

**Introducing Al Golin as Alexander Hamilton Award Recipient
Institute for Public Relations – Distinguished Lecture & Awards Dinner
The Yale Club
New York, N.Y.
November 4, 2009**

I'm honored to have the privilege of introducing Al Golin, who regrettably is not with us but who will share his acceptance of the prestigious Alexander Hamilton Award through a video message you'll see momentarily.

In Tanzania a few years ago, I met a Massai tribal leader who told me something I've never forgotten. He said, "A story is like the wind -- it comes from far away, and you can feel it." I have a story like that, and it involves tonight's honoree.

Ten years ago, I had the opportunity to join GolinHarris as a new executive leader, and my decision was not easy. I asked if I could meet Al. Having competed against this man and GolinHarris for many years, I was curious about what made him -- and the agency -- *different*. So we met for lunch at the old 410 Club in The Wrigley Building, and it was one of the most charmed afternoons I've enjoyed in my career. His warmth, his honesty, his undying humor in the face of difficulty, and his integrity -- all were evident in that first meeting. I made my decision on the spot, and I've never looked back. I've told him many times that our lunch was a moment of truth for me, and he's smiled and said, "I'm glad I was on that day!"

Al Golin is a master storyteller. We traveled to an event together one evening. Afterward, he told me that he had crossed paths with a former employee of the agency. This person made a point of telling Al that he had "never met a single person who had left GolinHarris with a bad thing to say about the agency." Al looked at me and said, "While a lot of things make me happy in life, I'm probably most proud of the fact that we've created a company that people truly *love*."

Al created the concept of "the trust bank" long before trust became a part of our reputational ethos. When clients, like Ray Kroc of McDonald's, were faced with the challenge of making decisions on taking the road less traveled and "doing the right thing," even when unpopular -- Al was there. And from his commitment, key principles that drive us in our work and leadership today were born: McDonald's introduced new environment practices, long before the advent of government rules and societal expectations. The Ronald McDonald House Charities, an iconic McDonald's program innovated in the Seventies, became the gold standard for corporate social responsibility. Al helped McDonald's introduce RMHC globally to places like Russia, where no one believed CSR would ever work -- but it did!

Al Golin has a "true north," and his moral compass has driven the agency in its growth and leadership. His principles and beliefs are always at work among us when it comes time to select, or even reject, a new client. He reminds us to consider the corporate values, business practices and beliefs of the clients we may serve -- to ensure they match our own values. He's led us into the work we do in communities where our people work and serve, with partnerships like the storied relationship with the Off the Street Club, where the agency staffers volunteer time and resources to disadvantaged young men and women in the Garfield Park area of Chicago. This service ethic led our agency to create community workdays throughout the world to "give back" -- in honor of Al Golin -- in name and spirit.

Then there's the humorous Al: He visited a conservative midwestern company a few years ago, and when seating himself in the boardroom, tumbled backwards in his chair, landing head over heels. Those in the room apparently gasped, thinking him dead or serious injured. Unruffled, Al picked himself up, stood before the CEO and his team and said... "And now, for my *next* trick!" Then there was the day he called on the American icon, Norman Rockwell, to commission him for an annual report cover for his McDonald's client. Standing in the foyer of Rockwell's New England home, Al found Rockwell ill and in repose, yelling down the stairwell -- "Come back next year! Maybe I'll do it then!" And of course, Al did just that. Rockwell agreed, and that annual report cover became one of the earliest examples of an American corporation reflecting the diversity of the customers it serves.

Al authored a book titled *Trust or Consequences* a few years ago, during a period of great challenge -- when brands like Enron, Arthur Andersen, Worldcom and others collapsed because of poor governance practices. At the heart of his book is the thesis of trust and what trusted brands *do*. He reminds us, as Mark Twain said, to "Always do right; this will gratify some people and astonish others." Al walks the walk for all of us.

Al Golin remains active, vital, and integral to GolinHarris, its clients and our profession. He loves mentoring, he loves learning, and he loves the action. He lives by a credo that was best professed by George Bernard Shaw, which he recites often: "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing!"

That is the Al Golin we all love.

Ladies and gentlemen, Al Golin...