

**PR AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT: TRANSFORMATION,
OPPORTUNITY, RESPONSIBILITY**

**Institute for Public Relations (IPR), Alexander Hamilton Medal for
Lifetime Contribution**

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The Yale Club, New York, NY

Ray Kotcher, Senior Partner & Chairman, Ketchum

THANK YOU VERY MUCH...

I AM DEEPLY MOVED AND HONORED.

**I WANT TO THANK THE INSTITUTE – ITS BOARD,
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND LEADERSHIP – FRANK
OVAITT, OSCAR SURIS AND KEN MAKOVSKY.**

**FRANK, IT IS PARTICULARLY WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU
HERE IN GOOD HEALTH AND DOING WHAT YOU LOVE
DOING.**

**THERE ARE SOME OTHER PEOPLE HERE TONIGHT.
PEOPLE TO WHOM I OWE EVERYTHING. MY
EXTRAORDINARY WIFE AND PARTNER OF 36 YEARS,
BETSY. MY DAUGHTER, MARIS AND SON, GREG – MY
DEEPEST THANKS TO THE THREE OF YOU FOR YOUR
UNDERSTANDING AND ABIDING LOVE. I COULD NOT BE
MORE PROUD OF THE FAMILY WE HAVE GROWN INTO.**

I ALSO WANT TO THANK TWO OF THE BEST BOSSES ANYONE COULD EVER HOPE FOR. THEY ARE FROM A GREAT ORGANIZATION OF WHICH KETCHUM IS FORTUNATE TO BE A PART. TOM HARRISON, CHAIRMAN EMERITUS OF OMNICOM'S DIVERSIFIED AGENCY SERVICES GROUP OF COMPANIES AND DALE ADAMS OUR CURRENT CHAIRMAN AND CEO. I ALSO WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE ROB FLAHERTY, KETCHUM'S CEO, AND KETCHUM'S SENIOR MANAGEMENT WHO ARE WITH US THIS EVENING. AND THERE IS ONE MORE PERSON I WOULD LIKE TO THANK - ROB LORFINK. ROB WAS CFO AND THEN PRESIDENT OF KETCHUM DURING MUCH OF MY TENURE AS CEO. HE HAS SINCE MOVED TO NEW AND EXCITING THINGS AT OMNICOM'S DIVERSIFIED AGENCY SERVICES GROUP OF COMPANIES. THANK YOU, ROB, FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP THROUGH THE YEARS. I COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU.

**I'M HUMBLLED TO BE RECEIVING AN AWARD NAMED
AFTER ALEXANDER HAMILTON.**

**LIKE HAMILTON, I BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF WORDS TO
CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS. LIKE HAMILTON I
BELIEVE IN THE IDEALS OF AMERICA. AND LIKE
HAMILTON, I RESOLVE MY DIFFERENCES BY DUELING
WITH HANDGUNS.**

ALLOW ME TO TAKE A PAUSE

IN THE BRIEF SECOND I PAUSED, A LOT HAPPENED.

**IN A *HEARTBEAT*, A SINGLE HEARTBEAT, THAT LASTS
BARELY A SECOND, IF YOU CONSIDER THE COSMOS, 4,800
STARS WERE BORN.**

MORE DOWN TO EARTH, IN THAT SECOND OF A SINGLE HEARTBEAT, 100 LIGHTNING BOLTS HIT THE EARTH.

AND TO BRING IT RIGHT DOWN TO US – IN A SINGLE HEARTBEAT, 2,800,000 EMAILS ARE SENT.

193,000 TEXTS.

5,787 TWEETS.

25 BLOGS WERE POSTED TO.

3,472 PHOTOS WERE POSTED TO FACEBOOK – 4,629 TO INSTAGRAM.

ALL IN A SECOND. A HEARTBEAT.

THIS IS A REVOLUTION IN HUMAN COMMUNICATION AND, IN FACT, IT'S A REVOLUTION IN THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

**AND FOR THE INDUSTRY OF WHICH WE ARE ALL A PART,
THIS IS THE GREATEST TRANSFORMATION – AND
CHALLENGE – IN THE HISTORY OF OUR DISCIPLINE.**

THIS IS A *NOW OR NEVER* MOMENT.

**WE WILL DEFINE OUR VALUE IN A MARKETPLACE
TURNED ON ITS HEAD BY CHANNEL DISRUPTION, BY SO
MANY NEW AND INSTANTANEOUS WAYS TO
COMMUNICATE...*NOW* – OR *NEVER*.**

**WE ARE NOW IN THE ERA OF PUBLIC RELATIONS - AT
THE SPEED OF LIGHT.**

**IT IS A DEFINING MOMENT FOR ALL OF US. WE WILL GET
IT RIGHT, OR WE WILL WATCH THE FUTURE RECEDE.**

**PERSONALLY, I AM TREMENDOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT
WE WILL SUCCEED.**

**THE REASON IS SIMPLE: THIS NEW WORLD IS A WORLD
THAT IS MADE FOR US.**

**WE ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF PROVIDING RELEVANCE –
OF IGNITING ENGAGEMENT.**

**WE BEGIN BY *EARNING* ATTENTION. WE DON'T *IMPOSE*
OURSELVES ON PEOPLE. WE *CONNECT* WITH THEM BY
REACTING WITH ACUTE RESPONSIVENESS TO THE NEWS
CYCLE AND TO THE CYCLES OF THE MARKETPLACE.**

THAT'S WHAT WE DO.

**IN A WORLD OF NEAR INFINITE CHOICE AND
DISTRACTION, EACH OF US NOW DECIDES WHAT WE
WANT TO KNOW ABOUT.**

***WE* DECIDE WHAT IS RELEVANT TO US. WHAT WE WANT
TO ENGAGE WITH. AND NOW WE MAKE THAT DECISION
FAST. RIGHT AWAY.**

**THAT'S A CYCLE WE ARE VERY FAMILIAR WITH IN
PUBLIC RELATIONS. IT'S ALL JUST SPEEDED UP,
LITERALLY, TO THE SPEED OF LIGHT.**

OUR INDUSTRY IS RIGHT FOR THIS MOMENT BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE ARE ALWAYS GOING TO GET IT RIGHT. IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT THESE AREN'T CHALLENGING TIMES.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO RE-INVENT THE WHEEL. IT JUST SPINS FASTER THAN ANY OF US COULD IMAGINE A GENERATION AGO - OR EVEN 18 MONTHS AGO.

WHAT ALL OF US AS CONSUMERS OF MEDIA NOW DEMAND OF OUR INFORMATION SOURCES – RELEVANCE, RIGHT AWAY, TO WIN OUR ENGAGEMENT – IS WHAT WE HAVE ALWAYS HAD TO EARN AS PR PROFESSIONALS.

IT'S JUST THAT WHEN SOME OF US BEGAN OUR CAREERS, "RIGHT AWAY" DIDN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THIS EXACT INSTANT. THE MOMENT WE ARE IN IS GIVING A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO THE EXPRESSION – IN A HEARTBEAT.

**ANYONE WHO CAN TAP OUT A MESSAGE ON A KEYBOARD
– OR A PIECE OF GLASS – CAN BE A CHANNEL. THEY CAN
STEP OUT ONTO THE WORLD STAGE AND WHAT THEY
HAVE TO SAY CAN GO EVERYWHERE, INSTANTLY.**

AND PEOPLE CAN TALK BACK TO THEM - AND THEY DO.

**WE ARE NOW IN A GLOBAL *DIALOGUE*. JUST ABOUT
ANYONE, JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE, CAN REACT TO
SOMETHING WE SAY, AND THE ENTIRE WORLD CAN
LISTEN IN.**

**THIS ALSO PLAYS TO OUR STRENGTHS. WE HAVE
ALWAYS WORKED TO DRIVE THE CONVERSATION – NOT
TO MENTION MANAGE THE OCCASIONAL, OR NOT SO
OCCASIONAL, CONTROVERSIES THAT THOSE
CONVERSATIONS KICK UP.**

**AND AT THIS NOW OR NEVER MOMENT, IT WILL BE THE
FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR INDUSTRY, *WHO WE HAVE
ALWAYS BEEN*, THAT WILL EMPOWER US.**

**WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AND WE WILL REMAIN IN THE
BUSINESS OF GENERATING BIG, NOVEL, IRRESISTIBLE
IDEAS. THAT MUST REMAIN THE HEART OF WHAT WE
DO.**

**WE ARE STORYTELLERS. TO SEE A STORY COME ALIVE –
FOR ME, AFTER MORE THAN 30 YEARS – THAT’S STILL
WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT.**

**IT’S JUST THAT NOW WE MUST GET THAT DONE IN A
FRAGMENTED LANDSCAPE IN WHICH THE OLD
HIERARCHIES HAVE BROKEN DOWN.**

**WHEN EVERY DAY EACH OF US CAN NOW CONSTRUCT
OUR OWN PERSONALIZED MEDIA STREAM, THE OLD
GATEKEEPER STRUCTURE OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA
IS OVER.**

**THE IMPACT OF A 140-CHARACTER TWEET CAN TRUMP
THE NEW YORK TIMES.**

**OF COURSE, TRADITIONAL MEDIA *DOES* STILL MATTER.
WE CAN'T LOSE SIGHT OF THAT.**

**IT IS IN FACT A MEASURE OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THIS
MOMENT THAT GOOD OLD FASHIONED NEWS PRINT –
EVEN IF YOU READ IT ON A SCREEN – REMAINS VERY
MUCH IN THE PICTURE.**

**TRADITIONAL NEWS SOURCES REMAIN BY FAR THE
MOST TRUSTED IN SOCIAL MEDIA.**

**BUT WE CAN AND WE WILL REACH FAR, FAR BEYOND
THAT TOO. TO ALL THE REST.**

**THE MULTIPLE, MULTIPLYING, AND HYPER-
PERSONALIZED CHANNELS THAT THE GREAT BRAND
NAMES OF MEDIA NOW CO-EXIST WITH!**

IT'S AN EXCITING TIME.

IT'S A COMPLICATED TIME.

**BUT IT ALSO SEEMS THERE IS NO TIME, NO TIME WITHIN
AN OPEN ARCHITECTURE OF EXTREME, INSTANTANEOUS
CHOICE.**

**THE CHALLENGE IS TO COMPEL AN AUDIENCE THAT HAS
INFINITE CHOICE TO STEP BACK – AND TAKE NOTICE.**

**WE SEE WEEK AFTER WEEK HOW SWIFTLY A STORY
EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT CAN BECOME A STORY
HARDLY ANYONE IS TALKING ABOUT.**

**BIG STORIES, CRITICAL STORIES. WE HEAR ABOUT THEM
ALL – FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE MEDIA ECOSYSTEM
– UNTIL WE DON'T.**

**BIG NEWS HAS ALWAYS COME AND GONE, BUT NOW THE
CHURN RATE IS INCREDIBLE.**

IN *SECONDS* EVERYTHING IS KNOWN TO JUST ABOUT EVERYONE. AND THEN THE NEXT THING COMES ALONG. THAT HAS CREATED A RESTLESSNESS IN ALL OF US, I THINK, AND IN EVERYONE WE NEED TO REACH.

AT ITS BEST, THIS CAN ACTUALLY CREATE A MORE EGALITARIAN WORLD. NOT TOO LONG AGO, SOCIAL MEDIA LIT BONFIRES THAT BROUGHT DOWN DICTATORSHIPS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND CAUSED A CONFLAGRATION THAT IS STILL BURNING.

MEDIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO MOVE MOUNTAINS --- BUT SOCIAL MEDIA CAN FLATTEN WHOLE MOUNTAIN RANGES. THAT *CAN* MEAN A MORE DEMOCRATIC WORLD, WITH POWER DISPERSED MORE WIDELY. AND THAT'S A GOOD THING.

IT CAN ALSO, OF COURSE, BE A FORCE TO CONVEY SOME OF THE DARKEST IDEAS OF OUR TIME, OR ANY TIME.

**AND, THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING OF
SUPREME IMPORTANCE TO ALL OF US.**

CHARACTER COUNTS.

**A STRONG SENSE OF ETHICS HAS ALWAYS BEEN
FUNDAMENTAL TO THE CREDIBILITY AND LONGEVITY
OF THIS BUSINESS.**

**INDEED, IN THIS FRAGMENTED, CONSTANTLY MORPHING
LANDSCAPE, TODAY, WHEN EVERYONE CAN KNOW
EVERYTHING, INTEGRITY MUST BE AT OUR VERY CORE.**

**TRANSPARENCY IN HOW WE FUNCTION AS
PROFESSIONALS IS NOT AN IDEAL TO ASPIRE TO – IT HAS
TO BE THAT WAY.**

**OUR INDUSTRY IS POWERFUL. PUBLIC RELATIONS CAN
MOVE INDIVIDUALS – EVEN NATIONS – TO SHARE A WAY
OF SEEING THE WORLD.**

**THAT IS AN AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY. WE MUST
HANDLE IT WITH CARE. BECAUSE WE ARE A BUSINESS
BUILT ON TRUST.**

IF WE ARE TRUSTED, PEOPLE WILL BELIEVE US.

IF WE ARE NOT – THEY WON'T.

WE ONLY SUCCEED WHEN WE REACH PEOPLE.

WE HAVE TO TOUCH ANOTHER HUMAN BEING.

PR IS LIVING ENGAGEMENT.

EVERYONE'S TALKING AND EVERYONE TALKS BACK.

**WE TELL OUR STORIES WITHIN AN ONGOING GLOBAL
CONVERSATION.**

**THIS IMPLIES SCALE. AND WE NEED TO SCALE WALLS,
NOT BE BLOCKED BY THEM. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE
WORLD BEYOND OUR RESPECTIVE BORDERS.**

WE'D BETTER BE SPEAKING – ACROSS CONTINENTS AND OCEANS – AS READILY AS WE SPEAK TO A NEIGHBOR OVER THE BACKYARD FENCE.

IN FACT – EVEN *MORE* EASILY.

DOING OUR WORK AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL MEANS HURDLING OVER FENCES.

ONLY ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN COMMUNICATE ACROSS RELIGIONS, RACES, CULTURES, LANGUAGES AND BORDERS CAN THRIVE IN THE WORLD WE LIVE IN TODAY.

SO WHAT SHOULD BE THE HIGHEST GOAL IN THIS INDUSTRY?

IDEALLY, TO FOSTER AN *AUTHENTIC* DIALOGUE BUILT ON MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

***THAT* IS WHAT WE STRIVE TO DO.**

THERE'S NO RULE BOOK. THERE'S NO MANUAL. IN FACT, EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM IS RE-WRITING THE BOOK. WE ARE RE-IMAGINING THE WORK WE ALL CARE SO MUCH ABOUT.

IT IS A GREAT THING TO BE A PART OF.

YET THE FORMATIVE TRUTHS OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION AND OUR BUSINESS REMAIN TRUE AS EVER...

...CHARACTER COUNTS.

...IDEAS ARE POWERFUL.

...IDEAS CAN CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS.

...IDEAS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

IT'S JUST THAT NOW THAT MUST HAPPEN DOWN

INFINITE CHANNELS...

IN A HEARTBEAT...

...AND AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT.

THANK YOU FOR THIS GREAT HONOR.