

PR News

Building the bridge between PR and the bottom line.

All-Stars Issue

★ Featuring the PR People & 15 to Watch Award Winners

More 50 than other industries, PR is intensely social, fueled by human interaction. No matter how brilliantly conceived, a program can never come to fruition without talented and focused PR pros guiding and galvanizing it. People—not concepts—continue to be the engine driving this business. At *PR News*, we know this instinctively, and we are delighted to pay homage to the winners of the PR People Awards and the Hall of Fame inductees in this issue, which is being unveiled at our Nov. 6 awards luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Also included in this issue is our nod to young turks—the “15 to Watch” PR up-and-comers.



Agency Executive of the Year

JOHN HELLERMAN, CO-FOUNDER,
HELLERMAN BARETZ COMMUNICATIONS

As co-founder of Hellerman Baretz Communications, John Hellerman has carved a niche for himself as a mastermind behind strategic communications campaigns for some of the world's top law firms. Providing advice to attorneys on how to manage their high-stakes litigation PR needs, Hellerman's contributions in the area of legal marketing have sealed his reputation as a superstar in this arena.

The Lateral Angle

Taking into account the high frequency of attorneys jumping ship to new firms each year, and that the average cost to integrate a new lateral partner into a firm is at least \$600,000, Hellerman figured out that more than \$240 million was being squandered because law firms weren't able to satisfy their lateral partners. Hellerman, who helped found Levick Strategic Communications, devised a strategic and cost-effective system that would help firms institutionalize talent by promoting the new, high-profile laterals hires with tactics such as speaking engagements at industry conferences, bylined article opportunities in trade publications and submissions to “best of” lists.

Hellerman's innovative PR practice led to him being



asked to present at the Legal Marketing Association's Annual Conference and to author for leading legal journals several articles on the topic of promoting high-profile hires.

A Splash in the Blogosphere

While watching the NBC sitcom *The Office*, Hellerman was hit with a thunderbolt of inspiration: Why not create a blog for client law firm Ford & Harrison LLP that directly addresses workplace issues that pop up on the TV show? Thus was launched the That's What She Said blog in February 2007. Since its inception, the blog has become a virtual sensation, scoring more than 20,000 hits a week. It also has generated notable media coverage in leading publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Coping With Challenges

“[New ideas] offer tremendous opportunities, but are difficult to sell and implement. We're a creative agency, but we work for a very conservative clientele,” says Hellerman. “There's a delicate balance, and selling news ideas can be challenging. However, as an owner of my company, I have tremendous empathy for our clients and understand why some great ideas simply never come to pass.”

Reading Advocate

When not working long hours at his firm, Hellerman, who manages a team of 10 in three offices while overseeing more than 30 clients, lends his talents to The Reading Connection, a nonprofit literacy organization in Washington, D.C., for which he serves as president of the board of directors. ■

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