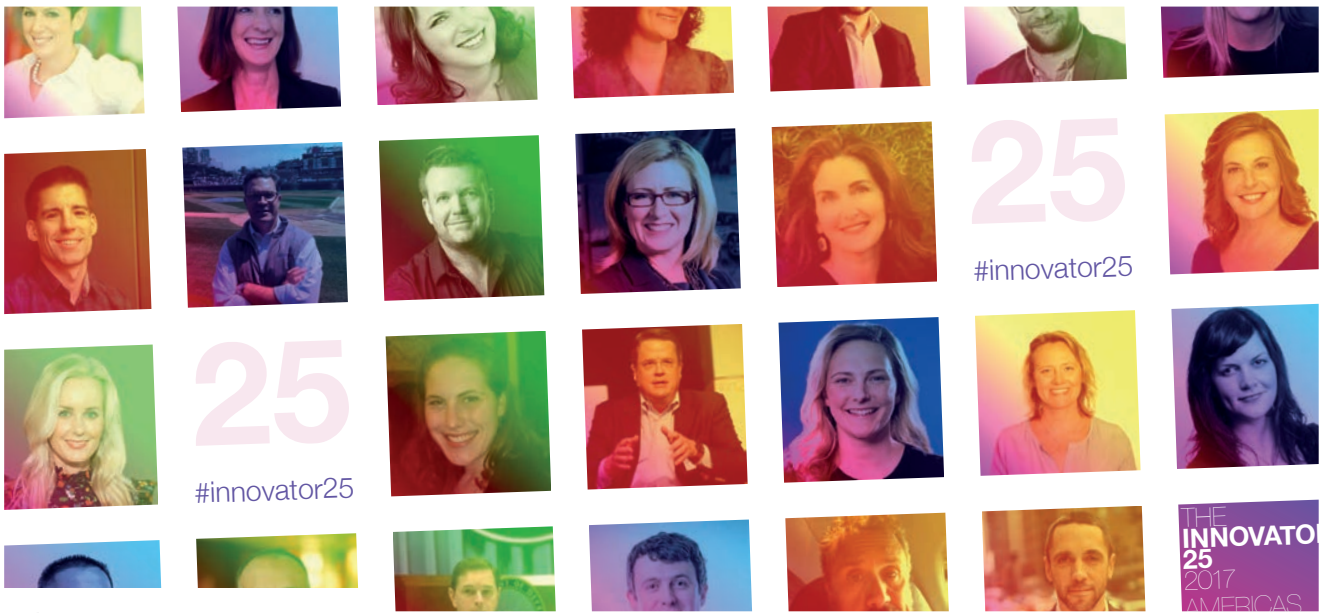
A political communicator in his native Australia, Stephen Forshaw moved into senior public relations and public affairs roles at Singapore Airlines and Microsoft before becoming MD of public affairs at Singapore-owned investment firm Temasek in 2011. In 2013, Forshaw added operational oversight for Australia and New Zealand to his remit, making him one of the few communications leaders to take on business leadership duties. A high-profile advocate for the importance of communications to an organisation's goals, Forshaw's work has often featured an adept ability with social media, evidence of a mindset that is constantly questioning the development of public relations in today's evolving media landscape. Forshaw has also spoken at length about the need to question your organization, rather than becoming "housetrained."



Sue Clark

Managing Director,
Europe
SABMiller

In 2012, Clark became that rarity in the PR world, a communications head who moved into the C-suite to become managing director of SABMiller in Europe. A poised performer who once drew the attention of the national media when she decided to remain at work well after going into labour, she had previously headed the brewing giant's global corporate affairs function for nine years, after amassing significant corporate communications experience at Railtrack and Scottish Power. Clark sits on SABMiller's executive committee, overseeing all of its public relations, public affairs and corporate responsibility initiatives. In particular, Clark is regarded highly for her expertise in understanding reputation. In 2006, she embarked on an ambitious project to define the factors that drive SABMiller's reputation in its key markets, following that up by creating a specific job function focused on the company's reputation.



The Innovator 25 North America

Our fifth annual Innovator 25 Americas includes the United States, Latin America and Canada. This year's innovators made the cut because they're producing work that points to the future of marketing and communications. Innovation is evolving and this list reflects the diversity inherent in curating a list like this one.

Champions for creativity, pay equity, storytelling and business analytics are among those featured on the list, all innovators in different — but meaningful — ways. For the first time, two innovators make their second appearance because they have expanded and built upon the reasons they were originally on the list.

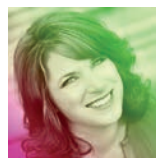
The Profiles



Barby Siegel

CEO
Zeno Group
New York

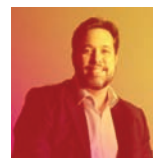
“Let’s get on with it. This is our moment.”



Cathy Planchard

Partner and President
All Told (Allison + Partners)
Phoenix, AZ

“Improve the status quo and add value for a target audience.”



Eduardo Vieira

Co-Founder/CEO
Grupo Ideal/Ogilvy
São Paulo, Brazil

“You can produce more being creative.”



Beth Monaghan

CEO + Co-Founder
InkHouse Media + Marketing
Boston

“If we don’t seriously address the bias against women and minorities in the PR industry, we won’t be able to innovate in the right ways.”



Dushka Zapata

VP of Communications
ZenDesk
San Francisco

“You can’t go to work if you feel all the colors inside of you are fading.”



Eli Draluk

Director, Marketing Science
Omnicom
New York

“We also need to reward smaller innovation.”



Erin Lanuti

Chief Influence Strategist
MSLGroup
New York

“I find the best way to get out of a creativity rut is to completely unplug.”



George Fiddler

Creative Director
Olson Engage
Minneapolis

“Finding creative ways to provide people with something that has real emotional or functional value.”



Greg Guidotti

Head of Marketing,
Oscar Mayer
Kraft Heinz
Chicago

“When you put the consumer at the center, you are always inspired to do better.”



Heath Rudduck

Padilla
Chief Creative Officer
Minneapolis

“Innovation separates and makes us unique as a species.”



Jeri Ward

SVP/Chief Communications Officer
Audi of America
Herndon, VA

“We will see more industry innovation in the next decade than in the last 100 years.”



Karen Kahn

CCO
HP
San Francisco

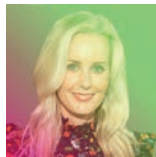
“And if [diversity] is not a clear business objective, it becomes ‘a nice to have’.”



Karen Strauss

Partner/Chief Strategy & Creativity Officer and Director
Ketchum (Omnicom)
New York

“Hire people for their curiosity, not their relevant experience.”



Krista Webster

CEO/President
Veritas
Toronto

“Don’t just embrace innovation, charge full-force toward it.”



Elizabeth Win-dram

Director Brand/Advertising
JetBlue
New York

“If I can focus on someone else and different challenges, it helps me get out of my own head and into some new ideas.”



Mark Stouse

CEO/Founder
Proof
Scottsdale, AZ

“Stop being afraid to turn loose of your current ‘franchise’ so you can grab ahold of what’s coming right around the corner.”



Michelle Mulkey

Sr. Partner, Corporate Responsibility & Global Impact
FleishmanHillard
San Francisco

“Starbucks and Salesforce seem to embrace more fully than others the morality opportunity of today’s private sector.”



Nicole Leverich

Senior Director, Corporate Communications
LinkedIn
San Francisco

“Understand the risk to reward ratio that your company can accept and take intelligent risks within that range.”



Patricia Ko-rth-McDonnell

President
Huge
Brooklyn, NY

“I think the smartest work out there is moving away from ‘storytelling’ and ‘functionality’ as two barely overlapping circles.”



Patrick Chau-pham

EVP, Creative Technology + Innovation

Weber Shandwick
Boston

“Be nimble, and make things, quickly, iteratively, and see how the masses engage. Rinse, repeat.”



Rajiv Chandrasekaran

SVP, Public Affairs
Starbucks
Seattle, WA

“The goal of what I’m trying to do is to give birth to (at the outset) a small suite of projects that will each in its own way educate, inform, and engage Americans on issues we think are important.”



Robert Hastings

EVP, Chief Communications Officer & Chief of Staff
Bell Helicopter
Fort Worth, Texas

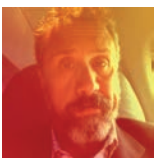
“Innovate or die! the only constant in our profession is change.”



Seth Duncan

Chief Analytics Officer
W2O Group
San Francisco

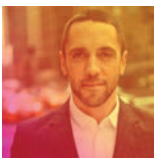
“If their approach to microtargeting quick-and-dirty content with inexpensive media buys is as effective as they claim it is, it completely disrupts the current ‘big creative agency’ model as we know it.”



Tim Vaccarino

Executive Creative Director
MullenLowe
Boston

“Look beyond the obvious and don’t be afraid of taking risks”

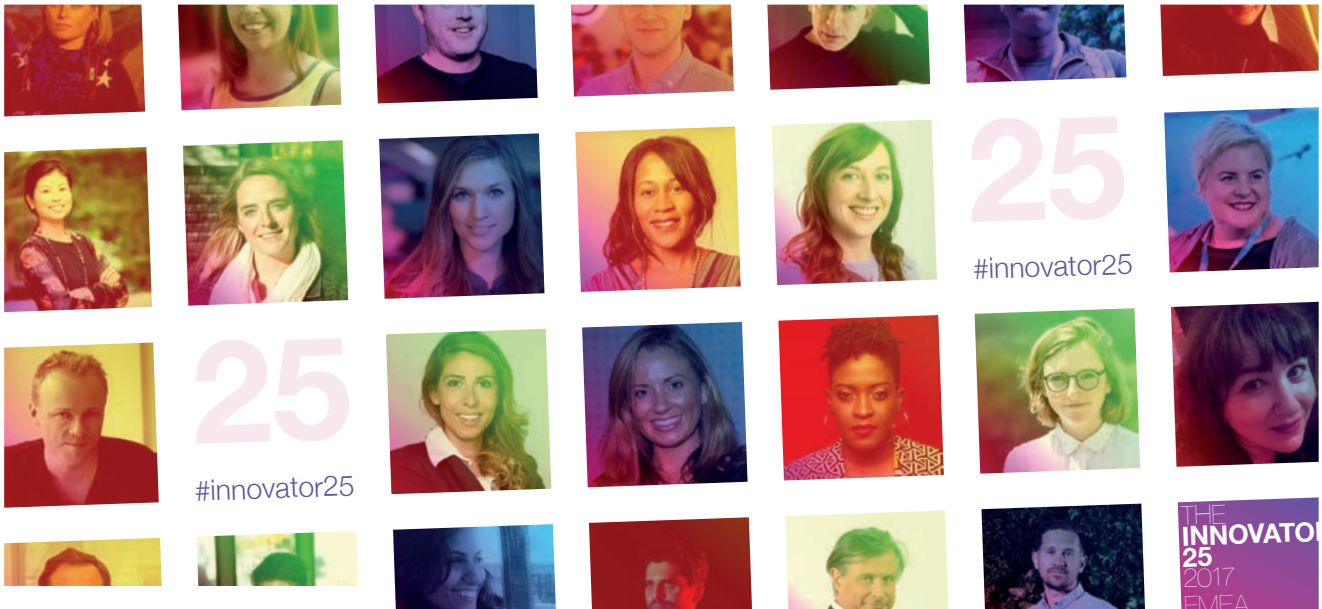


Zach Overton

VP of Customer Experience & GM
Samsung 837
New York

“Get out for inspiration.”





The Innovator 25 EMEA

Our third Innovator 25 class in EMEA provides a valuable glimpse of our industry’s future, shining a spotlight on those individuals who are reshaping influence and engagement in an era of dramatic marketing and communications disruption.

For more research on the Innovator 25 and to read their full profiles, including Q&As, please visit holmesreport.com/ranking-and-data/innovator-25/innovator-25-2017.

The Profiles



Abby Guthkelch
Global Head of Social Media Engagement
HSBC
London



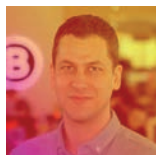
Bibi Hilton
MD
Golin
London

“Just do it and ask for permission afterwards”



Dan Kirby
MD
Techdept
London

“Start small, get evidence to show what’s working”



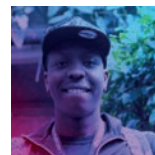
Drew Benvie
Founder & MD
Battenhall
London

“Look to other industries, such as the technology sector, for ideas on marketing and communications innovation”

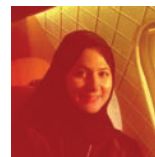


Gerry Hopkinson
Co-founder
Unity
London

“Be brave, focus on the value, test and learn, did I say be brave?”



Jamal Edwards
Founder
SB.TV
London



Jehan Abdulkarim
Marketing & Communications Director
Accenture
Abu Dhabi

“Manage relationships with influencers who have sharp elbows who can help you bring ideas to light”



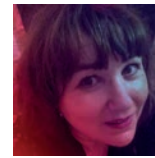
Jess Butcher

Co-Founder & CMOBlippar
London



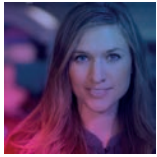
Marcus Dyer

MD, Mobile
Weber Shandwick
London



Ruth Yearley

Insight & Strategy
Director
Ketchum
London



Julie Pedersen

VP, Public Relations
Kayak / Momondo
Copenhagen

“Hire people with some fire. Put in place a culture that rewards ambition. The rest will do itself”

“Do it with passion. Believe in your truth”



Karen Blackett

Chairwoman
Mediacom
London



Maysoun Ramadan

Head of
Communication and
Public Affairs
Roche Diagnostics
Middle East
Dubai



Salvador da Cunha

CEO
Lift World
Lisbon

“Network and circulate externally from your organisation more. Look outside your market also”

“Tell a true story and make sure you add the human element”

“Always be more relevant and cost effective. Innovation must have a clear upside to the ecosystem”



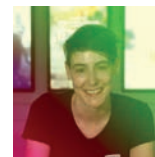
Kate Joynes-Burgess

Head of Digital & Integrated Marketing
UK & EMEA
Cohn & Wolfe
London



Nicola Green

Director of Corporate
Affairs
Telefónica UK (o2)
London



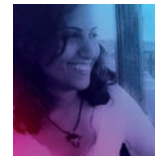
Sarah Wood

CEO & Co-founder
Unruly
London

“Remember that it’s important to develop your skills as a consensus builder if you want to be a trailblazer”

“Work your way round all the key decision makers so you know their views before you present it”

Shehnaaz Chenia

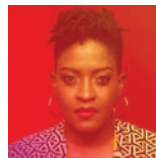


Director, Global
eCommerce
The Lego Group
London



Keri-Ann Stanton

Head of PR & Group
Comms Director
Avatar 360 / M&N
Brands
Johannesburg



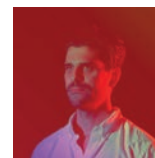
Ory Okolloh

Director of Investments
Omidyar Network
Nairobi

“Don’t be afraid to ruffle a few feathers along the way”

“It’s all in the timing. And the tone. Doing it quietly reverberates louder than a big, brash presentation”

“Start small, prove your concept and iterate from there step by step while having your big vision about in the back of your head”



Stefan Ronge

Chief Creative Officer
Edelman Deportivo
Stockholm/London

“People easily can opt out from whatever message brands are trying to push at them”



Thierry Wellhoff

CEO
Wellcom
Paris

“Be interested in everything about everything, especially if you think it has nothing to do with what you were doing”



Tom Manners

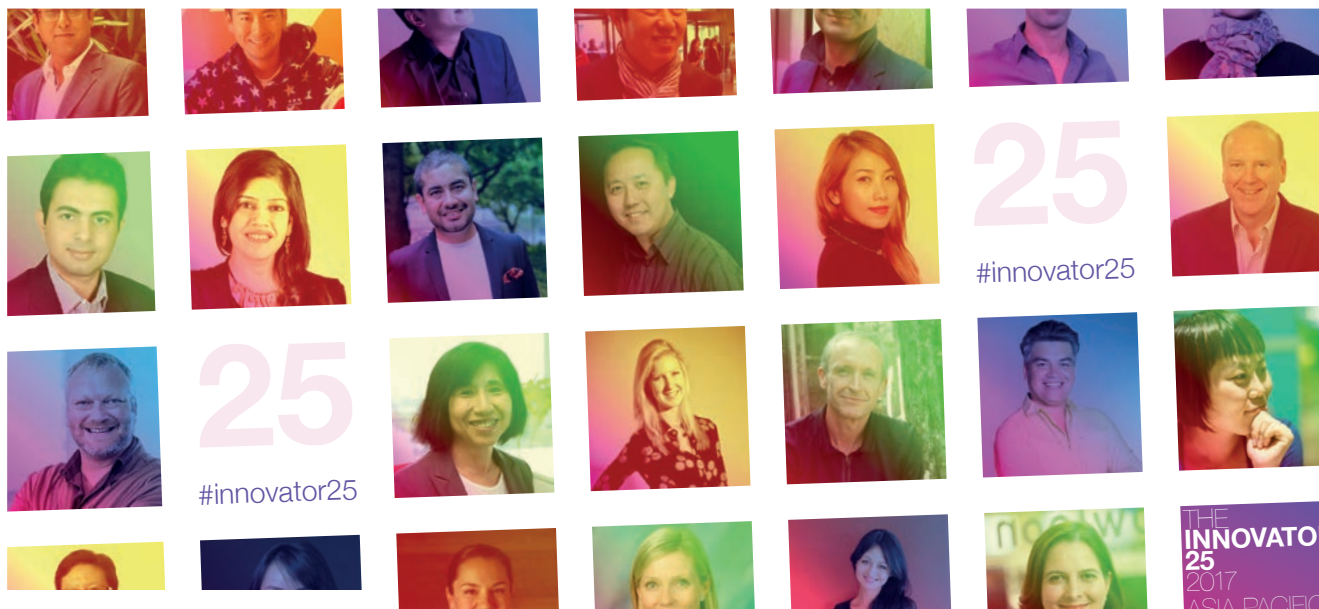
MD
Clockwork Media
Johannesburg

“We had no concept of what model or approach to apply, so we made our own up”



Valerie Tan

**VP of PR, Social Media,
Internal Comms**
Emirates Group



The Innovator 25 Asia-Pacific

Our second Innovator 25 class in Asia-Pacific provides a valuable glimpse of our industry’s future, shining a spotlight on those individuals who are reshaping influence and engagement in an era of dramatic marketing and communications disruption.

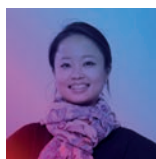
The people recognized here come from various corners of the industry — creative strategy, digital execution, influencer mapping, media storytelling — but together they represent a compelling picture of what marketing and communications looks like today, and where it is heading tomorrow.

The Profiles



Aman Gupta
 Managing Partner
 SPAG
 New Delhi

“Look beyond the obvious and don’t be afraid of taking risks”



Aries Hou
 Head of Global
 Business Acceleration
 Center & GM of
 Consumer Goods
 BlueFocus
 Beijing



Helen Zhou
 VP, Greater China
 Marketing &
 Ecommerce
 Tiffany
 Shanghai



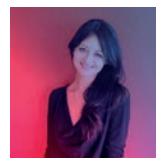
Anjali Kapoor
 Head of Digital, APAC
 Bloomberg Media Hong
 Kong

“Always ask questions and be curious — you never know how an answer might turn into a spark of an idea”



David Ketchum
 Founder and CEO
 Current Asia
 Hong Kong

“Incremental ideas that point the way forward are the most welcome”



Jemma Wong
 Head of Audience
 Growth
 Australian Football
 League
 Melbourne

“Creativity is driven from diversity, and diverse lenses come from a sincere curiosity of the broader world state”



John Kerr

Chief Digital Officer
Zeno Group
Singapore

“Innovation can feel scary, so understand the change management and soft power required”



Laura Crampton

Managing
Director, Brand &
Communications
FedEx
Hong Kong



Lydia Lee

Chief Strategist, China
Weber Shandwick
Shanghai

“Keep it simple and relevant. Don’t be innovative for innovation’s sake.”



Margery Lynn

Head of Social &
Content Marketing
Uber Asia-Pacific
Singapore



Michael McComb

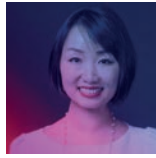
VP Brand
Communication
SAP Greater China
Hong Kong



Motoko Kunita

Executive Division
Director
Dentsu Public Relations
Tokyo

“I would encourage organizations to incorporate the perspectives of outsiders, young people, and those slightly out of the mainstream”



Nancy Liu

Communications
General Manager
Procter & Gamble
Guangzhou

“If you clearly define the core value of why we should do it differently, there is always a chance”



Neal Cross

Chief Innovation Officer
DBS
Singapore



Rachelle Berges

Head of Media and
Connections, Total
Brand Experience
Johnson & Johnson
Asia-Pacific
Singapore



Sandi Sein Thein

Chief Executive Officer
Digital Kaway
Yangon

“When it comes to innovation, ignorance is never bliss”



Sean Seah

Head of Digital
Experience
HSBC
Hong Kong

“Innovation often involves change and change is often rejected by people.”



Shrey Khetarpal

Senior Director, WPP
Account Lead for Ford
Communications –
Asia Pacific
Burson-Marsteller
Shanghai

“A lot of times organisations talk about innovation but don’t really create a culture – please welcome the crazy ideas and take a few risks”



Shweta Shukla

Director - Sustainable
Business &
Communications
Unilever
Singapore

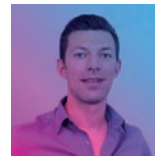
“Work backwards from the problem and think of all (im)possibilities without any restrictions”



Siddharth Sankhe

Asia Pacific Lead,
Insight & Analytics
WE Communications
Singapore

“Have we looked for solutions in places one generally wouldn’t look? Ideas are all around us, we just need to spot them.”



Simon Ruparelia

Head of Digital
Golin
Singapore

“Without relevance, ‘innovative’ campaigns are just superficial quick wins”



Simon Vericel

Managing Director,
Founder
Influence Matters
Beijing

“The agency can only be innovative if the client accepts innovative ideas”



Sungbong Lee

Vice Chairman
Prain Global
Seoul

“Ideas can only become new when put into action”



Yosuke Toyoura

iMarketing Director
Coca-Cola Japan
Tokyo

“There should be ample support for risk-taking, creativity and initiative-taking in digital activities”



Tony Chow

Regional Director for
Creative & Content
Marketing
Marriott International
Hong Kong

“Spend time to listen more and interrupt less”



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**COMMUNICATIONS
CONSULTANCY
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Asia-Pacific Healthcare Communications Consultancy
The Holmes Report 2017



Finalist

Global Healthcare PR Agency of the Year
The Holmes Report 2017



Honorable Mention

“Best Asia-Pacific Agency to work for”
The Holmes Report 2016 and 2017



Recognition

Aman Gupta, honoured to be listed in
‘Innovator 25 Asia-Pacific 2017’
The Holmes Report

It takes a lot. Because, it's tough to deconstruct unreal insights and perceptions, and lay a foundation formidable enough to be real. However, we realize, it's even tougher giving up. And that's what makes us India's award-winning global communications entity.

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Global Top 250 PR Agency Ranking 2017

Global PR agency ranking: Revenue numbers for many agencies include subsidiaries—including research, advertising, and specialist PR firms—many of which operate under separate brands but nevertheless report into the listed PR agency. For firms that submitted numbers in pounds sterling, euros or other non-USD currencies, conversions were made using exchange rates as of 12/31/2016.

In some cases, where last year's submitted numbers were used for comparison purposes, growth numbers may be lower because of exchange rate fluctuations than they would have been in constant currency terms. Accordingly, we also include a constant currency growth metric. Aside from large PR networks above \$100m in fee income, the Rankings are totally dependent on submitted fee income; many agencies, often well-known, choose not to submit their numbers.

2017	2016	Agency	HQ	Fee Income 2016 (\$)	Fee Income 2015 (\$)	Staff	Growth (USD)	Growth (Constant Currency)
1	1	Edelman	USA	874968000	854576000	5849	0.024	0.024
2	2	Weber Shandwick	USA	825000000	775000000		0.065	0.065
3	3	FleishmanHillard	USA	570000000	570000000		0	0
4	4	Ketchum	USA	562000000	530000000		0.06	0.06
5	6	MSLGroup	France	485000000	480000000	3133	0.01	0.01
6	5	Burson-Marsteller	USA	480000000	480000000		0	0
7	7	Hill+Knowlton Strategies	USA	395000000	385000000		0.026	0.026
8	8	Ogilvy PR	USA	361000000	347000000		0.04	0.04
9	9	BlueFocus	China	268675634	244814558		0.097	0.172
10	10	Golin	USA	245000000	227000000		0.079	0.079
11	12	Brunswick	UK	240000000	220000000		0.091	0.091
12	13	Cohn & Wolfe	USA	224000000	200000000		0.12	0.12
13	11	Havas PR	France	220000000	213000000		0.033	0.033
14	14	FTI Consulting	USA	191184000	189974000	599	0.006	0.045
15	15	MC Group	Germany	185209500	162317350	996	0.141	0.185
16	22	W2O Group	USA	122715000	95010000	427	0.292	0.292
17	16	Porter Novelli	USA	122000000	127000000		-0.039	-0.039
18	17	APCO Worldwide	USA	120622100	119858300	672	0.006	0.006
19	19	Sunny Side Up Inc	Japan	116500000	104000000	159	0.12	0.12
20	18	Huntsworth Health	UK	111684000	107004000		0.044	0.256
21	20	Finsbury	USA	108000000	100000000	238	0.08	0.08
22	25	Vector Inc.	Japan	106000000	82000000	515	0.293	0.293
23	21	WE Communications	USA	101784000	98782000	583	0.03	0.03
24	24	inVentiv Health	USA	90000000	85000000		0.059	0.059

For entries in [this color](#), The Holmes Report has estimated revenue. In many cases, the parent companies of these firms have elected not to provide revenue numbers for individual firms in response to Sarbanes-Oxley financial regulations.

2017	2016	Agency	HQ	Fee Income 2016 (\$)	Fee Income 2015 (\$)	Staff	Growth (USD)	Growth (Constant Currency)
25	32	Res Publica (National PR)	Canada	78000000	60000000	558	0.3	0.3
26	28	Finn Partners	USA	76706000	71481000	485	0.073	0.073
27	34	FSB Comunicacoes	Brazil	76338478	52511005	659	0.454	0.172
28	27	Ruder Finn, Inc.	USA	67400000	74000000	556	-0.089	-0.089
29	23	Grayling	UK	66297000	93536000		-0.291	-0.147
30	31	Text 100	USA	65964887	62647894	610	0.053	0.053
31	29	PMK*BNC	USA	65000000	69800000	312	-0.069	-0.069
32	43	Zeno Group*	USA	59080694	47343821	406	0.248	0.248
33	35	MWWPR	USA	58000000	60000000	200	-0.033	-0.033
34	36	Hopscotch	France	57960000	58424000	533	-0.008	0.03
35	30	Lewis PR	UK	57000000	68585000	370	-0.169	-0.169
36	37	ICR	USA	55663450	56208727	158	-0.01	-0.01
37	39	Allison+Partners	USA	55000000	49000000	338	0.122	0.122
38	46	Marina Maher Communications	USA	52000000	43000000	165	0.209	0.209
39	38	fischerAppelt	Germany	51555000	46212730	427	0.116	0.158
40	33	Bell Pottinger Private	UK	49200000	60872400		-0.192	-0.027
41	61	Newgate Communications	UK	48608857	29827400	171	0.63	0.63
42	48	Hering Schuppener	Germany	47040000	36624000	189	0.284	0.333
43	44	DKC Public Relations	USA	47000000	46950000	240	0.001	0.001
44	45	Dentsu Public Relations Inc.	Japan	44600000	43000000	260	0.037	0.037
45	41	Kreab	UK/Sweden	42466200	48611820	400	-0.126	-0.093
46	51	Padilla	USA	42444913	43265495	206	-0.019	-0.019
47	40	Instinctif Partners	UK	42208680	49316560	386	-0.144	0.03
48	42	Freud Communications	UK	41143500	48228760	238	-0.147	0.026
49	47	PRAP Japan, Inc.	Japan	41000000	41000000	289	0	0
50		Grupo Inpress	Brazil	39856031	28752906	516	0.386	0.118
51	52	Four Communications Group	UK	39822192	34473387	332	0.155	0.39
52	55	GCI Health	USA	38800000	32000000		0.213	0.213
53	53	Teneo Blue Rubicon	UK	37000000	34000000		0.088	0.088
53	49	DeVries Global	USA	37000000	37000000	205	0	0

For entries in this color, The Holmes Report has estimated revenue. In many cases, the parent companies of these firms have elected not to provide revenue numbers for individual firms in response to Sarbanes-Oxley financial regulations.

2017	2016	Agency	HQ	Fee Income 2016 (\$)	Fee Income 2015 (\$)	Staff	Growth (USD)	Growth (Constant Currency)
55		Kyodo Public Relations	Japan	36230091	32268380	223	0.123	0.123
56	50	Portland Communications	UK	35670000	37000000	210	-0.036	0.16
57	54	Llorente & Cuenca	Spain	35484750	32739240	496	0.084	0.125
58	57	Global Strategy Group	USA	34000000	31000000	95	0.097	0.097
59		H&H Group	Sweden	33770000	27240000		0.24	0.352
60	62	Prain Global	Korea	32853248	28537969	220	0.151	0.151
61	73	Hotwire	UK	31702340	23397226	216	0.355	0.355
62	58	The Outcast Agency	USA	31500000	30000000		0.05	0.05
63	70	Prosek Partners	USA	31488000	24400000	127	0.29	0.29
64	60	Racepoint Global	USA	29036374	29247346	168	-0.007	-0.007
65	67	M Booth	USA	28844191	25546472	150	0.129	0.129
66	65	Coyne PR	USA	27300000	25000000	159	0.092	0.092
67	59	Citigate Dewe Rogerson	UK	27183000	29600000		-0.082	0.105
68	76	5W Public Relations	USA	27002754	21927960	138	0.231	0.231
69	69	Oliver Schrott Kommunikation	Germany	26365500	24514100	213	0.076	0.116
70	94	Carmichael Lynch Relate	USA	25500000	17500000		0.457	0.457
71	64	SEC Group	Italy	25273231	27260900	188	-0.073	-0.073
72	81	Fahlgren Mortine	USA	24440092	20554236	194	0.189	0.189
73	86	Adfactors PR	India	24300000	19600000	575	0.24	0.24
74	68	G&S Business Communications	USA	24228411	25012724	135	-0.031	-0.031
75	79	Olson Engage	USA	24000000	21000000	128	0.143	0.143
76	66	MHP Communications	UK	23789554	24489880	147	-0.029	0.169
77	82	Hunter Public Relations	USA	23500000	20500000	121	0.146	0.146
78	78	French/West/Vaughan	USA	23371021	21166208	103	0.104	0.104
79	66	Iris Worldwide	UK	23370000	28120000		-0.169	0
80	91	Farner Consulting	Switzerland	23215500	17598050		0.319	0.369
81	74	Taylor	USA	22900000	22100000	110	0.036	0.036
82	77	Strategic Public Relations Group	Hong Kong	22300000	21800000	302	0.023	0.023
83		Sopexa	France	22149750	25338140	214	-0.126	-0.093
84	90	Jackson Spalding	USA	21006046	18172800	131	0.156	0.156

For entries in [this color](#), The Holmes Report has estimated revenue. In many cases, the parent companies of these firms have elected not to provide revenue numbers for individual firms in response to Sarbanes-Oxley financial regulations.

2017	2016	Agency	HQ	Fee Income 2016 (\$)	Fee Income 2015 (\$)	Staff	Growth (USD)	Growth (Constant Currency)
85	80	Peppercomm	USA	20427321	20644468	101	-0.011	-0.011
86	75	Geelmuyden.Kiese Group	Norway	20160000	18480000		0.091	0
87	107	Spectrum	USA	20000000	14840000	72	0.348	0.348
88	95	Kivvit	USA	19882634	17010000	66	0.169	0.169
89	83	Shift Communications Inc.	USA	19621186	20426167	126	-0.039	-0.039
90	87	Levick Strategic Communications	USA	19000000	19586431	73	-0.03	-0.03
91		Exposure	UK	18750033	20306235	168	-0.077	0.111
92	92	ATREVIA	Spain	18674278	18065286	253	0.034	0.073
93	89	Serviceplan PR Group	Germany	18186000	18224800	120	-0.002	0.036
94	137	CYTS-LINKAGE	China	18123494	10075000	150	0.799	0.799
95	109	M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment	UK	17466000	14800000	123	0.18	0.42
96	93	LaunchSquad	USA	17409000	16221000	119	0.073	0.073
97		Havas Formula	USA	17030177	14356222	95	0.186	0.186
98	84	Barabino & Partners	Italy	16905000	16568000	102	0.02	0.059
99	106	PR One	Korea	16800000	14946921	135	0.124	0.124
100	98	Mitchell Communications Group, LLC	USA	16657093	14190491	76	0.174	0.174
101	88	The Red Consultancy	UK	16359000	18988103	140	-0.138	0.037
102	112	Faktor 3	Germany	16065000	13625000	180	0.179	0.224
103	101	achtung!	Germany	15666000	15337390	146	0.021	0.06
104	115	PAN Communications	USA	15605837	13150000	87	0.187	0.187
105	111	Cooney/Waters Group	USA	15160000	14020725	46	0.081	0.081
106		Imre	USA	15100000	14600000	85	0.034	0.034
107	102	TRACCS	Saudi Arabia	15050000	15200000	218	-0.01	-0.01
108	104	Spark	USA	15000000	14007456	55	0.071	0.001
109	99	ICF Mostra	Belgium	14592900	15760533	141	-0.074	-0.039
110	96	Brands2Life	UK	14387925	17110280	104	-0.159	0.012
111	110	Haberlein & Mauerer	Germany	14385000	14606000	166	-0.015	0.022
112	108	Interel	UK	14175000	14715000	120	-0.037	0
113		Envirionics Communications	Canada	14076868	12055011	92	0.168	0.136

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2017	2016	Agency	HQ	Fee Income 2016 (\$)	Fee Income 2015 (\$)	Staff	Growth (USD)	Growth (Constant Currency)
114	132	Highwire	USA	14032125	10994175	73	0.276	0.276
115	139	ReviveHealth	USA	14015000	10030000	65	0.397	0.397
116		Rud Pedersen	Sweden	13965000	11118000	67	0.256	0.304
117	97	Lansons	UK	13887551	16196377	115	-0.143	0.032
118	113	Hanover	UK	13788300	13648692	100	0.01	0.216
119	124	InkHouse	USA	13738722	12110173	98	0.134	0.134
120	116	Kaplow	USA	13700000	13100000	69	0.046	0.046
121	119	Sloane & Company	USA	13500000	13000000	19	0.038	0.038
122	105	Maitland	UK	13451280	14206520	53	-0.053	0.139
123		Mazarine Asia Pacific	Hong Kong	13200000	12754000	61	0.035	0.035
124	114	Makovsky	USA	13141000	13450000	56	-0.023	-0.023
125	127	Exponent	USA	12600000	11800000	54	0.068	0.068
126	133	ROI Communication	USA	12500000	12500000	80	0	0
126	120	RF Binder	USA	12500000	12700000	68	-0.016	-0.016
126		TogoRun	USA	12500000	14300000	65	-0.126	-0.126
129	123	Bite Communications	USA	12250000	12250000		0	0
130	138	Crosby	USA	12243385	10055190	68	0.218	0.218
131		Current Marketing	USA	12012000	10500000	55	0.144	0.144
132	121	Brodeur Partners	USA	12000000	12500000		-0.04	-0.04
133	130	Merritt Group, Inc.	USA	11805900	11119100	58	0.062	0.062
134	117	Pegasus	UK	11767410	13120200	108	-0.103	0.079
135	126	Max Borges Agency	USA	11500000	11842541	65	-0.029	-0.029
136	135	M&C Saatchi PR	UK	11386035	10583481	118	0.076	0.294
137	141	The Hoffman Agency	USA	11340000	10300000	140	0.101	0.101
138	133	A&B One	Germany	11235000	10943600	75	0.027	0.066
139	129	Davies	USA	11083799	11310000	32	-0.02	-0.02
140	100	Rasky Partners	USA	11043237	14126431	44	-0.218	-0.218
141	144	Kwittken	USA	11000000	10000000	70	0.1	0.1
142	131	F&H Porter Novelli	Germany	10710000	11052600	65	-0.031	0.006
143	125	Action Global Communications	Cyprus	10700000	12500000	291	-0.144	-0.144
144	143	Wellcom	France	10500000	9810000	100	0.07	0.111
145	157	Bateman Group	USA	10482117	8643281	53	0.213	0.213

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146	148	Lift World	Portugal	10354761	9550268	120	0.084	0.126
147	167	North Strategic	Canada	10212000	8136000	78	0.255	0.221
148	145	Method Communication	USA	10141885	9734260	59	0.042	0.042
149	122	TVC Group	UK	10087638	12560121	16	-0.197	-0.034
150	155	SenateSHJ	New Zealand	10058000	9352000	58	0.075	0.075
151	150	Podesta Group	USA	10030212	9020909	19	0.112	0.112
152		DCI	USA	10023512	9600000	57	0.044	0.044
153	152	KPR & Associates	Korea	9916073	8700000	100	0.14	0.14
154		PRR	USA	9782849	9081986	96	0.077	0.077
155	128	Nelson Bostock Group	UK	9471000	11642294	88	-0.187	-0.021
156	149	Bliss Integrated Communications	USA	9284000	9500000	48	-0.023	-0.023
157	163	rbb Communications	USA	9241425	7605889	58	0.215	0.215
158	193	Praytell	USA	9211710	5900000	56	0.561	0.561
159	147	Powerscourt	UK	8856000	10212000	37	-0.133	0.043
160		furrerhugi.	Switzerland	8800995	9115864	38	-0.035	0.002
161	177	Nebo	USA	8500000	8600000	74	-0.012	-0.012
162	153	Apple Tree Communications	Spain	8400000	8692750	72	-0.034	0.003
163	136	Veritas Communications	Canada	8362000	7272000	65	0.15	0.119
164		HSE Cake	UK	8241000	8806000	65	-0.064	0.126
165	234	Gregory FCA	USA	8200000	7500000	66	0.093	0.093
166	168	LVT Group	Netherlands	8169000	7722650	75	0.058	0.098
167	158	First House	Norway	8085000	9047000	22	-0.106	-0.072
168	164	360PR+	USA	8026000	7500000	45	0.07	0.07
169	175	Walker Sands	USA	8018798	6917494	79	0.159	0.159
170	182	C+C	USA	8002057	6488879	45	0.233	0.233
171	159	FoodMinds	USA	8000000	8287756		-0.035	-0.035
172	161	Approach	Brazil	7878020	8132838	146	-0.031	-0.031
173	177	McNeely Pigott & Fox Public Relations	USA	7845354	6806534	62	0.153	0.153
174	103	Frank PR	UK	7782832	9993864	55	-0.221	-0.063
175		JPA Health Communications	USA	7703679	6056952	39	0.272	0.272

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176	160	Jeschenko MedienAgentur	Germany	7612500	8185900	44	-0.07	-0.035
177	146	AMI Communications	Czech Republic	7610175	9643422	100	-0.211	-0.181
178	162	Dodge Communication	USA	7578042	7750000	42	-0.022	-0.022
179	188	Marco de Comunicacion	Spain	7535156	6105679	90	0.234	0.281
180	171	Lambert, Edwards & Associates	USA	7481000	7058000	39	0.06	0.06
181		Greentarget Global Group LLC	USA	7447000	6835000	33	0.09	0.09
182	154	JeffreyGroup	USA	7213840	8580997	122	-0.159	-0.159
183	173	Lou Hammond & Associates	USA	7210839	6966039	40	0.035	0.035
184	191	W	UK	7170900	6009633	91	0.193	0.436
185	237	Rumeur Publique	France	7100100	5952490	48	0.193	0.238
186		GOODIDEA MEDIA	China	7000000	5000000	45	0.4	0.4
186	174	451 Marketing	USA	7000000	7000000		0	0
186	166	Enzaim Health	Korea	7000000	7265750	57	-0.037	-0.037
189	151	Octopus Group	UK	6888000	7067000	66	-0.025	0.173
190	169	Thomas Marko & Associes	France	6825000	7085000	36	-0.037	0
191	184	Fink & Fuchs Public Relations	Germany	6741000	6431000	54	0.048	0.088
192	183	komm.passion	Germany	6615000	6485500		0.02	0.059
193	179	Narva	Sweden	6600000	6480000	41	0.019	0.111
194	180	LDWWgroup	USA	6599007	6596363	16	0	0
195	176	Cicero Group	UK	6531028	6910389	54	-0.055	0.137
196		Saxum	USA	6460846	5976694	34	0.081	0.081
197	156	Mischief	UK	6424290	7143960	70	-0.101	0.082
198	185	Kirchhoff Consult	Germany	6422000	6322000	58	0.016	0.016
199	203	EMG	The Netherlands	6300000	5450000	47	0.156	0.2
199	181	All Channels	Bulgaria	6300000	6540000	91	-0.037	0
201		Public Integrated Communications	USA	6260124	6312563	45	-0.008	0.074
202	189	Djembe Communications	UAE	6200000	6000000	47	0.033	0.033
203	207	Another Company	Mexico	6100000	5200000	91	0.173	0.173

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204	192	Cerrell Associates	USA	6098177	5950000	25	0.025	0.025
205		Day One Agency	USA	6038323	4390259	33	0.375	0.375
206	195	Creative Crest	India	6024391	5859050	42	0.028	0.028
207		Kyne	Ireland	5900761	4592165	26	0.285	0.285
208	170	Diplomat Communications	Sweden	5800000	4900000	38	0.184	0.184
209	194	Headland Consultancy	UK	5792868	5539347	40	0.046	0.258
210		Kiterocket	USA	5788068	4222082	45	0.371	0.371
211		Tunheim	USA	5757017	5120195	29	0.124	0.124
212		Moore Communications Group	USA	5737878	6542410	38	-0.123	-0.123
213	214	Hope&Glory	UK	5710719	5032209	58	0.135	0.365
214	220	Konnect Public Relations	USA	5700000	4750000	36	0.2	0.2
215		Eulogy!	UK	5467921	5749347	51	-0.049	0.144
216		Story Partners	USA	5442608	4800000	20	0.134	0.23
217	221	Singer Associates	USA	5364538	4736816	16	0.133	0.133
218	204	Trigger Oslo	Norway	5250000	5406400	45	-0.029	0.008
219	201	Berkeley PR International	UK	5231190	5544654	55	-0.057	0.135
220	196	Seven Hills	UK	5216011	5854917	46	-0.109	0.072
221		Evercom	Spain	5207922	3967781	62	0.313	0.363
222	187	salt	UK	5157588	6101695	45	-0.155	0.017
223	205	Dukas Public Relations	USA	5148601	5300000	21	-0.029	-0.029
224	172	The Herd Agency	Australia	5148000	5110000	48	0.007	0.021
225	208	London Communications Agency	UK	5126930	5228908	34	-0.02	0.18
226	219	Integral PR Services Pvt Limited	India	5100000	4805000	78	0.061	0.061
227		Red Agency	Australia	5048706	3635850	65	0.389	0.408
228	225	DT Digital	China	5000000	4500000		0.111	0.111
228	212	Magna Carta	South Africa	5000000	5000000		0	0
228	210	BOCA Communications	USA	5000000	5126405	35	-0.025	-0.025
231	190	Harvard	UK	4981591	4650133	44	0.071	0.289
232	199	MCG Medical Consulting Group	Germany	4924500	5548100	34	-0.112	-0.079

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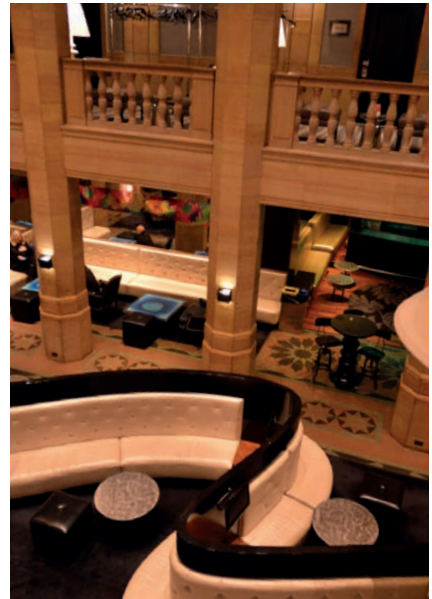
2017	2016	Agency	HQ	Fee Income 2016 (\$)	Fee Income 2015 (\$)	Staff	Growth (USD)	Growth (Constant Currency)
233	202	circle	UK	4861018	5506569	39	-0.117	0.062
234	211	CP/compartner	Germany	4840500	5014000	58	-0.035	0.002
235	245	NJF	USA	4816600	3840000	48	0.254	0.254
236		Remarkable Group	UK	4792080	5308760	41	-0.097	0.086
237	165	Shine@Academy	UK	4778220	4339492	44	0.101	0.325
238	198	CooperKatz & Company, Inc.	USA	4748633	5581445	29	-0.149	-0.149
239	197	Talk PR	UK	4714236	5624000	50	-0.162	0.009
240	229	Meropa Communications	South Africa	4690000	3480000	80	0.348	0.155
241	238	Hawkins International Public Relations	USA	4566288	4000000	31	0.142	0.142
242	226	L C Williams & Associates	USA	4506037	4450000		0.013	0.013
243		Greenough Brand Storytellers	USA	4501166	4036949	25	0.115	0.115
244	233	akkanto sa	Belgium	4494000	4159763	27	0.08	0.122
245	200	Havas Just::	UK	4428000	5550000	30	-0.202	-0.04
246	242	Tact Intelligence-conseil	Canada	4413093	3765709	50	0.172	0.14
247	213	Bhava Communications	USA	4400000	5000000	27	-0.12	-0.12
248		Rose Marketing	Cyprus	4396072	4087653	57	0.075	0.116
249	223	Imagem Corporativa	Brazil	4378597	4609299	82	-0.05	-0.05
250	232	Akima Media	Germany	4356430	4249000	34	0.025	0.025

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IN2 Summit North America







SABRE Awards
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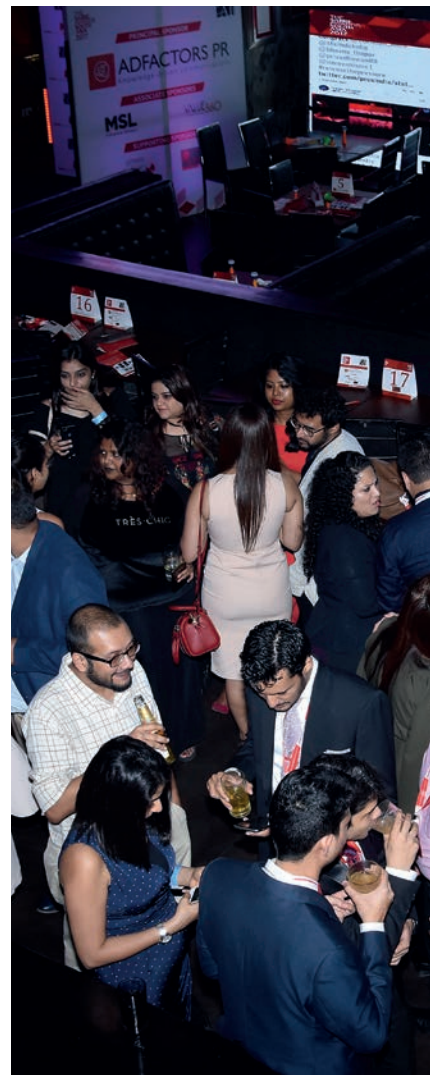
SABRE Awards
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Asia-Pacific







SABRE Awards
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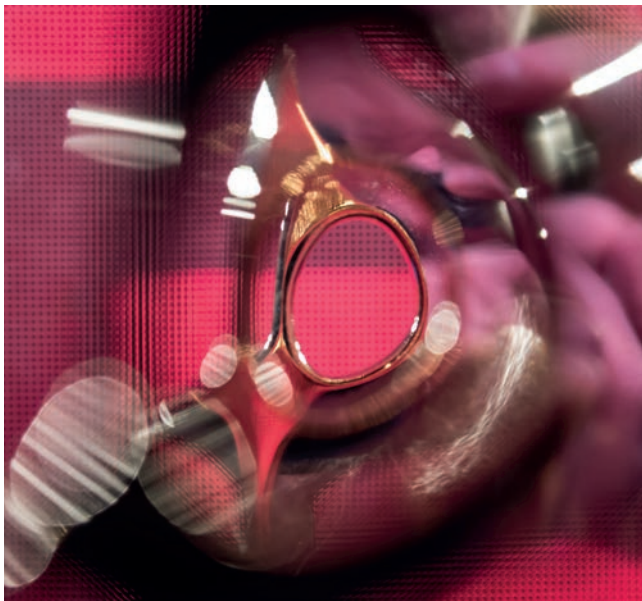




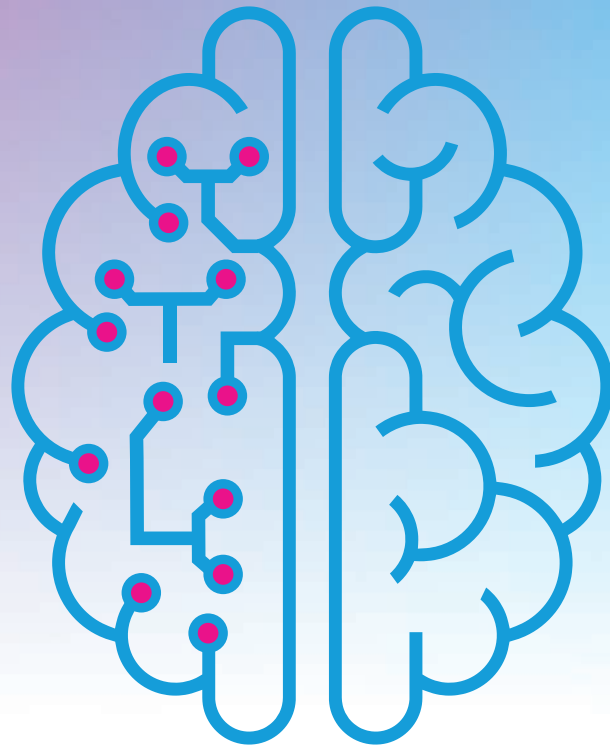


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