

PR Firms Add to Headcount as Offerings Expand

Tech Prioritization, New Clients, Developing Markets

■ By EMILY SANTIAGO-MOLINA

The pandemic appears to be a thing of the past for Orange County's collection of public relations firms, which are enjoying their second consecutive year of notable employment gains.

The county's 16 largest companies reported a 9.4% jump in employees to 304 full-time staff, adding on to last year's 14.2% boost, according to this week's Business Journal list.

Seven offices reported an increase of at least 10%, while only two companies reported a decline in staff.

The Brand Amp in Costa Mesa retained its No. 1 spot on the list with 65 full-time employees in OC, up 10% from a year ago.

Innovation and technology are front of mind for the region's top PR firms as they looked to modernize offerings for clients and reach a broader base of consumers.

"We're living in a world of multiple generations. We require a level of understanding as to what business looks like for each generation and what it's morphing into," **Global Results Communications** founder and CEO **Valerie Christopherson** told the Business Journal.

Glued Together

Global Results Communications was one of many PR firms prioritizing technology as part of its 2021 business strategy.

The firm grew locally to 35 full-time employees, placing it once again as No. 2 on the list. The firm saw greater growth companywide, with total headcount up 22% to a 110-member



Goodwill of Orange County CEO, President Nicole Suydam with Idea Hall CEO, President Rebecca Hall; Idea Hall, No. 3 on list, named nonprofit's marcomm agency of record last month

team.

Based in Santa Ana, the company's global footprint counts team members in Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

Christopherson noted that North America bounced back the fastest from a PR standpoint. As for an industry comeback, "telecom was extremely strong in helping keep the world glued together."

Global Results also has its eyes on space travel as a growing industry, as well as the metaverse.

"The second half of this year is going to be a reflection of getting back to business and pushing innovation forward," Christopherson said.

Video Focus

A handful of companies fortified their teams

and rose through the ranks, including No. 4 Orange-based **Communications LAB**, No. 5 **Core Strategic Group** in Anaheim, and No. 6 **Bastion Elevate** in Costa Mesa.

Communications LAB saw the greatest growth across the list, with its headcount up 54% to 20 employees, moving the firm up three spots.

"There's now a conga line of people in the office," Chief Executive **Arianna Barrios** told the Business Journal.

A large part of the firm's business is with government agencies, which kept the office busy through the pandemic as an essential business.

In the first month of the pandemic, the company purchased a fleet of computers and cameras for a newly built video production studio within its office, which led to an increase in in-

terested clients.

"Storytelling now has to have these digital tools," Barrios said. "Without the pivot, a huge slowdown would have happened."

This set the stage for 2021, as the Communications LAB team maintained its client roster and went after new business. Coming out of the pandemic, the team added staff in its Los Angeles office to capitalize on a "release of energy and projects" coming out of the area, according to Barrios.

"Doors were opening up that hadn't been open before."

EdTech

As those doors opened, firms saw gains.

"Companies were looking for trusted partners to navigate where they should be spending money," Bastion Elevate's President **Shana Starr** told the Business Journal. "When we have a steady stream of business, that means we can invest more into our team."

The firm grew its staff by 38% to 18 employees and plans to double that figure by 2023. It jumped up one spot to No. 6 on this year's list and plans to move up a few more notches by next year as it works toward its goal of becoming the largest independent agency on the West Coast.

It plans to do this by working with growing industries like education, which has also benefited from an infusion of technology in recent years.

































Bastion said multiple companies sought out PR services for developing educational programs last year, such as **Scout Education** which connects substitutes to various school districts.

"Travel and hospitality will be our next big swing," Starr said. ■



THE LIST PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS | ▶ NEXT WEEK'S LIST *Restaurant Chains*

RANKED BY NUMBER OF OC EMPLOYEES

| Rank | Company | Company logo | OC employees | Companywide employees | Primary markets served | Partial list of clients | Top local official(s) | |
|------------|--|---|------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Prev. Rank | •Address •Headquarters | | •yearly % change | •yearly % change | | | •Title •Phone/fax | |
| 1 | The Brand Amp 1945 Placentia Ave., Bldg. C (1) Costa Mesa 92627-6274 Costa Mesa Website: thebrandamp.com Email: karen@thebrandamp.com |  | 65 10% | 79 13% | automotive, consumer, healthcare, nonprofit, other, retail, technology | Traeger Grills, Indian Motorcycles, Carl's Jr., Skullcandy, Surfrider Foundation, Mitsubishi Motors, DirecTV | Todd Brooks/Marc Altieri/ Charley Fitzwilliam co-founders (949) 438-3939 |  |
| 2 | Global Results Communications (GRC) 201 Sandpointe Ave., Ste. 440 (2) Santa Ana 92707-5742 Santa Ana Website: globalresultspr.com Email: grc@globalresultspr.com |  | 35 6% | 110 22% | consumer, government, healthcare, hospitality/tourism, nonprofit, real estate, technology, telecom | Verizon, Wahoo's Fish Taco, Ericsson, EPAM, Telit, Impulse Propulsion Space, Epson | Valerie Christopherson founder/CEO (949) 608-0276/(949) 271-4680 |  |
| 3 | Idea Hall 611 Anton Blvd., Ste. 140 (3) Costa Mesa 92626-7005 Costa Mesa Website: ideahall.com Email: rebecca@ideahall.com |  | 26 0% | 26 0% | consumer, government, healthcare, hospitality/tourism, nonprofit, other, real estate, retail | ocVIBE, Be Well OC, MemorialCare, C.W. Driver, Goodwill OC, Sabal Capital, Cystinosis Research Foundation | Rebecca Hall CEO/president (714) 436-0855/(714) 263-8743 |  |
| 4 | Communications LAB 701 E. Chapman Ave. (7) Orange 92866-1620 Orange Website: communicationslab.com Email: info@communicationslab.com |  | 20 54% | 22 69% | government, healthcare, Hispanic, hospitality/tourism, nonprofit, other, real estate, retail | Disneyland Resort, Southern California Edison, City of Anaheim, EOCWD, SMWD, OC Tax, OC Forum, CIGNA Healthcare, LA Metro, Metrolink, Ready OC, Safe OC, UCI MIND, OC Sanitation District | Arianna Barrios CEO (949) 215-5539/(949) 215-5549 |  |
| 5 | Core Strategic Group 2099 S. State College Blvd., Ste. 630 (7) Anaheim 92806-6142 Sacramento Website: corestrategicgroup.com Email: rachael@corestrategicgroup.com |  | 19 46% | 64 39% | automotive, consumer, government, healthcare, Hispanic, hospitality/tourism, manufacturing, nonprofit, other, real estate, technology | Anaheim Chamber of Commerce, Ford Motor Co., Western Carwash Association, Habitat for Humanity, San Diego SHRM, Anaheim/Orange County Hotel & Lodging Association, Southern California Edison, Greenlaw Partners, Wincome Hospitality, Prime Healthcare, SRB Management (Angels Baseball) | Jeff Flint CEO/president (949) 336-4500/(949) 448-5933 |  |
| 6 | Bastion Elevate 2942 Century Place, Ste. 770 (7) Costa Mesa 92626-4324 Melbourne, Australia Website: bastionelevate.com Email: shanas@bastionagency.com |  | 18 38% | 22 47% | automotive, consumer, government, healthcare, Hispanic, hospitality/tourism, manufacturing, nonprofit, other, real estate, retail, technology | Scout Education, Impero Software, Graybirch Construction, Coval, Cyrex Laboratories, Holistic Hyperbarics, Iron Rebel, WowWow, Lucky 7 Spirits, Ontario Auto Center, Telematics, Lemonade, Cousins Maine Lobster, K1Speed, Enevate, OREMOR Automotive Group, UFC, Avalara, International Fruit Genetics, Store 5a, SoberBuddy and more! | Shana Starr CEO (949) 433-0851 |  |
| 7 | IMW Agency 23191 La Cadena Drive, Ste. 101 (4) Laguna Hills 92653-1429 Costa Mesa Website: imwagency.com Email: chris@imwagency.com |  | 16 0% | 16 0% | automotive, consumer, government, Hispanic, hospitality/tourism, manufacturing, retail, technology | Santa Barbara Vintners Association, Sizzler, Ayres Hotels, Hyundai Glovis, Avocados from Mexico, The Flower Fields, Kayanoya Foods, LA Flower Market | Chris Bretschger president (714) 557-7100 |  |
| 7 | The Smart Agency⁽¹⁾ 220 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 22 (5) Newport Beach 92660-7550 Newport Beach Website: thesmartagency.com Email: info@thesmartagency.com |  | 16 14% | 22 38% | real estate, retail | KBS, Lewis Retail Centers, Passco Companies, Avanath Capital Management, DAUM Commercial, NADEL Architecture & Planning, Western National Group | Jenn Quader CEO/president (949) 438-6262 |  |
| 9 | Reveille Inc. 1931 Newport Blvd. (5) Costa Mesa 92627-2250 Costa Mesa Website: reveilleinc.com Email: ideas@reveilleinc.com |  | 14 0% | 15 0% | consumer, healthcare, hospitality/tourism, manufacturing, nonprofit, other, real estate, retail | City of Hope Orange County, Sole Technology, FivePoint Holdings Inc., Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, YMCA of Orange County, Make-A-Wish OC & IE, Community Action Partnership Orange County, Families Forward, Human Options, Waymakers | Brenda Springer CEO/president (949) 692-3239 |  |
| 10 | Trinet Internet Solutions Inc. 108 Discovery, Ste. 100 (12) Irvine 92618-3131 Irvine Website: trinetnsolutions.com Email: info@trinetnsolutions.com |  | 12 0% | 13 0% | consumer, government, healthcare, hospitality/tourism, manufacturing, nonprofit, retail | OCTA, Catalina Express, Variety the Childrens' Charity, Maruchan, Juice It Up, Gelson's Supermarkets, World Vision | John Carley/Ron Weber CEO/COO (949) 442-8900/(949) 442-8905 |  |
| 11 | Madison Alexander PR 250 El Camino Real, Ste. 116 (14) Tustin 92780-3655 Tustin Website: madisonalexanderpr.com Email: dchm@madisonalexanderpr.com |  | 11 10% | 11 10% | technology | Cyatar, YouAttest, Horizon3.ai, Shared Assessments, Corent Technology Inc., Enevate, Blue Hexagon, Approov, The Media Trust, VeridiumID, Gurucul, GRIMM, SCYTHE, iMatrix Systems, Dispersive Holdings, LogicHub | Dan Chmielewski principal (714) 832-8716/(714) 832-8916 |  |
| 11 | Rocket Launch Marketing & PR 190 S. Glassell St., Ste. 201 (7) Orange 92866-1477 Orange Website: rocketlaunchagency.com Email: blast-off@rocketlaunchagency.com |  | 11 -15% | 11 -15% | automotive, consumer, healthcare, hospitality/tourism, manufacturing, nonprofit, other, retail, technology | Dole Food Company, Beko Home Appliances, OC Fair & Event Center, Orange County Community Foundation, Boys & Girls Clubs, Hydra Design Labs, Sherman Library & Gardens, Family Promise of OC, War Heroes on Water | Dan Nasitka principal/VP (714) 694-7190 |  |
| 11 | The ACE Agency 3420 Bristol St., Ste. 430 (14) Costa Mesa 92626-1996 Costa Mesa Website: theaceagency.com Email: info@theaceagency.com |  | 11 10% | 12 20% | government, hospitality/tourism, nonprofit, other, real estate, retail | 2nd & PCH, Dana Point Harbor, Downtown Santa Monica, Inc., Glen Ivy Hot Springs, Irvine Ranch Conservancy, Laguna Art Museum, Miguel's Jr., Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort & Marina, OC Parks, Pacific Surfliner, Santa Monica Place | Ashley Patterson founder/president |  |
| 14 | Curt Pringle & Associates 1801 E. Katella Ave., Ste. 1002 (14) Anaheim 92805-6600 Anaheim Website: curtpringle.com Email: email@curtpringle.com |  | 10 0% | 10 0% | government, healthcare, hospitality/tourism, other, real estate, retail, technology | Brookfield Homes, CHOC Children's, Jamboree Housing, Shea Properties, Verizon | Curt Pringle president (714) 939-9070/(714) 939-9080 |  |
| 14 | Hill+Knowlton Strategies 3200 Bristol St., Ste. 300 (7) Costa Mesa 92626-1838 New York Website: hkstrategies.com Email: lela.coutsoftides@hillandknowlton.com |  | 10 -17% | 2,500 25% | automotive, consumer, government, healthcare, Hispanic, hospitality/tourism, nonprofit, other, real estate, technology | Budweiser, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Takeda, Mazda, Ford, Angostura | Larry Krutchik executive VP, California (714) 913-9700 |  |
| 14 | Venture Strategic 1 Corporate Park, Ste. 101 (14) Irvine 92606-5150 Irvine Website: venturestrategic.com Email: jeff@venturestrategic.com |  | 10 0% | 10 0% | consumer, government, healthcare, nonprofit, other, real estate, retail, telecom | KPC Group, Promise Care Medical Group, Core-Mark International, Clay Lacy Aviation, Associated Builders and Contractors of Southern California, K2 Gold, OC Business Council, Pierce Aesthetics, The Arcus Group, Stride Fitness, Strive LA | Jeff Corless CEO/president (714) 676-8332 |  |

Note: To the best of our knowledge, this information is accurate as of press time. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the list, omissions and typographical errors sometimes occur. Unless otherwise noted, the information on this list was provided by the companies themselves. Though we have asked the companies to report only permanent employees, some numbers may still include contractors. List may not be reprinted without permission of the editor. Photos show the first top official listed.
(1) Previously listed as Brower Group